Graham Eatough, B.A. (Hons)

From Plato’s Cave to Tragic Truth:

A theoric journey between theatre and the visual arts

Submitted for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre Studies, LICA, Lancaster University in January 2016.
I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature.......G. Eatough.......

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Abstract

This thesis provides a critical and practice based exploration of a recent ‘theatrical turn’ in the visual arts from the point of view of a theatre maker engaged in interdisciplinary practice, and asks what implications these developments may have for theatre making. As a context, I explore ideas of anti-theatricality which rely on a Platonic definition of truth that find expression within certain discourses and practices within the discipline of visual art. Through referencing the ancient Greek cultural practice of *theoria* that was appropriated by Plato, as well as Heidegger’s alternative concept of truth as *aletheia* (unconcealment) and his theorising of the festival, I examine the possibility of a re-instigation of a *theoric* festive mode which reconnects the idea of theory to its practice based antecedents and acknowledges the potential of theatricality to stage an *aletheic* form of truth. My first piece of practice, the film *The Making of Us*, explores the use of framing and theatricality in an interdisciplinary artwork, drawing on Derrida’s ideas of the *parergon* and Heidegger’s concept of technology and *Gestell* (enframing), to propose an interdisciplinary practice that might ‘rest on the frame’ (Derrida, 1987). Finally, my play *How To Act* is an attempt to create a contemporary Greek tragedy in order to investigate the expression of *aletheic* truth within a ‘mono-disciplinary’ theatrical frame and provide a *theoric* return to my own practice as a theatre maker.

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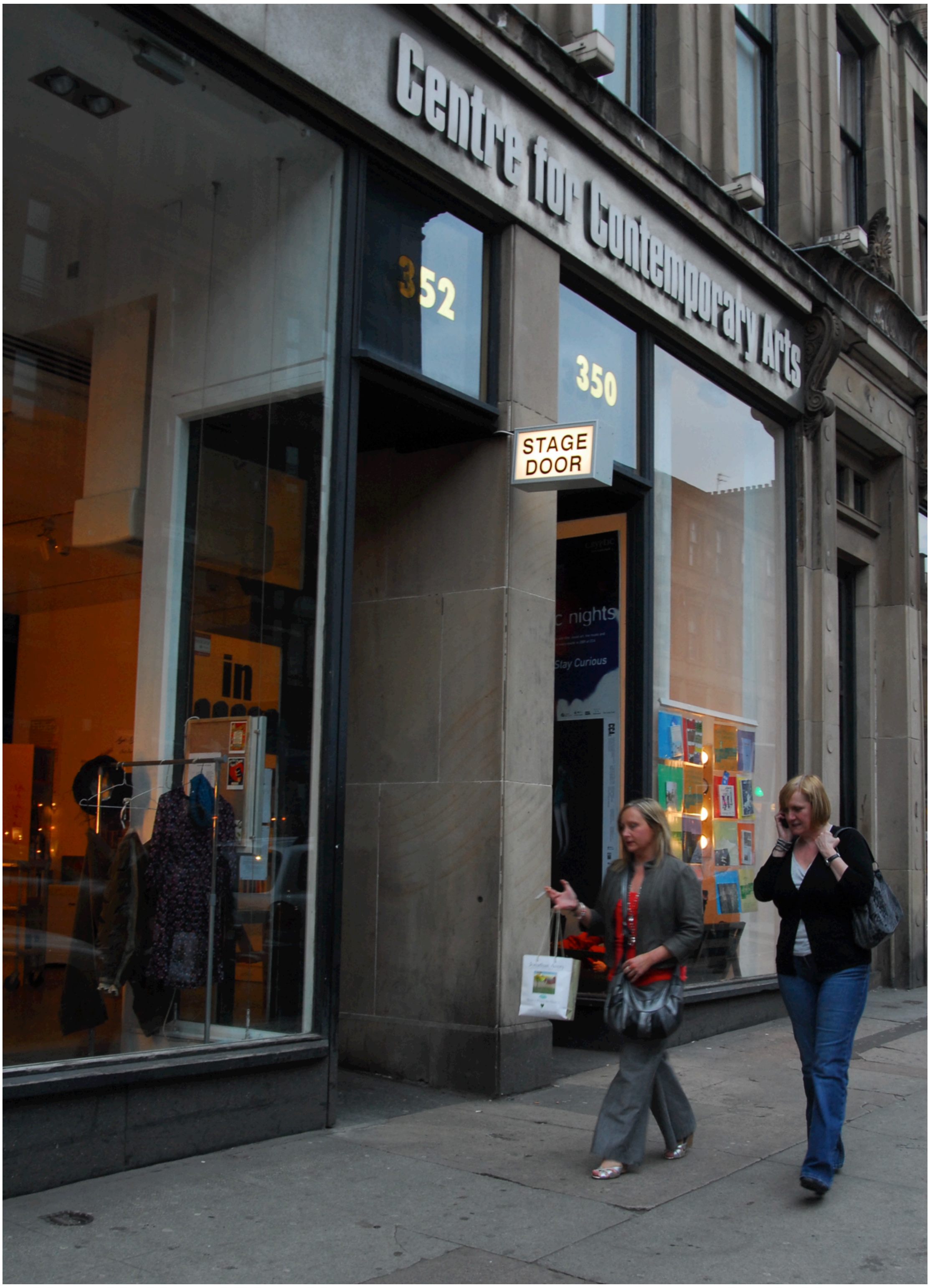
Introduction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STAGE DOOR
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Fig. 1. *Stage Door* (2009)

Background to the research

In May 2009, Suspect Culture, the theatre company I had helped to run since leaving university in 1992, presented its final show at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. The show was called *Stage Fright* and, perhaps unusually for the work of a theatre company, took the form of a visual art exhibition. My own contribution to the show, as well as co-curating it with CCA Director Francis McKee, took the form of two installations in the foyer and café areas. In the foyer I created a piece called *Stage Door* which re-purposed the entrance and route through the reception to the café as the stage door, dressing rooms, green room and stage management area with props tables, of a theatre (figs. 1, 2 and 3). The idea was that with this shift in environment, the public entering the CCA might imagine that they were the potential actors passing through these preparatory spaces before entering onto a stage. This stage was suggested in the accompanying installation sited in the café area entitled *Performance in Progress*. To access this piece the public passed through a black curtain hung between the foyer and café and paged by a stage manager/invigilator (fig. 4). The café was framed on either side with more black curtains, resembling the blacks of the wings at the sides of a stage, through which the public could move from the café up the stairs, into the lift, through to the toilets, and which also provided the entrance and exit for the café staff to and from the kitchen. The café space was lit with coloured theatrical lighting from above that randomly picked out with a spotlight the entrance area with the people coming into the space, or one of the café tables where people might be sitting. To accompany

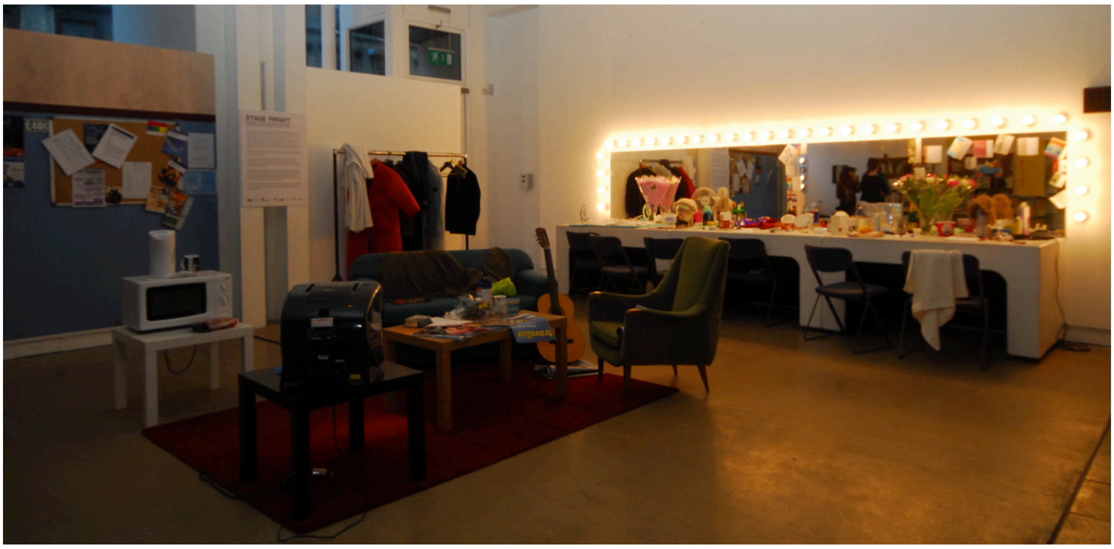

Fig.2. *Stage Door* (2009)

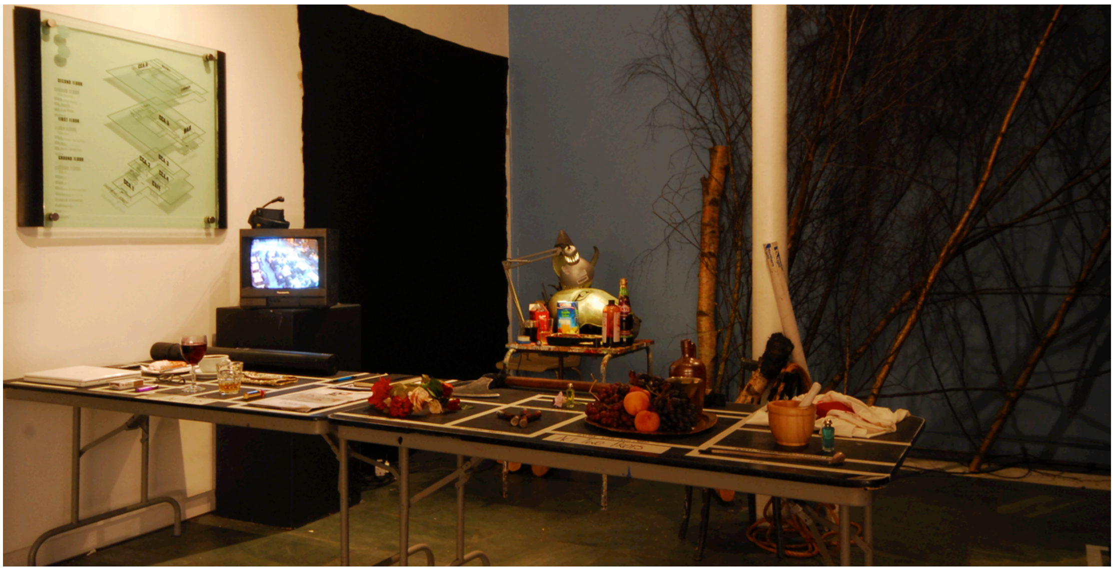

Fig. 3. *ibid*

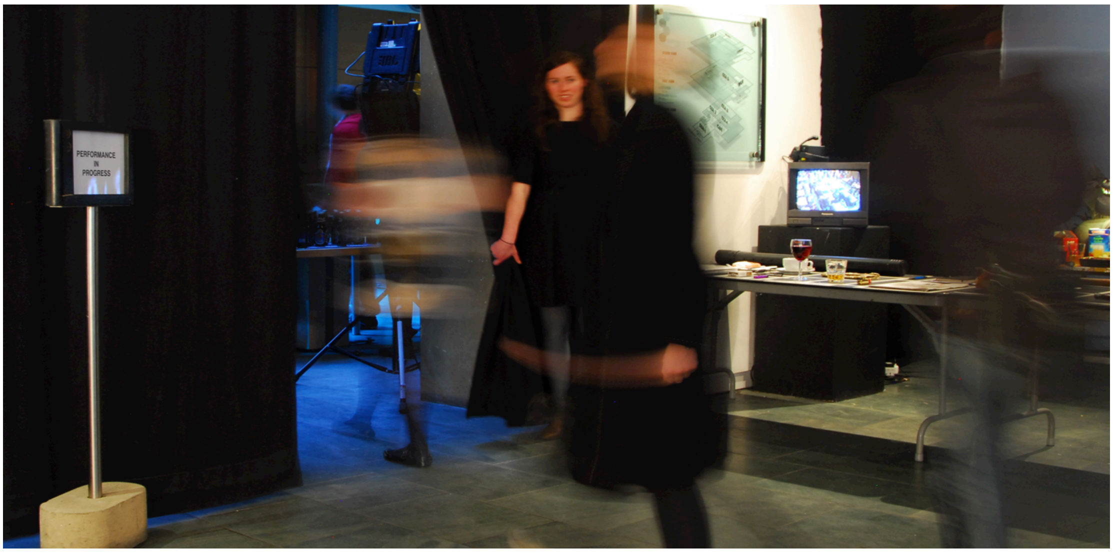
PERFORMANCE IN PROGRESS

Fig. 4. *ibid*

this lighting sequence there was a soundtrack playing random recordings of audience reactions such as laughter, surprise and applause, so that someone's entrance into the café, or part of their meal, might be accompanied by a spotlight and applause or laughter from time to time. All of this was intended to make available to the public in the café the idea that they were the actors in some kind of performance, with their actions of coming into the café to have a drink or meal being framed by what were, for the most part, reasonably subtle transformations in the physical environment, lighting and soundscape. Less subtle was the final element of *Performance in Progress* that consisted of twelve Silver Birch trees suspended directly above the café space in the CCA's three-storey atrium, below which this 'performance' was being played out (figs. 5 and 6). These trees were intended to suggest a second act to this performance, the set for which was waiting in the 'flies' above the 'stage' ready to be flown in and create a radically different 'set'. These two acts and their different sets were referred to in the accompnying *Stage Door* work on the props tables that the public/actors passed by before their entrance onto the 'stage' of the café (fig. 3). The props for Act One were the everyday items of CCA café activity: coffee cups, cigarette packets, laptops. The props for Act Two, however, seemed to suggest a fantastical forest scene, perhaps something akin to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or a Greek tragedy, with magic potions, bloodied underclothes and an ass's head costume. Although the trees were never lowered and Act Two never staged, their presence was intended to suggest the transformational potential inherent within a theatrical context to accompany the framing of the public's everyday café activity as a performance.

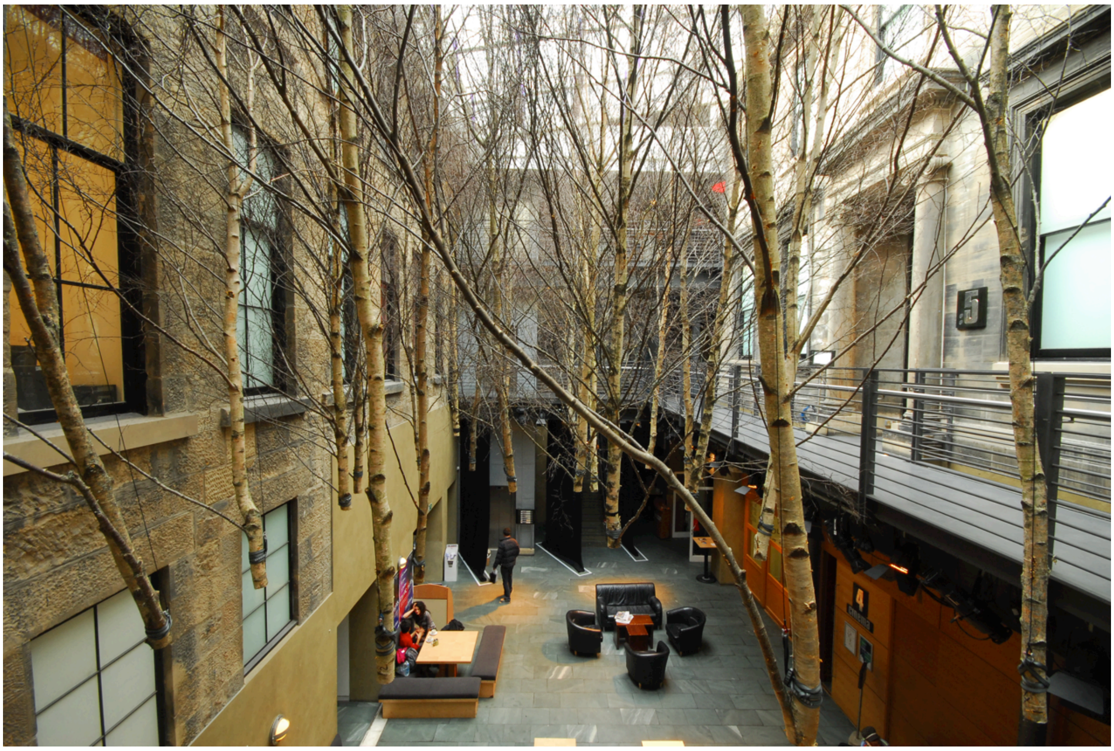

Fig. 5. *Performance in Progress* (2009)

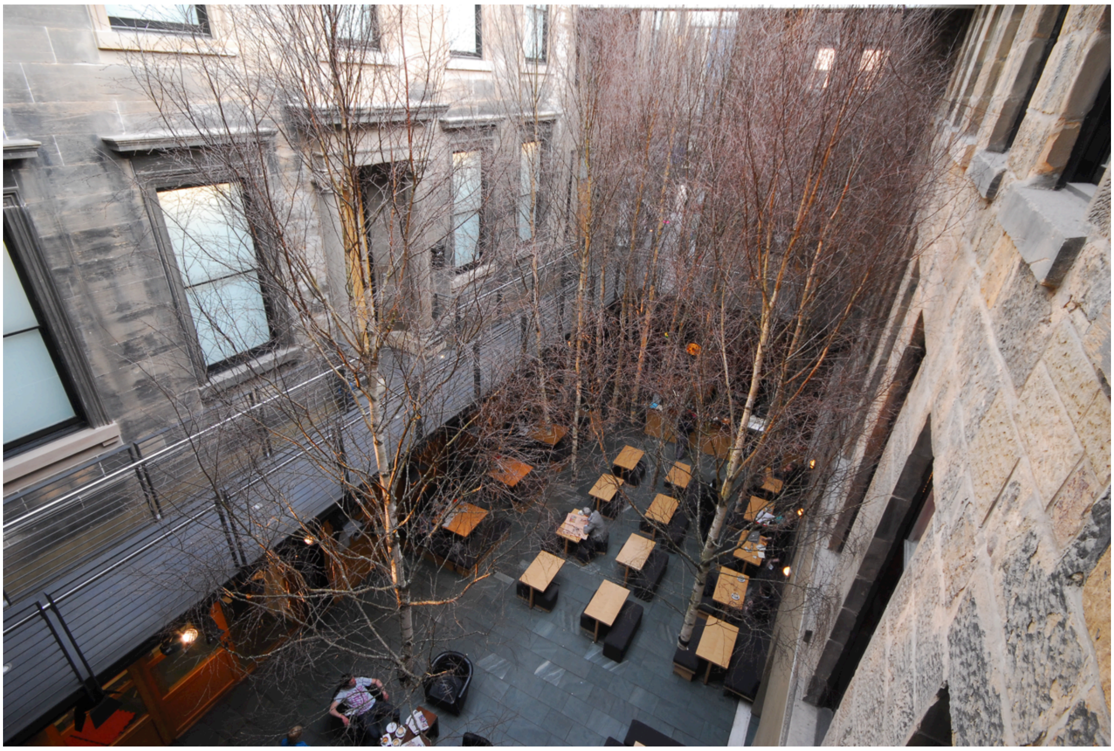

Fig. 6. *ibid*

Sat underneath these trees on the final evening of this exhibition, that also occasioned the party to mark the end of Suspect Culture, I was conscious of several questions that seemed to represent a crossroads in my work in the theatre and my artistic practice in general. Elements of the exhibition had been successful, others less so. An attempt to give both visual artists the opportunity to engage with ideas of theatricality, and theatre artists the opportunity to work in a gallery context, the show was ultimately dominated by theatre artists, with only one visual artist taking part. Two others had pulled out of the project at earlier points and I was left with questions as to why this was the case, and why the interdisciplinary opportunity this show represented was not as attractive to them as I had hoped. In addition to this, all but one of the theatre artists who were involved in the show had decided not to include any kind of conventional live performance in their work as we had initially discussed, instead attempting to create work that, although conceptually dealing with themes of theatricality, might more conventionally by found in a gallery[1]. This seemed to raise similar questions around the interdisciplinary ambitions of the project and a potential hesitancy or inability for artists of both disciplines to fully embrace these intentions.

There was also the question of how a theatre company had arrived in the particular circumstances of presenting a gallery exhibition as its final show. *Stage Fright* was a continuation of a strand of work I had begun with Suspect Culture three years earlier in my first collaboration with visual artist Graham Fagen for the show *Killing*

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[1] The writer, academic and Suspect Culture associate artist Dan Rebellato was the only participating artist to work with an actor performing live for his piece, *Theatremophosis*.

Time at Dundee Contemporary Arts (2007). I had long been interested in and influenced by visual arts practice in my theatre work and was enthusiastic about developing this interest in an interdisciplinary collaboration that would be presented in a gallery[2]. This project was critically successful (The List, 2007) and the relationship with Graham Fagen was one that was to continue, and indeed forms a key part of this thesis. Graham was one of a number of artists at the time that I was becoming aware of as showing an interest in theatre through the use of various theatrical ideas and techniques within their work. This trend had become so prevalent that it seemed to me to represent a new 'theatrical turn' in recent visual art practice.[3] Unlike live art work that had used performance and installation but could still be described as anti-theatrical (as I will explore in the Chapter One), these more recent developments seemed to explicitly rely on ideas of theatricality, and specifically mimetic representation.[4] This reciprocal interest towards theatre from an art form I had long been drawn towards seemed like the ideal opportunity to form new partnerships and develop a new strand of work that drew on both disciplines. However, Graham, like many visual artists I talked to at that time, felt a wariness towards theatricality despite his interest in it. There seemed to be a strong sense of embarrassment around conventional modes of theatrical representation, the pretending it involved, and the whole premise of mimetic performance that I also sensed from the visual artists I talked to about the *Stage Fright* exhibition.[5] In addition to all this, Suspect Culture's work within the visual arts, as well as some film projects, had been a contributing factor in us not continuing to be awarded what was, after all, supposed to be funding for theatre production. This prompted the significant question as to what role theatre making would play in my future practice and what impact these interdisciplinary interactions with visual arts would have on it.

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[2] For an overview of this ongoing interest in the visual arts and its impact on the company's work see *The Suspect Culture Book*, 'Interview with Graham Eatough' (2010).

[3] Gavin Butt uses the term 'theatrical turn' in his book *After Criticism* (pp. 8-12) to describe a 'broad range of performance and installation oriented practices' since the 1950s and 60s as I will discuss in Chapter One. His concern is specifically with responses in art criticism to these developments.

[4] Examples of this will be given in Chapter One, and a survey of these developments and their implications forms the basis of Chapter Two of this thesis.

Thesis structure

All of these circumstances and questions seemed to point towards a significant piece of research that I needed to undertake to move forward in my practice and further an understanding of these interdisciplinary developments. The more recent theatrical turn in the visual arts, the pervasive anti-theatricality that may have preceded it and still persist to some degree, as well as attitudes towards theatricality in the theatre itself, were issues that all felt worthy of further theoretical analysis and research through practice. This seemed important both for my own development as an artist and academic, but also within the broader context of shifts in artistic practice that it would be timely to take account of. It was with these impetuses that I started to formulate the research questions that would inform this doctoral project.

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[5] These kinds of attitudes are summarised in Nic Ridout's article *You Look Charming* (2007) for the Tate exhibition *The World as Stage* (2007) discussed in Chapter One.

This project breaks down into four main questions that correspond to the four chapters of this thesis. In the first chapter I explore the theoretical and philosophical context to a perceived theatrical turn in recent visual art practice. This is to establish what the ‘theatrical turn’ in the visual arts might be a turn away *from*, in order to then understand the nature of the ‘theatrical’ it might represent a turn *towards*. I attempt this through an analysis of two key anti-theatrical texts, Michael Fried’s *Art and Objecthood* (1967) and Plato’s cave analogy from Book VII of *The Republic* (1976 [380 BCE]), as well as exploring their relationships to other artists and thinkers that have made significant contributions to the debates around ideas of theatricality and truth in the arts. At the end of the first chapter I discuss Martin Heidegger’s analysis and response to Plato’s cave analogy as a way of introducing his alternative philosophy of truth as *aletheia* as an important reference throughout this research.

In the second chapter my analysis focuses on what I consider to be some of the key features of recent visual arts practice that form part of a ‘theatrical turn’ in respect to questions of theatricality and truth. I provide this critical analysis through my reflections on a research trip to the Performa 2011 festival of visual art performance in New York and the detailed case studies of two works I encountered there. This analysis is intended to provide an insight into the very diverse developments around theatricality within the visual arts by means of engagement with individual pieces of work rather than attempting a comprehensive but potentially superficial overview. It also allows me to incorporate ideas drawn from ancient Greek cultural practice, as I will describe in my methodology, as well as Heidegger’s ideas of ‘the festive’, in order to contextualise this research trip and interrogate specific examples of artistic practice in this theoretical context.

The third question that underpins this research investigates what might inform the creation of an interdisciplinary artwork in collaboration with a visual artist that seeks to explore explicit ideas of theatricality and truth. In Chapter Three I provide a critical reading of the film *The Making of Us* made with artist Graham Fagen for the Glasgow International Festival of Visual Arts in 2012. This reading is principally informed by Derrida's writing about the function of the frame in a work of art as a 'parergon' from his book *The Truth in Painting,* as well as Heidegger's work on technics and his idea of the 'enframing' operations of contemporary technology, as a way of understanding the different notions of 'frame' and theatricality at work in *The Making of Us*.

It was always my intention to research and create a theatre project throughout the duration of this PhD in order to absorb my developing theoretical knowledge and interdisciplinary experiences back into my theatre practice. The process of creating the play *How To Act* therefore, has evolved in response to the rest of the research as it has unfolded. This has allowed me to answer a key question that motivated this project from the outset, as to what insight and new developments might be brought to bear on my theatre practice as a result of interdisciplinary collaboration with the visual arts and the accompanying theoretical research. That the answer took the form of a rich engagement with ancient Greek tragedy and my attempt to create a contemporary example of this form, provides the subject matter for the fourth chapter of this thesis.

To summarise, this thesis explores ideas of anti-theatricality and their reliance on a Platonic definition of truth that find expression within certain discourses and practices within the discipline of visual art. This provides a context for a critical and practice based exploration of a recent ‘theatrical turn’ in the visual arts from the point of view of a theatre maker engaged in interdisciplinary practice. Through referencing the ancient Greek cultural practice of *theoria* appropriated by Plato, as well as Heidegger’s alternative concept of truth as *aletheia* (unconcealment) and his theorising of the festival, I argue for a re-instigation of a *theoric* festive mode that reconnects the idea of theory to its practice based antecedents and acknowledges the potential of theatricality to stage an *aletheic* form of truth. My first piece of practice, the film *The Making of Us*, explores the use of framing and theatricality in an interdisciplinary artwork, drawing on Derrida’s ideas of the *parergon* and Heidegger’s concept of technology and *Gestell* (enframing) to propose an artistic practice that might ‘rest on the frame’ (Derrida, 1987). Finally, my play *How To Act* is an attempt to create a contemporary Greek tragedy in order to explore the expression of *aletheic* truth within a ‘mono-disciplinary’ theatrical frame and provide a *theoric* return to my own practice as a theatre maker.

Definition of key terms

Even from this brief overview of the following thesis it is clear that it will rely on the key concepts of theatricality and truth. Although the definition of these terms and the relationship between them becomes one of the overarching undertakings of my theoretical and practical work, I would like to briefly introduce them in the context of this research.

As Davis and Postlewait (2003) identify in their introduction to *Theatricality*, the term itself has ‘an extraordinary range of meanings’ rendering it both ‘a sign empty of meaning’ but also ‘the meaning of all signs’ (p. 1). This diversity of usage makes it a very difficult term to define and, they argue, the attempt to do so all the more important. I initially introduce the term in the context of my identification of a ‘theatrical turn’ in the visual arts that provides a key background to this research. Here, theatricality refers to ideas and techniques drawn from the world of theatre production and recently employed in certain examples of visual art practice. This might include the use of staging devices such as stage structures themselves, sets, theatrical lighting and sound, costume, and crucially, the use of live actors to convey character and narrative. (For the purposes of my argument it is important to distinguish this mimetic use of actors from the ‘non-mimetic’ presence of performers in visual art work, in order to explore theatrical mimesis in opposition to ideas of the ‘real’ in performance art for example, as I discuss in Chapter One). This practice based definition of theatricality corresponds broadly to Davis and Postlewait’s project in defining the term by means of identifying and exploring the 'set of concepts and practices' the term evokes in specific examples from theatre history (p. 2).

In philosophical terms, my thesis quickly identifies an important definition of theatricality as the negative of a certain conception of truth. This provides the starting point for my engagement with Platonic thought and its enduring influence on Western philosophy in general and specific approaches to ideas of truth in the visual arts in particular, such as the theorising of modernist art by critic Michael Fried. This negative definition of theatricality as a cornerstone of a Western philosophical tradition also opens the way for my use of Heidegger's attempts throughout his writing to challenge and overturn that tradition. Although Heidegger talks little of theatricality specifically in his work, his constant project is to offer an alternative to the mode of thought instituted by Platonic philosophy that, in his view, drastically limits our understanding of truth as a concept. In his lecture, *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (1962b), he identifies Plato's analogy of the cave and the sun as a decisive moment of change from a pre-Socratic concept of truth as 'unconcealment' or *aletheia*, to truth as an external transcendent given or *idea*. In this context, I argue, we can extrapolate a theatrical aspect to Heidegger's definition of a contingent, experiential truth intrinsically bound up with being that he explores in so much of his work.

It is this relationship between theatricality and truth that forms the principal dynamic of my research and its attempts to formulate a practice based taxonomy of both terms. It seeks to challenge the orthodoxy of a Platonic anti-theatrical conceptualisation of truth that we can see at work in modernist visual art discourse, and asks what might constitute a theatrical truth based on an understanding of truth as *aletheia*. Taking a lead from Heidegger, as well as other notable opponents to this Platonic orthodoxy, it is ultimately to ancient Greek tragedy as a means of expressing a pre-Socratic, *aletheic*, contested, and inherently theatrical definition of truth, that my thesis turns.

Methodology

The relationship between practice and theoretical research is at the heart of this thesis and directly connects with the different ideas of theatricality and truth that I explore. Because of this, I have not attempted to frame my practice as research within the terms established by more conventional qualitative and even quantitative research within the academy, as explored by academics such as Robin Nelson (*Practice as Research*, 2013). Rather, I have a taken a different approach to these issues by examining the foundational definitions of theory itself and how they originally relate to notions of practice. In this respect, the central idea that has informed my methodology is Andrea Nightingale's work on *theoria* that I discuss fully in the first chapter (Nightingale, 2004). It is her contention that Plato based his prospectus for the nascent discipline of philosophy that he puts forward in *The Republic*, and specifically the analogy of the cave and the sun in Book VII, on the traditional ancient Greek cultural practice of state sponsored pilgrimage or *theoria*. This involved an individual being chosen by their home city-state to travel to a festival in a foreign region in order to witness ‘sacralised spectacles’ (p. i) such as theatrical performances and participate in religious rites. They would then return to their home *polis* and share what knowledge they had acquired as a result of their trip, which could include religious revelations but also the political and social news from abroad. Plato translates this *theoric* emissary figure, Nightingale argues, into his proto-philosopher of the *Republic* who, in the analogy, must leave the cave of delusion in order to journey towards the land of the forms and experience (or in Nightingale’s argument, ‘spectate upon’) truth, the highest form of which is represented by the sun, and then return to the cave to share his experiences. Plato borrows the *theoric* topography from the traditional Greek cultural practice in order to describe the new discipline of philosophy in a way that would be accessible and persuasive to his readership. In Plato, this *theoric* topography (literally in the Greek, a ‘writing of place’) no longer describes a literal journey of pilgrimage, but instead maps the intellectual journey that he proposes would constitute the act of philosophy. Through this appropriation Plato transforms the *practice* of *theoria*, into the purely intellectual activity of *theory*. He replaces the destination of the festival, and the set of practices of which it consists, with the theoretical destination of truth as the sun. Although this relationship between theory and practice is not specifically a part of Nightingale’s considerations, it has profound implications for my practice as research project, and this relational definition of *theoria* has come to underpin my methodology.

My research can be seen as having adopted a *theoric* methodology on several levels. In correspondence with the ancient Greek practice of pilgrimage to a festival, I was sponsored as a theatre maker to journey to a festival, Perfoma ’11 in New York, and spectate upon the practices I encountered there, alien in both their geographical context and the disciplinary context of a visual art festival[6]. I then created and participated in a performance in a festival setting in the form of *The Making of Us* at Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art 2012. Subsequently, I attempted to implement the knowledge gained from these ‘festive’ experiences in my ‘return’ to theatre making in the form of the play *How To Act*. My research can also be seen as *theoric* in a Platonic sense on the level of artistic discipline in its movement from the ‘cave’ of theatricality towards the visual arts with its anti-theatrical ideas of truth, followed by a return to the world of theatre. Finally, I would argue that there is a *theoric* aspect to the underlying ‘journey’ of this PhD as a whole, from my practice as a professional theatre maker into the world of academia and back again, in the same manner as Plato’s Guardian has to leave behind the cave of his everyday circumstances in order to re-orientate himself towards philosophical enquiry and then return to put that new knowledge into practice.

In summary, my methodology through this research has been guided by this *theoric* topography of a journey, taking place on these different levels. It has been a journey of practice involving travelling, spectating, participating and making; a journey from one artistic discipline to another and back again; a journey of theory from an exploration of theatricality and anti-theatricality to different notions of truth; and a journey from the world of practice into the world of the academy and philosophy and returning to practice. Crucially, as this thesis reflects, the different levels of this experience have unfolded simultaneously as the research has moved forward, and have informed and guided each other. The theoretical developments in my research have happened at the same time as the practice based work, and both have had a fundamentally reciprocal effect on each other.

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[6] This sponsorship was in the form of financial support provided by both Creative Scotland and Lancaster University, an important condition of which was the ‘reporting back’ on my trip. For Creative Scotland this involved an actual grant report, but more significantly the idea that my artistic practice would develop as a result of this activity thereby enabling a ‘reporting’ to a broader audience through my work. For Lancaster, this thesis can be seen as the ‘reporting back’ to that particular community.

This multi-layered *theoric* journey seemed appropriate to me as a methodology because its of point of departure and destination are bound up with ideas of theatricality and truth in both its original practice based and theoretical forms, as I will explore. But most importantly, allowing this research to develop simultaneously on both these levels of theory and practice according to these different ideas of *theoria* constitutes a reconnection of the very ideas of theory and practice that were so decisively ruptured by Plato's replacement of practice based *theoria* with philosophy as intellectual *theoria* in the cave analogy. The *theoric* methodology therefore, plays a crucial role in the thesis in providing a structure within which practice can be reconnected with theory at the same time as ideas of theatricality are reconnected with ideas of truth. In my thesis I describe this as a re-instigation of 'the festival' (or 'festive mode' in Heideggerian terms), with its theatrical and ultimately tragic components, as a *theoric* destination, rather than Plato's alternative of an external, transcendent truth. In this way my methodology embodies the Heideggerian strategy of 'remembering'[7] the festive mode of classical Greek culture both in theory, but crucially here, through the experience of practice.

By means of this methodology, I want to suggest a definition of my practice as research as a contemporary *theoric* mode that combines both the Platonic idea of *theoria* as an intellectual journey, with elements of its practice based antecedent. This definition accepts Heidegger's admission that we cannot escape the metaphysical conceptual framework within which our thinking has developed from Plato onwards, whilst at the same time attempting to 'remember' the ideas of practice on which it was originally based. As well as philosophical theorising, this contemporary *theoric* mode involves a practice that accumulates knowledge through the process of journeying on its different levels, and the spectating upon and participation in, practice based activity. It also draws on an idea of tragic thinking and knowledge arrived at through experiential understanding of instability, conflict and suffering. Although this methodology is one of inevitable tension and sometimes contradiction between these different ideas of knowledge and truth, it seeks to interpret these tensions as potentially productive rather than as incorrect in some way. It suggests that these are the generative conflicts and contradictions of the festival (and the tragic thinking bound up with the festive mode), where ideas of transcendent truth exist alongside practice based stagings of truth. This idea of a contemporary festive mode allows for these encounters to take place, just as the ancient Greek festival allowed the *theoric* emissary to encounter and participate in

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[7] There is a full exploration of Heidegger's concept of 'remembering' and *andenken* in Chapter Two.

'alien' practices and meet other emissaries doing the same.[8] This *theoric* methodology asks how a contemporary idea of the festive might contain these seemingly irresolvable conceptual frameworks in a way that usefully informs ideas around practice as research. In so doing, this approach may serve to alleviate some of the anxiety around the relationship between practice as research and theoretical research, acknowledging that one has from the start been inextricably linked to the other.

Encounters with key texts

This journey of research has been motivated and informed by a series of linked encounters with key texts and it is as such that I will give an overview of the literature that has been central to my overall approach. The first encounter, from which all others could be said to have originated, was with Plato's *Republic* (1976 [380 BCE])*,* and in particular the analogy of the cave and the sun from Chapter VII (514-517). My reading of this provided the foundational definitions for theatricality and truth that went on to underpin the rest of the research. The next crucial encounter was with Andrea Nightingale's *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy* (Nightingale, 2004) that seeks to analyse some of the cultural precedents that informed Plato's philosophy. This key text allowed me to develop the primary *theoric* structure of this research as detailed above. From this classical Greek context I next looked at Michael Fried's essay *Art and Objecthood* (Fried, 1967) with its distinctly Platonic, I argue, anti-theatricality, and its articulation of the paradigms of 'truthfulness' in modernist visual art practice which I then went on to explore. Finally, in this first phase of my research I encountered the key text by Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (Heidegger, 1962b [1940]) which analyses and responds to Plato's cave analogy by identifying the crucial moment of transition from the pre-Socratic conception of truth as *aletheia* to the instigation of the Platonic conception of truth as *idea* that would go on to inform Western philosophy from that point on. These two conflicting definitions of truth, and the repercussions of this change in the 'doctrine of truth' that Heidegger goes on to elaborate, provide the primary dynamic between *aletheia* and a transcendent idea of truth that are central to my exploration of ideas of theatricality in the rest of the research.

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[8] In this light we can see these ancient Greek *theoric* emissaries as the first, or at least very early, practice as researchers.

Having established the conceptual foundations of the research through these initial texts I went on to deepen my knowledge of Heidegger by reading *The Origin of the Work of Art* (Heidegger, 2002 [1950]). In it he presents his idea of the relevance of the classical Greek festival in a contemporary context and the need to re-instigate a notion of the festival in order to release contemporary society from its current limitations. This reading accompanied my visit to the Performa festival in New York in 2011 where I saw visual art performance practice that dealt with theatricality. This reciprocal relationship between practice based research and literature based research is one I have attempted to maintain throughout this project and is reflected in the balance between the two in each chapter. The key text that enabled a reading of my own work, *The Making of Us* (2012), was Heidegger's *The Question*

Concerning Technology (Heidegger, 1977 [1954]). This text provided a key to unlock the film's complex set of relationships between contemporary technology and philosophical ideas of being and 'enframing'. Jacques Derrida's essay 'The Parergon' (Derrida, 1987 [1978]) and its exploration of the significance of the frame to a work of art, also provided an important analytical tool in my examination of the film's approach to theatricality and framing.

As a direct result of my engagement with Platonic philosophy and Heidegger's repeated reference to what he sees as the classical Greek cultural paradigm, more latterly the research has led me to encounters with writing around tragedy. Heidegger's own reflections on Greek tragedy in texts such as *The Self Assertion of the German University* (Heidegger, 1933) and *The Ode on Man in Sophocles' Antigone* (Heidegger, 2014 [1953]) have been instrumental in my understanding of tragedy's role in the history of philosophy. However, of equal influence in terms of my own practice has been the general overview provided by Dennis J. Schmidt's *On Germans and Other Greeks* (Schmidt, 2001) and Simon Critchley's lecture series on tragedy for the European Graduate School in 2011 (Critchley, 2011b). All these readings accompanied and informed the creation of my own attempt at contemporary tragedy, the play *How to Act*.

There are other texts that, whilst not being a part of the central path of this journey have been influential to my thinking throughout the research. Perhaps most significant amongst these has been Samuel Weber's *Theatricality as Medium* (Weber, 2004) which I read at the beginning of my research and which touches upon many of the concerns I look at in detail. It was Weber who made some of the connections between Plato, Heidegger, Derrida and tragedy in his introductory remarks on theatricality in that book, that I went on to chart out in my own research. Nicholas Ridout's *Theatre and Ethics* (Ridout, 2009) was an important early encounter that went on to inform the continuing development of the play *How To Act*. Ridout's essay for the Tate exhibition *The World as Stage* (Ridout, 2007), Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube* (O'Doherty, 1976) and Melanie Gillighan's essay *The Beggars Pantomime* (Gillagan, 2007) each provided important context for the developments towards theatricality in the visual arts that prompted this research. Also, Julian Young's *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Young, 2001) provided a very useful introduction to the philosophy that would become central to my thesis.

Points of departure

It is interesting to look back at the starting points for this research, and in particular the show *Stage Fright* described at the beginning of this introduction, to realise how many of the central concerns of my thesis were already embedded in that piece of practice. The public's movement from the 'everyday' of the street outside of the CCA, through the re-orientation of role and understanding in the dressing room and stage management areas, to the arrival at the staged café destination with its suggestion of theatrical transformation, is a fundamentally *theoric* journey. As a dramaturgy, it contains the key elements of the ancient Greek cultural practice of *theoria* that was to become the defining structure of my research. There is a journey at the heart of that piece that aspires towards the accumulation of new knowledge. At play within the work are the major values of theatricality and truth and their relation to both theatre and visual arts practice that I have gone on to explore over the next five years. There is also a strong sense of 'the festival' in the café-as-performance destination and its explicit use of theatrical devices to frame the participation of the public. In this way the work 'enframes', in Heideggerian terms, the public's presence within it in order to ask questions about what might be revealed (or 'unconcealed') about our being in the world through ideas of theatricality. There is even reference to classical tragedy in the props and scenery for the suggested second act. All of these elements would go on to play a key role in my own *theoric* journey of research. This journey would enable me to deepen my understanding of, and further articulate, the key questions about my practice and its philosophical underpinnings that were already present in my work in 2009, and develop new knowledge and practice along the way.

Chapter One

Before the turn

Definitions

One of the key motivations for my research has been the proliferation of visual art practice that has drawn on ideas of theatricality in recent times. In his book *After Criticism, New Responses to Art and Performance* (Butt, 2005), Gavin Butt uses the term ‘theatrical turn’ to describe ‘the rise of performance- and installation-oriented practices’ (p. 8) in a broad range of work from the 1950s and 60s onwards. Although these developments undoubtedly contributed to the ‘theatricalisation’ (*ibid*) of visual arts practice to which he refers, and were the focus of a critique of theatricality offered by writers such as Michael Fried, they also include practice that can be seen as clearly anti-theatrical in its intentions. The work of artist Marina Abramović is perhaps one of the clearest examples of a performance practice that is self-avowedly anti-theatrical as I will explore later in this chapter. In more recent developments we can identify a similarly broad range of work and expressions of theatricality that might be considered a part of this ‘theatrical turn’. A brief list of more prominent recent examples could usefully include the gallery performances constructed by Tino Seghal, the scripted scenarios staged by Melanie Gilligan, the site-specific re-enactments and parades of Jeremy Deller, the heightened theatrical performances for stage and film of Elmgreen and Dragset, Matthew Barney and Catherine Sullivan, as well as the presentation of sculptural objects and installations as theatrical props and stage sets in the work of Barney and Graham Fagen, amongst many others. Even in these few examples we can identify fundamentally different approaches to the use of performers, objects, and scenarios. The work of Seghal for example concentrates on the bodily confrontation of the performer with the gallery visitor, and makes little or no use of props or objects of any kind. In this regard it can be viewed as part of the tradition of gallery based performance art, practiced by artists such as Marina Abramović, and her anti-theatrical intentions mentioned earlier. Elmgreen and Dragset's *Happy Days in the Artworld* (Performa Festival New York, 2011) on the other hand, was a full theatre production scripted by an established theatre practitioner (Tim Etchells) and performed in conventional theatre spaces. That the 'theatrical turn' might paradoxically include an anti-theatrical strand will be an important theme of this and the following chapters. Over the past ten years this diversity has been reflected in exhibitions that have sought to survey these developments such as *A Theatre Without Theatre* (MACBA, Barcelona 2007), *The World as Stage* (Tate Modern, London 2007), *Il Tempo Del Postino* (Manchester International Festival, 2007) and *Stage Presence: Theatricality in Art and Media* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2012).

This diversity of practice poses obvious challenges to a clear definition of theatricality in this context and there is surprisingly little literature concerned with these developments[9]. Given this, I want to explore what the reasons might be behind this turn towards the theatrical within an art form that has previously exhibited, and to an extent continues to demonstrate, clear anti-theatrical tendencies, and what visual arts practitioners might mean when they refer to theatricality as a set of ideas. In my iteration of the term 'theatrical turn' therefore, I want to attempt to distinguish between work identified by Butt since the 1950's that merely incorporates performance or installation elements in some way,[10] and a more recent strand of visual art work that seems to me to more explicitly explore and embrace ideas of theatricality.

Identifying the possibility of a corresponding 'theatrical turn' in theatre practice is beyond the immediate scope of this research, aside from the implications for my own practice as a theatre maker[11]. However, it is interesting to note that theatre has always, by its very nature, explored its own theatrical operations. Historically we can see in the work of practitioners such as Boal, Brecht, Pirandello, Gordon Craig, and as far back at least as Shakespeare, a self-conscious concern with theatricality as an important aspect of the work itself. More recently, it is possible to identify a mode of practice that seems to be interrogating the power and potential of theatricality with particular focus. Here, I would cite The Wooster Group and Forced

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[9] Melanie Gilligan's *Artforum* essay, 'The Beggar's Pantomime' (2007) being a notable exception.

[10] These developments have been surveyed by many writers including, most prominently, Rose Lee Goldberg in *Performance Art* (Goldberg, 1998) discussed later in this chapter.

[11] However, in the conclusion to this thesis I do speculate on the possibility of a recent 'tragic turn' within contemporary British theatre practice that I suggest can be seen as a corollary to the 'theatrical turn' in the visual arts.

Entertainment as obvious examples, groups who foreground theatrical operations as a way of exploring contemporary experience. Also, writers such as Peter Handke, Caryl Churchill and Howard Barker, to name a few, have drawn attention to the theatricality of the representational devices employed within their work. What marks these practitioners out is their refusal to accept the transparency of representation and its ability to reflect the word and its reality. Instead, their focus is on the mediality of theatre as a framing device within which to situate human experience within a theatrical context. Hans-Thies Lehmann’s distinction between the unifying representations of the dramatic and the fragmentary representations of the postdramatic is useful here,

> …the theatre takes on a fragmentary and partial character. It renounces the long-incontestable criteria of unity and synthesis and abandons itself to the chance (and risk) of trusting individual impulses, fragments and microstructures of texts in order to become a new kind of practice.
> (Lehmann, 2006: p. 85)

According to Lehmann, the dramatic is aligned with modernity’s ideal of representing reality and being able to present an organic unity as truth. This is overturned, he argues, in the postdramatic, and the power of theatre to transparently represent the world revealed to be itself illusory. Indeed, much experimentation in performance since the 1960s can be seen as revealing and reflecting on theatre’s failure to represent fully. However, this thesis avoids positioning itself within the parameters set by debates around the postdramatic, or even the postmodern, for reasons that will become apparent as this thesis develops in its entirety. Briefly, my interest is in the paradigms of Platonic anti-theatricality and theatrical truth in Greek tragedy that pre-date and interrupt the notions of temporal separation on which the debates around the postdramatic and postmodern are predicated.[12]

Anti-theatricality

Before attempting an examination of the rise of theatricality in contemporary visual arts by means of in-depth case studies, I feel it is important to look at what came before. If there has been a recent *turn* towards theatricality, what, we might ask, has preceded it? What is being turned away from? This is a particularly important context if, as I have suggested, what precedes the turn towards theatricality is in fact anti-theatricality. The turn is all the more striking if it represents something of a reversal in attitudes within the visual arts, or at least parts of it. And if we understand anti-theatricality to be embedded in the very foundations of Western thought and our conceptions of knowledge, as we will explore, then might this theatrical turn in one art form give us a more general insight into our developing relationship with ideas of knowledge and truth?[13]

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[12] For example, I will argue that Greek tragedy operates outside of the 'criteria of unity and synthesis' that Lehmann identifies as dramatic, despite the Aristotelian notion of 'the unities'.

[13] My use of the expression 'theatrical turn' is in keeping with a *theoric* vocabulary in its echo of the guardian's re-orientation towards the sun having left Plato's cave. He physically turns himself around in the analogy (VII, 518) in order to travel towards the land of the

Firstly, I want to take a brief look at two of the more prominent proponents of anti-theatrical thinking within the visual arts from the last fifty years in order to establish what the grounds for their prejudice might be. I then want to explore what many consider to be the origins of these ideas about theatricality, Platonic philosophy, and place these attitudes within a specific cultural context of their time. By exploring the origins of anti-theatricality and what Plato offers as an alternative to the theatrical, I hope to illuminate the underlying paradigm that opposes theatre and visual art and provide a context for the recent developments of the 'theatrical turn' described above.

One of the most common touchstones for anti-theatricality in the visual arts is Michael Fried's 1967 essay, *Art and Objecthood*. In it he argues that the phenomenon of minimalist (or as he calls it 'literalist') art threatens to undermine what he sees as important principles of modernist artistic practice and, importantly, spectatorship. He writes, '...the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art' (Fried, 1967: p. 153). It is instructive that in the course of this seminal essay Fried's use of theatricality as a pejorative is given little direct explanation. Instead Fried concentrates on explaining *why* he feels minimalist work is theatrical, as if this in itself is enough to damn it as 'non-art', or not 'authentic art' as he puts it (*ibid*: p. 152). That theatricality is the 'enemy' or 'the negation or art' is taken for granted to

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Forms and face the sun. The 'theatrical turn' suggests a turn in the opposite direction away from the idea of transcendent artistic truth and towards theatricality.

a large degree, and the reader is offered only aphoristic explanations of why this might be the case. For example,

> 2. Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre.
> 3. The concepts of quality and value are meaningful only within the individual arts. What lies between the arts is theatre. (*ibid*: p. 164)

These ideas of theatre as ‘degenerate’ and lacking in ‘quality and value’ are perhaps taken for granted by Fried because they resonate so clearly with a prejudice that dates back at least as far as Plato. This is a perception of theatricality as an impure, contaminating influence to be resisted at all costs. It is the enemy of the ‘individual arts’ that maintain their ‘quality and value’ through their purity; through how true they are to themselves - unlike theatre which can never be true to itself because of its necessarily hybrid nature. For Fried, minimalist art ‘approaches the condition of theatre’ through the ‘situation’ it creates between the artwork and viewer. The threat Fried perceives from this encroaching theatricality seems potentially overwhelming and the essay amounts to a plea for resistance to its pervasive influence,

> I want to call attention to the utter pervasiveness – the virtual universality of the sensibility or mode of being that I have characterized as corrupted or perverted by theatre. We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace. (*ibid*: p. 168)

This is not just a problem with minimalist art therefore, or with the theatre itself, it is what Fried sees as problematic in contemporary life in general. It is a ‘sensibility or mode of being’ that has been ‘perverted by theatre’ and from which he wishes us to save contemporary art.

Fried's central argument is that the intention of minimalist art is to create an 'event' out of the spectator’s encounter with the artwork by foregrounding the relationship between the artwork as object - it’s ‘objecthood’- the spectator, and the space they are in. This approach, he feels, creates a theatrical experience in its use of space and time.[14] He opposes to this the idea of the modernist artwork as a transcendent object that exists outside of time and space. If art is to ‘defeat theatre’ as Fried states, it needs to defeat its emphasis on the temporal and relational,

> the [theatrical] experience in question persists in time...This preoccupation marks a profound difference between literalist work and modernist painting and sculpture...because at every moment the [modernist] work itself is wholly manifest. (*ibid*: p. 166)

Being ‘wholly manifest’ ‘at every moment’ is the ‘presentness’, or elsewhere ‘instantaneousness’, that Fried refers to as defining the spectator’s relationship with the modernist artwork. This is a kind of infinite moment of spectatorship that transcends conventional ideas of time and space and stands in contrast to the minimalists' emphasis on the 'duration of experience' in his view. The minimalist artwork is revealed to the spectator in its objecthood through the 'duration of experience' in a similar way as one's understanding of a play would grow through the duration of the performance. Whereas the modernist artwork is 'wholly manifest' in a 'continuous and perpetual present',

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[14] This minimalist ‘objecthood’ seems a fairly mild form of theatrical contamination compared to the interdisciplinary tendencies of some of today’s visual arts practice. Perhaps the current, overt theatricality would further convince Fried of the dangers of the moment of ‘infection’ that he identified in the sixties.

> It is this continuous and entire presentness, amounting as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness: as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it. (Here it is worth noting that the concept of interest implies temporality in the form of continuing attention directed at the object whereas the concept of conviction does not). (*ibid*: p. 167)

Being convinced and ideas of 'conviction' are very important to Fried in defining his ideal relationship with the artwork - 'nothing short of conviction matters at all' (*ibid*: p. 160). Being 'merely interesting' is part of the minimalist work's 'theatrical effects' or 'stage presence' (*ibid*: p. 158) and is bound up with the theatrical duration of our engagement with it. We are interested in the minimalist artwork as long as it can employ its theatrical effects to hold our attention. But for Fried this falls far short of being convinced by it. In fact, the theatrical work's reliance on an audience is a defining element of its lack of conviction,

> For theatre has an audience - it exists for one - in a way the other arts do not; in fact, this more than anything else is what modernist sensibility finds intolerable in theatre generally...literalist art too possesses an audience...(*ibid*: p. 163)

Minimalist art's insistence on 'confronting' (*ibid*: p. 155) the viewer is indicative of its reliance on an audience, according to Fried, rendering the work irredeemably contingent on the presence of the spectator and the 'event' of their meeting. This contingency stands in marked contrast to Fried's ideal of the work being in itself 'wholly manifest…at every moment.' From Fried's criticisms of minimalism and its theatricality therefore, we can start to understand what he considers to be ideals for art. Opposed to the theatrical artwork dependent on an audience and a 'duration of the experience', he argues for the transcendent artwork that exists both outside of time and space and does not rely on the spectator for its meaning and the quality of its conviction.

We might look towards those presenting performance in visual arts contexts around the same time to offer a more positive perspective on theatre and theatricality. Although the context may be different - a gallery space instead of a theatre - surely there are similar elements and operations at work? On the contrary, performance artists such as Marina Abramović voice perhaps some of the most vehement expressions of anti-theatricality. This is how she describes the attitudes she and her collaborators had when they were first starting to make work in the former Yugoslavia,

> Theatre was an absolute enemy. It was something bad, it was something we should not deal with. It was artificial… We refused the theatrical structure.
> (Abramović in Huxley and Witts, 1996: p. 13)

Talking in 2010 during the retrospective of her work at MOMA she reiterates this same antipathy,

> To be a performance artist, you have to hate theatre. Theatre is fake: there is a black box, you pay for a ticket, and you sit in the dark and see somebody playing somebody else's life. The knife is not real, the blood is not real, and the emotions are not real. Performance is just the opposite: the knife is real, the blood is real, and the emotions are real. It's a very different concept. It's about true reality.
> (Abramović and Ayers, 2010)

Performance in a visual art context then, on Abramović's terms, is the opposite of theatre. It is real instead of fake and gives us ‘true reality’ instead of pretence. This distinction between a ‘true’ and ‘fake’ reality is one of the cornerstones of anti-theatrical thought. It is clear from the tone of these remarks how important it is for performance artists such as Abramović to be seen to be rejecting theatre, both as a set of procedures and a physical context for their work. Any similarities between what happens in ‘conventional’ theatre and performance are aggressively ruled out, and indeed ‘hating’ theatre becomes an essential pre-requisite in defining what a performance artist is.[15]

At the heart of these remarks from Fried and Abramović we see two of the key objections to theatricality in the visual arts; that the theatrical encounter between a spectator and the artwork is diametrically opposed to an idea of the transcendent, non-contingent artwork, and that theatre is essentially fake while art offers us truth. Modernist art has to ‘convince’ us and performance art has to give us ‘true reality’. Theatre can only ever pander to its audience with its pretences and theatrical effects.

This basic opposition to theatre as an inferior art form can be seen to exist in the theoretical writings of critics like Fried, but can also be said to characterise the attitudes prevalent in the visual arts more generally, at least until recently,

> Theatre, of course, is rubbish. It happens in the evenings, when there are more exciting things to do, and it does go on a bit. It typically involves people dressing up and pretending to be other people, putting on accents and shouting too much. Since visual art practice has so decisively repudiated, problematised, complicated the whole business of pretending, it’s hardly surprising that the theatre, still apparently a way of

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[15] It is interesting to note Abramović’s potential softening to the overtly theatrical in recent years in the form of her collaboration with Robert Wilson and Willem Dafoe, *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović* (Manchester International Festival, 2013) a theatre show dramatising events from her life. It might also be argued that the re-staging of performance artworks from the 60‘s and 70‘s, such as those shown in the recent MOMA retrospective, complicate her otherwise dismissive relationship with the theatrical.

> representing away in complete naïvity, should be given a wide berth, involving, not infrequently, disdainful glances.
> (Ridout, 2007: p. 1)

Nicholas Ridout’s stereotype of these attitudes, written to contextualise Tate Modern’s exhibition *The World as Stage* (2007) that sought to survey the growth in theatricality in the visual arts, is intended as a provocation. Nonetheless, it points towards theatre’s fakery - its ‘representing away in complete naivety’ - as a widely felt embarrassment. Theatre’s formal language of mimesis is seen as crude and childlike compared to the sophistication of the visual arts. Theatre, in this characterisation, is again something to be looked down upon and avoided.

Of course, this set of oppositions between pretending and truth, mimesis and reality, are at the heart of an anti-theatricality that extends far beyond the visual arts. Concerns about theatre and its mimetic powers have co-existed with theatre practice throughout its history, in aesthetic, political and religious debates, and in both popular and academic contexts. As Jonas Barish suggests in his historical survey *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice*, it is the pervasiveness of anti-theatricality that is one of its defining characteristics,

> The fact that the prejudice turns out to be of such nearly universal dimension, that it has infiltrated the spirits not only of insignificant criticasters and village explainers but also of giants like Plato, Saint Augustine, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, suggests that it is worth looking at more closely... (Barish, 1981: p. 2)

Barish suggests that the fact that these concerns about theatricality are so widespread may be the product of a deep-rooted ‘ontological queasiness’ (*ibid*: p. 3) about the nature of pretending and what it might mean for our stable sense of self. In fact, he argues that this prejudice is so deep rooted that it ‘reflects something permanent about the way we think of ourselves and our lives’ (*ibid*).

The anti-theatricality represented by the considered arguments of critics and performers like Fried and Abramović seems in keeping with the more general attitudes within the visual arts characterised by Ridout in their disdain for theatre’s effects and pretences. This is certainly borne out by the anecdotal evidence of my own interactions with visual artists that I alluded to in the introduction. But it is to one of Barish’s giants that we now look for some understanding of how these attitudes might connect to deeper, more philosophical conceptions of truth, our sense of self and our role within society.

Plato’s Cave

Plato’s are the first written expressions of anti-theatrical sentiment. They coincide with the first accounts of formal, Western theatre practice but also, crucially, with the first attempts to formulate an idea of philosophy as the pursuit of a certain definition of truth. In fact, Plato’s use of theatricality as an examplar for the ways in which humanity deceives itself, and his proposals to counter this, form one of the cornerstones of the philosophical approach to knowledge he puts forward in *The Republic* (1976 [380BCE]).

There is a fairly standard identification of Plato's allegory of the cave from Book VII of *The Republic* as a founding image of anti-theatricality in its equation of a theatre-like environment and theatrical procedures, with a deluded, unenlightened society[16]. Plato writes,

> And now, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: -- Picture men dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern with a long entrance open to the light on its entire width. Conceive them as having their legs and necks fettered from childhood that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. (VII, 514a)

The image of the cave famously resembles a theatre, albeit a very strange type of theatre where the audience has been held captive since birth. Nevertheless it contains unmistakably theatrical elements. There is an audience in a confined darkened space being presented with images in which they are persuaded to believe. There is the technical manipulation of light by means of an opening at the back of the cave and a fire carefully positioned for controlled illumination, and there is a fairly elaborate performance (using puppets) facilitated by stage manager/performers,

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[16] Samuel Weber surveys this interpretation in the introduction to *Theatricality as Medium* (2004: p. 3).

> Some way off and higher up a fire is burning behind them and between the fire and the prisoners is a road on higher ground. Imagine a wall built along this road, like the screen that showmen have in front of the audience, over which they show puppets...(*ibid*: 514d)

The resemblances to theatre seem all the more striking to a contemporary reader, resonating as they do with what theatre was to evolve into long after the classical era. The darkened auditorium and emphasis on technical presentation are surely more in keeping with contemporary notions of theatre and cinema than the open-air auditoria of the time of writing. However, the principles of theatricality that are relevant to Plato's argument remain the same. Spectators are literally captivated by what is being shown them to the extent that they are unaware of how these images have been generated, and indeed that they are images at all. For Plato these images dangerously confuse mimesis with reality and distract the spectator from anything else, including the truth that lies outside the cave. This, Plato argues, is how an unenlightened society functions. People are seduced by the familiar images and experiences with which they have been presented from birth into believing that there is nothing more - nothing outside the cave - whereas in fact their knowledge is only a pale imitation of the truth that lies beyond their current experience.

As well as employing an image of theatricality in this cautionary allegory, Plato raises concerns directly against theatre as an art form elsewhere in *The Republic* (Books III and X). These objections centre around theatre's reliance on mimesis. If the reality that we experience is already a pale imitation of the ideal ‘Forms’ that are the cornerstone of the Platonic philosophical system, then theatrical representations of that reality are yet a further step away from the truth that we should all be aspiring to understand. They can only ever be a copy of a copy or ‘a third remove from reality’ (X: 597).

Another problem for Plato is that the theatre, he argues, appeals to the emotions, which are a ‘lower’ part of the soul in the Platonic system. It is reason’s job to keep the emotions in check in order for it to function most effectively in the pursuit of truth. He writes of theatrical performance, ‘It has a terrible power to corrupt even the best characters, with very few exceptions’ (X: 605). In this way theatre is a powerful medium and a dangerous one for Plato. It has the ability to destabilise a coherent sense of self, both in the performer who becomes another character (often of questionable morals) for the sake of the performance, and also in the audience who are persuaded to emotionally identify with these fictions. Plato acknowledges that because of its power, the theatre is a medium that many enjoy. All of us, he says, ‘...delight in giving way to sympathy, and are in raptures at the excellence of the poet who stirs our feelings most’ (X: 605d). But it is precisely because of this power that the theatre needs careful censorship in the ideal state to which much of his writing is dedicated.

These are much the same concerns that we have seen in the thinking of Fried and Abramović. Fried’s idea of the ’endless duration’ of minimalist theatricality has a particular resonance with the life-long performance in the cave. Both rely on a continual presentation of enough ‘interest’ to hold the spectators attention throughout the theatrical experience, and both exclude the possibility of a higher, more convincing, truthful experience:

> Smith’s cube is always of further interest; one never feels that one has come to the end of it; it is inexhaustible. It is inexhaustible, however, not because of any fullness - that is the inexhaustibility of art - but because there is nothing there to exhaust. (Fried, 1967: p. 166)

The spectacle in the cave will also always, inexhaustibly, be of further interest to the spectators who will endlessly believe in the shadows with which they are presented. However, the cave will nevertheless remain empty and the figures and objects presented have no substance. The theatrical artwork, like the cave, can only offer us a hollowed out version of the truth with just enough interest to keep us in thrall to the spectacle of its presentation, but it is ultimately and necessarily unsatisfying. The modernist artwork, so the argument goes, offers us conviction, fullness and truth.

Abramović’s claim for the ‘true reality’ of performance described above might be an alternate translation of the ‘really real’ (V: 475) that Plato repeatedly uses to describe the ‘realm of the Forms’ he would rather the inhabitants of the cave seek outside. The knife, blood and emotions of the theatre are fake for Abramović in the same way that the reality of the cave is a shadow of the truth outside. We are deceived in the cave as we are in the conventional theatre, whereas the performance artwork can offer us truth as can the realm of the Forms. Plato is using the image of the cave to draw our attention to the fake reality with which we are daily seduced. The unenlightened world from which the philosopher must try to escape is like the theatre, in that it pretends to its spectator/inhabitant that it is the truth, whereas for Plato it can only ever be a poor imitation, the more credible it is, the more dangerous to its audience.

In voicing his concerns about theatrical representation and its role within society, as well as equating theatricality with societal deception and delusion in the analogy of the cave, Plato establishes the paradigm for anti-theatricality that persists to this day. We can read developments of the same arguments, and much of the same language, in the thinkers Barish cites such as Rousseau and Nietzsche, but also, as Samuel Weber has pointed out in his introduction to his book *Theatricality as Medium* (2004), in more contemporary thinkers such as J.L. Austin and Guy Debord in their theories of the 'performativity of language' and the 'society of the spectacle' respectively.[17]

In the context of the relationship between ideas of theatricality and the visual arts it is instructive to explore what Plato opposes to the image of the cave. In the allegory, the cave is the starting point of a journey that begins in darkness and dissimulation and travels towards light and knowledge, however difficult to contemplate. Eventually, as the traveller is '... forced into the presence of the sun' the brightness of which means he is ‘likely to be pained and irritated’ (VII: 515d). The sun stands for the ultimate truth or the ‘Form of Good’ that exists in Plato’s realm of the Forms. The contemplation of these Forms is the philosopher’s primary objective and motivation for turning away from the delusions of everyday knowledge towards a higher truth. Plato writes,

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[17] Interestingly, Debord's *Society of Spectacle* was published in the same year as Fried's seminal essay, 1967, only five years after Austin's *How to Do Things with Words,* and at the same time as Abramović was creating her first work in Belgrade.

> In the world of knowledge, the Form of Good is perceived last and with difficulty, but when it is seen it must be inferred that it is the cause of all that is right and beautiful in all things, producing in the visible world light and the lord of light and being itself lord in the intelligible world and the giver of truth and reason, and this Form of the Good must be seen by whosoever would act wisely in public or in private. (VII, 517)

The point of the journey out of the cave of delusion is to contemplate the Forms that are the cornerstone of the Platonic system of thought, and ultimately be able to gaze upon their highest ideal, the Form of the Good. Plato’s theory of Forms suggests a celestial realm of a-spatial, a-temporal, metaphysical beings that are the essence, or ‘true being’, that our everyday reality is merely a reflection of. As Plato describes in *Phaedrus*, it is a realm flooded with the light of wisdom where the ‘eye of the soul’ can ‘rejoice in seeing being’ (*Phaedrus*, 247d). To conduct ‘true philosophy’, Plato argues in the analogy of the cave, we must ‘draw the soul from becoming to being’ — from the darkness and mimetic illusion of the cave to the ‘really real’ in light of the sun (*Republic*, VII: 521c). ‘Becoming’ and ‘being’ are thus embedded in the opposition of the cave to the sun; of theatricality, illusion and confinement, opposed to truth, the ‘really real’ and freedom. For Plato the world of 'becoming' is the world of constant, unreliable change and movement that we see around us - the cave of the analogy. The world of 'being' is the transcendent, timeless world of ideas and true knowledge, represented by the light of the sun.[18]

As I suggested earlier, we can recognise most of the theatrical conditions and operations Plato describes in the cave in our understanding of a conventional contemporary theatre space. I now want to explore if it is also possible to see connections between what Plato describes as its opposite — the sun or realm of the Forms — and the presentational contexts for visual arts, specifically the modernist white cube gallery.

In his introduction to Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube* (1976), Thomas McEvilley identifies Plato's ideas as a key influence on the aspirations of the gallery space and modernism in general,

> It [the white cube gallery] is like Plato's vision of a higher metaphysical realm, shiningly attenuated and abstract like mathematics, is utterly disconnected from the life of human beings here below. (Pure form would exist, Plato felt, even if this world did not.) It is little recognised how much this aspect of Platonism has to do with modernist ways of thinking, and especially as a hidden controlling structure behind modernist aesthetics. (in O'Doherty, 1976: p. 11)

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[18] This will lead the research directly to Heidegger's analysis of Plato's Cave in *The Doctrine of Truth* (1962b) and his developments of the ideas of 'becoming' and 'being'.

The pristine white space of the gallery, removed from the everyday reality of the outside world, certainly seems to fit with Plato's attempts to describe the realm of the Forms. An environment sterilised against the contaminations of the outside world, where the white light enables a purity of contemplation, stands in marked contrast to the sticky seats of a darkened auditorium in which spectators sit captivated by the illusions with which they are presented, in much the same way as Plato contrasts the cave with the sun. The white cube displays these oppositions aesthetically in its use of light as opposed to darkness to create the impression of a kind of limitless, celestial non-space, as opposed to theatre's seemingly subterranean confinement. The modernist gallery provides the ideal environment for artists to attempt the transcendence of truth articulated by Fried, Abramović and others. In this way it aspires to be theatre's opposite, opposing theatre's reliance on conventional notions of time and place and its dependence on the corporeal presence of the audience. As McEvilley describes,

> Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial - the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics. Works of art are mounted, hung, scattered for study. Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes. Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of "period" (late modern), there is no time. Indeed the presence of that odd piece of furniture, your own body, seems superfluous, an intrusion. The space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space occupying bodies are not... (*ibid*: p. 15)

The white cube gallery therefore, provides the perfect conditions for the 'instantaneousness' of Fried's ideal encounter with the artwork in a 'perpetual present'. The modernist gallery transcends time in exactly the way Fried suggests is the key to defeating theatre. The privileging of sight over the body also resonates clearly with the Platonic emphasis on 'seeing' the Forms and 'seeing being'. The body disappears in the gallery in the same way as it transforms from the incarcerated corporeal presence in the cave into the 'eye of the soul' when contemplating the sun in the realm of Forms. And if the artworks of the modernist gallery are not in themselves an attempt to realise a materialisation of the Platonic Forms, they can at least be said to employ aesthetic strategies reminiscent of this classical system of thought. As McEvilley writes,

> The Pythagoreans of Plato's day, including Plato himself, held that the beginning was a blank where there inexplicably appeared a spot, which stretched into a line, which flowed into a plane, which folded into a solid, which cast a shadow, which is what we see. This set of elements...is the primary equipment of much modern art. The white cube represents the blank ultimate face of light from which, in the Platonic myth, these elements unspeakably evolve. (*ibid*: pp. 11-12)

There seem to be some strong connections therefore between both the context of much (late modern) visual art practice and Platonic philosophy. We can see them in the physical context of the white cube gallery as a kind of 'higher metaphysical realm', in the aspirations for the art form of critics and artists like Fried and

Abramović towards transcendence and a 'true reality', and even, as McEvilley suggests, in the mechanics or 'equipment' of the artwork itself. In this way the conventional theatre and white cube gallery can be seen to embody the two primary loci of Plato's allegory of the cave and the sun - the two opposing ends of the journey. The theatre relies on confined bodies, technical effects, mimesis and durational 'interest' from an audience, whereas the modernist gallery aspires to a negation of the body with the exception of the eye, ideas of purity and truth, and the transcendence of time and place. It is in this context that we can see anti-theatricality in the visual arts as having a very early progenitor in a Platonic philosophy that has directly influenced its aspirations, procedures and environments.

Theoria

There is another dimension that makes this a particularly interesting context in which to begin to frame my interdisciplinary research. The intellectual journey Plato describes out of the 'cave' of delusion towards the 'sun' of truth in this part of *The Republic* is based on a literal journey undertaken as part of a specific cultural practice of the day, that of *theoria*, or the *theoric* pilgrimage. As Andrea Nightingale describes in *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy* (2004), *theoria* in fourth century Greece involved individuals traveling abroad from their home city or state to attend festivals, usually of a religious nature, but all involving some form of spectacle that the attendee or *theoros* would spectate upon. Often the *theoros* would be sent as, or part of, an official delegation from one *polis* to another to witness the events of the festival, and have a specific remit to report back on this experience and what he had seen and learnt there. Sometimes the journey would have been of a religious nature to celebrate a particular deity or consult with an oracle on a specific matter, at others it seems to have had more to do with the political relations between one state and another. There are also examples of individuals carrying out these types of *theoric* journeys in a private capacity without any official civic function. What is common to all these different types of *theoria* is the journey away from the known and familiar of the home environment towards a foreign destination to spectate upon unfamiliar practices in order to gain new forms of knowledge, and the reporting back via official channels so that this new knowledge could be assimilated in some way into the life and attitudes of the home *polis*. As Nightingale argues, the cultural practice of *theoria in its entirety* provided Plato with an important model for his system of thought, 'In the effort to conceptualize and legitimize theoretical philosophy, the fourth century thinkers invoked a specific civic institution; that which the ancients called *'theoria'* (Nightingale, 2004: p. 3).

Plato consciously uses this *theoric* model as the basis for his proposals of what the ideal intellectual activity should be in *The Republic*. The journey the would-be 'guardian' makes out of the cave towards the sun in order to see the divine truth of the Forms in Book VII of *The Republic* is a *theoric* journey. The emphasis Plato places on the need for the guardian/philosopher to return to the cave to make use of his new found insight for the benefit of others, is in keeping with the idea of *theoria* as a returning journey and having a practical application. As Nightingale describes it, ‘whether civic or private, the practice of theoria encompassed the entire journey, including the detachment from home, the spectating, and final re-entry’ (*ibid*: p. 4).

Plato is staking a claim for the new discipline of philosophy (as opposed to the multi-disciplinary activities of the pre-Socratic sophists) and a central part of his strategy is to use a well established cultural practice as a model in order to demonstrate the value of this new discipline to society. If the philosopher is allowed to pursue knowledge in this way then the republic will grow and better itself as a result, with the philosopher himself at the centre of this process. In this way we can see the allegory of the journey from the cave to the sun and back again as Plato’s proposal for the new discipline of philosophy as a kind of intellectual *theoria*. The versions and uses of theatricality upon which the allegory relies are therefore embedded within the very foundations of what was to become the Western philosophical tradition. Philosophy, Plato argues, is an intellectual journey away from the delusions and intellectual darkness of everyday experience towards the contemplation of a purer form of knowledge, in order to then put this new knowledge into practice in society – a movement away from theatricality and its deceptions towards transcendence and truth. The resulting knowledge can then be used to help enlighten others still deluded by the theatrical illusions of everyday experience.

Plato repeatedly makes the connection between the spectatorship of the *theoros* at the religious festival to which he has travelled and philosophical contemplation of 'truth'. He often refers to this act of contemplation as 'seeing being', as opposed to the 'becoming' witnessed in the cave. This emphasis on 'seeing' and spectatorship is a key factor in Plato's use of the cultural practice of *theoria* as a model. Nightingale writes,

> But at its centre was the act of seeing, generally focused on the sacred object or spectacle. Indeed, the *theoros* at a religious festival or sanctuary witnessed objects or events that were sacralized by way of rituals: the viewer entered into a "ritualized visuality" and practices. This sacralized mode of spectating was a central element of traditional theoria, and offered a powerful model for the philosophic notion of "seeing" divine truths. (*ibid*: p. 4)

The 'sacralized spectating' that the *theoros* experiences as part of a ritualised spectacle, and that Nightingale suggests is an important model for Plato's conception of the contemplation of the Forms, is also useful in our correlation of the realm of the Forms with the modernist gallery. The gallery places the same emphasis on the visual as a means of gaining knowledge and creates its own sets of rituals and its own ways of looking. The objects being looked at are given a special status by their very presence in the gallery space, just as religious sculptures might have divine status in their presence at a shrine. We encounter the artworks physically according to a pre-existing presentational code, whether this is the sculpture's plinth or the video work's cube-monitor. Even in terms of atmosphere, there are clear comparisons between the hush of a gallery and reverential quiet of religious spaces. Is this because we recognise on some level that we are in a kind of ‘higher metaphysical realm’ as O’Doherty suggests, allowing for the quasi-religious experience of ourselves and others? Like the *theoric* journey of the ancient Greeks, the gallery provides us with an opportunity to distance ourselves and journey away from the realities of the everyday world, and creates a set of conditions and codes that allows us to participate in a contemporary version of ‘sacred spectating’. It is undoubtedly secular in its character but structured around the same principles of desiring the revelation of insight and new knowledge from an unfamiliar, ritualised set of artistic practices.

For O’Doherty, it is this ritualised spectatorship, as well as the sterile conditions of the gallery as previously mentioned, that render the body superfluous. He writes,

> For the Viewer - literally something you look through - and the Eye validate experience. They join us whenever we enter a gallery...To that exact degree we are absent. Presence before a work of art, then, means that we absent ourselves in favour of the Eye and the Spectator, who report to us what we might have seen had we been there...This complex anatomy of looking at art is our elsewhere trip; it is fundamental to our provisional modern identity, which is always being re-conditioned by our labile senses. (O’Doherty, 1976: p. 39)

This relationship between the eye and the body creates another level of *theoria*. The suggestion here is that there is a ‘reporting back’ from the act of spectatorship to our sense of self. In this version of the gallery experience there is a kind of personal *theoria* with the 'ritualised spectating' enabling a journey out of, and subsequent re-configuring of, an unstable sense of self. The eye, or spectatorial presence in the gallery, can be seen as the *theoric* emissary of the original cultural practice, sent by the *polis* of the self to gain new insight and seek reassurances as to the nature of its identity and its place within the world.

As we have seen, the practical application of insights gained from this sacred spectating and the reporting back on *theorising*, is at the heart of the claims Plato makes for the new discipline of philosophy, and indeed is central to the earliest definitions of the concept of *theory*[19]. A complex but intrinsic relationship between theory and practice, therefore, is embedded at the beginning of Western philosophy as we have come to describe it. Plato's first attempts to describe the nascent discipline of philosophy included and relied upon this applied, practical element. The separation of the two with which we are now familiar in the debates around theory and practice owes much to Aristotle's development of Plato's *theoric* model as Nightingale explains. Aristotle argues for the pursuit of philosophy as an end in itself without the need for practical application or a relationship between *theorising* and any form of 'reporting back'. The model is still very much based on a *theoric* spectating of truth found in the original cultural practice, the basis for Aristotle's conception of 'contemplation', but there is no need for the 'reporting back' of the 'useless knowledge' gained. She writes,

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[19] It is worth noting that the words theory and theatre derive from the same ancient Greek etymological root, *thea* meaning 'view' or 'look'.

> To these fourth-century theorists, Aristotle responds with a bold new claim: *theoria* does not lead to praxis. Narrowing the scope of theoretical philosophy, Aristotle identifies *theoria* as an exclusively contemplative activity. In fact he even separates the processes of learning and demonstration from the activity of *theoria*. To be sure the theorist will attempt to argue and account for his findings, but this is not considered part of the *theoria*. Rather, *theoria* is a distinct activity that is an end in itself, completely cut off from the social and political realm. (Nightingale, 2004: p. 5)

In Aristotle's refinement of the Platonic model of intellectual *theoria* we can see the decisive separation of theory as the *theoric* spectating of truth from the practice of a *theoric* journey from and back to worldly affairs and everyday experience. In separating out these two previously symbiotic elements of Platonic philosophy, Aristotle cements a rift, the effects of which are still obvious today in debates around the applications of philosophy and academic knowledge in general.

There is clear relevance here to the debates, often vexed, around practice as academic research in the arts and humanities within the academy, and the oppositional use of the terms 'theory' and 'practice'. The controversy around practice as research appears in a potentially different light in the context of Plato's original claims for theorising and the philosophical life. It becomes clear that from the first conceptions of the discipline of philosophy theory had, as a part of its very definition, an integral idea of practice; that one supported and informed the other,[20] even if this was subsequently modified by Aristotle who explicitly separated these concepts. In a different context it would be interesting to further explore the relationship between theoretical and practice based notions of *theoria* with a view to a possible reconsideration of the terms of the contemporary debates around theory and practice in the academy.

From a personal point of view, the model of the *theoric* journey provides a useful methodological template and way of analysing my own experiences in conducting this research. It has involved a repeated intellectual movement from the world of the practitioner into the academy and *theorising*, and back again to the world of practice. In keeping with the Platonic definition, I see this reporting back and the practical application of insights gained, as an essential aspect of the research.
Also, if we take the cave and the sun to be in some ways emblematic of theatre and the visual arts, the interdisciplinary nature of my practice as research can be seen as having a *theoric* structure in the Platonic sense. My interdisciplinary work has taken me away from the everyday of my own discipline, the theatre, and towards another, the visual arts, in which I am necessarily an outsider (and to some extent a spectator upon alien practices) where I am trying to glean new kinds of understanding. I want to apply these new forms of understanding to my own discipline of theatre. In that sense I want to effect a kind of reporting back to my own theatre practice on my experiences in this 'alien' context. Of course I would not ascribe the same value

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[20] In fact, in this analysis practice based *theoria* can be seen to precede and make possible philosophical *theoria*. This corresponds to the dramaturgy of the cave analogy itself in which a journey is made prior to, and makes possible, the contemplation of truth in the form of the sun.

judgements to the different points on Plato's journey form the cave to the sun and back again as he proposes. Indeed, the perceived reversal in attitudes within the visual arts that has inspired this research suggests that these values may have radically shifted. However, the structure of moving from a world of mimesis, pretending and becoming towards one that aspires to transcendence, truth and being provides an interesting key to my own interdisciplinary explorations and enables an elucidation of the founding paradigmatic conceptions of each art form.

Aletheia

Plato's cave analogy is a text of great importance to the philosopher Martin Heidegger and one that he returned to throughout his career.[21] He uses it as a way of developing a definition of the concept of truth as unhiddenness (elsewhere translated as unconcealment) from the Greek word used throughout Plato's allegory, *aletheia.* He explains in *Being and Time*,

> Unhidddenness in Greek is *aletheia*, which word is translated as "truth". And for a long time "truth" has meant for the Western mind, the agreement of the mental concept (or representation of) with the thing: *adaequatio intellectus et rei*….If we are to take the real meaning of *aletheia* seriously,

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[21] I deal here with his essay *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (1962b) but a fuller consideration of this passage from *The Republic* and its implications is offered in the lecture series collected in *The Essence of Truth* (1988). Heidegger revised his ideas about truth as *aletheia* towards the end of his career, most notably in in the essay *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, in *On Time and Being* (1972).

> then we must raise the question: where did Plato proceed from in order to define the essence of unhiddenness. The answer to this question is seen when we refer to the real content of the "allegory of the cave." This answer shows that the "allegory" tells a story about the essence of truth as well as how it deals with it. (Heidegger, 1962a: p. 257)

For Heidegger the allegory of the cave 'tells a story about the essence of truth' and its different interpretations. Above he refers to the ancient Greek sense of truth as *aletheia* or unhiddenness, but also a more standard philosophical definition (from Thomas Aquinas, 1256) of truth as *adaequaetio,* or the correspondence of an idea to a thing. Heidegger draws on Plato's use of *aletheia* in his description of the cave and the perceptions of its inhabitants in order to present a definition of truth as a process by which things are made intelligible to humans by being brought out of concealment. It is an idea of truth that contains as a necessary constituent, untruth, represented by the negative prefix 'a' in *a-letheia*, translated as 'un' in un-hidden or un-concealed. In the cave it is the shadows that are recognised as unhidden in the restricted view of the inhabitants (*Republic*, VII: 515c: 1-2). This is an idea of a relative, contingent truth but, for Heidegger, a truth nonetheless. It is relative both to the darkness out of which the shadows emerge but also the light that is 'more unhidden' beyond the cave. When they are unshackled and able to see the objects casting the shadows, after some initial disbelief, the freed inhabitants consider them 'more unhidden' than what they previously observed (515d). Eventually, it is the sun that is seen as 'the most unhidden of all' (516a, 3). However, it is at this point that Plato introduces a different term, and for Heidegger a completely different conception of truth, *idea*. The ultimate *idea* that the sun represents shines a light on, and gives meaning to, all other ideas. It is the ultimate 'Form of the Good' in Plato's conceptual system, providing an epistemological transcendent to which everything else must correspond in order to be true. Here, Heidegger identifies the decisive shift from one conception of truth as a process of unconcealment, bound up in the very experience of humanity's being in the world, to another that posits an external truth that transcends being and time, and in correspondence with which truth must be verified. As Heidegger points out later in the same essay, Plato's 'Form of the Good' as an ultimate truth can be seen to have been replaced by God and then scientific reason later in history, but still, he argues, as part of the same epistemological system.

The 'change in the doctrine of truth' that Heidegger identifies in Plato's cave allegory therefore, is the transition from truth as *aletheia* to truth as *idea*. The journey out of the cave into the light of the sun represents the transition from one form of understanding to the other. It also, Heidegger points out, describes the precedence that the definition of truth as *idea* then takes,

> It [the allegory] is based on the unstated occurrence whereby *idea* became the master of *aletheia*….When Plato says that the *idea* is the master permitting unhiddenness, he banishes to something left unsaid the fact that henceforth the essence of truth does not unfold out of its own essential fullness as the essence of unhiddenness, but shifts its abode to the essence of the *idea*. The essence of truth relinquishes the basic feature of unhiddenness. (Heidegger, 1962b: p. 265)

This is so significant for Heidegger because he sees it as a foundational moment in Western philosophy and its system of metaphysics. If Plato's *Republic* is in part a claim for the nascent discipline of philosophy as I have discussed, then the cave allegory presents a re-definition of the concept of truth upon which this philosophy is then based. The allegory not only describes *idea* becoming the master of *aletheia*, but itself institutes this change in its role as a founding philosophical text.

In terms of my research, this provides another important aspect of my understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. There is a direct connection between a pre-Socratic conception of truth as *aletheia* as an experiential process of unconcealment, and the *theoric* cultural practice on which Plato based the allegory. Although Heidegger never refers to, and was presumably unaware of, this more recent piece of scholarship, it seems wholly relevant to his arguments. If Plato's cave marks the 'change in the doctrine of truth' from an experiential unconcealing of truth through being in the world, it also marks the shift from a practice based accumulation of knowledge to a contemplative theorising in the form of the discipline of philosophy already discussed. This points to the possibility of 'remembering' (in the Heideggerian sense)[22] this pre-Socratic form of truth, as Heidegger urges at the end of his essay. The implication for my research is that this might be attempted through a re-instigation of a practice based approach to knowledge acquisition and the re-instatement of the festival (and the festive mode) as a *theoric* destination. Heidegger himself explores these strategies both in his looking towards art as the possible context for a coming to presence of a different kind of truth, and in his reference to Greek culture and its festive mode as a paradigm from which we might draw inspiration (Heidegger, 2002). These ideas of art as the ‘happening of truth’ and the festival are the subject of my next chapter.

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[22] See my explanation of Heidegger's concept of remembering and *andenken* (thinking of) in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The theatrical turn: staging truth at the festival

Performa '11 New York

In November 2011 I spent a week at the Performa festival in New York, 'the fourth edition of the internationally acclaimed biennial of new visual art performance' (Performa, 2011). The biennial has come to occupy a dominant role in visual arts presentation over the past twenty years (Bonami and Esche, 2005) and Performa has positioned itself as the most important festival for visual art work that concerns itself with performance and theatricality. The festival's director is Rose Lee Goldberg who is a key figure in the historiography of performance. Her 1979 book *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* was one of the first attempts to write the history of twentieth century performance and has recently gone into its ninth edition. Goldberg occupies an interesting position from the point of view of my research in that she is strongly associated with the work of performance artists such as Marina Abramović whose work is self-avowedly anti-theatrical as discussed.[23] However, Performa has become one of the key contexts for work within the visual arts that explicitly draw on theatrical techniques. Indeed, it might be argued that the festival owes much of its success and prominence within art criticism to this turn towards the theatrical in the art world more generally. Performa today presents work that clearly has its antecedents in the anti-theatrical performance art practice brought to prominence by Abramović and others in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as work that can be seen as part of the more contemporary theatrical turn I describe, allowing them to sit alongside each other. Moreover, it is possible to analyse some of the work within the festival as an attempt to resolve these seemingly opposed sets of ideas around theatricality and anti-theatricality by allowing them to co-exist within the same individual artworks. This dialectic between theatricality and ideas of truth and the real is, in my opinion, a necessary and central dynamic of contemporary visual artwork that draws on theatrical techniques. So prevalent have been the ideas of anti-theatricality in visual art, and so influential the anti-theatricality associated with modernism, that a contemporary 'theatrical' visual artwork is inevitably, often explicitly, in dialogue with it[24]. I will explore how much of this contemporary work can be seen as a response to or reaction against modernism more generally and the anti-theatricality associated with it, and as a re-contextualising or 'staging' of its ideas.

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[23] Goldberg worked with Abramović as a curator and wrote with and about her – *The house with the ocean view artbook* (2003).

In this chapter I will analyse work presented at the Performa '11 festival as a means of exploring some of the most prominent aspects of the theatrical turn in visual art, and the relationship between theatricality and anti-theatricality on which it so often draws. Through this analysis I hope to address how theatrical techniques are being employed in this work, and what these techniques and references might offer the contemporary artist. I will also attempt to understand how these approaches stand in relation to the anti-theatricality of modernist practice and the rhetoric of live art examined in the previous chapter. Rather than a broad ranging survey of the proliferation of work that draws on ideas of theatricality within the art world and a necessarily incomplete assessment of the many artists involved, I will use Performa '11 as a snapshot of these developments and trends, examining specific artworks and my reaction to them within a festival context.

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[24] For the purposes of this argument I am using a fairly narrow but widely acknowledged definition of modernism as applied to visual art (in particular painting, but also sculpture) by writers such as Michael Fried but particularly Clement Greenberg. Greenberg's 1960 essay *Modernist Painting* argued for an increasing focus on the two-dimensional 'reality' of the painting surface in rejection of three-dimensional representational illusionism of painting from the renaissance onwards. There are clearly elements of Plato's antipathy towards mimesis in Greenberg's thought, which provided a major influence for Fried's later anti-theatricalism.

This approach is in keeping with the *theoric* aspect of this research identified and developed in Chapter One. As discussed previously, practice as research in itself can be seen in Platonic terms as a kind of *theoric* movement from the *polis*/cave of everyday artistic practice towards theoretical contemplation within the academy, and then a 'reporting back' and assimilation of knowledge gained into that practice. Also, in the terms set in the previous chapter, there is a *theoric* aspect to the attempts of a theatre practitioner to move towards an understanding of the legacy of modernist visual arts values of transcendence and 'the real' through practical and theoretical insight, in order to then assimilate these experiences back into a theatre practice. But of most relevance here is the role that festivals and their performances, rituals and social functions, played in the ancient Greek cultural practice of *theoria*, and therefore in Plato's appropriation of this practice as a strategy for advocating the new discipline of philosophy. It is with an awareness of these festive contexts that I want to frame my trip to the Performa '11 festival, and in particular the first show I encountered there. I will then employ Heidegger’s ideas of the ‘festival’ and the ‘festive mode’, which draw heavily on this Greek context, as a frame for analysis of another work at Performa ’11, and to further explore the relationship he outlines between art and ideas of truth. I will conclude the chapter by proposing that the examples of work I have discussed, and the theatrical turn in the visual arts more generally, can be illuminated by, and seen as a ‘re-instigation’ of, Heidegger’s idea of the ‘festival’ and the ‘festive mode’.

The Eyes of Ayn Rand

Like many of the Performa events, Dennis McNulty’s *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* was presented in an unconventional space, in this instance St Patrick’s Youth Club in Little Italy. This site, and its associations with the Catholic Church and a New York from a past era, provided an appropriate context for the piece’s exploration of belief systems and different twentieth century artistic manifestos, many of which were directly associated with that city. It also placed the work in what essentially is a theatre space, with an auditorium/gym hall and stage area. The unconventional location of the venue, like many I visited during Performa, was a significant part of the experience prior to the actual performance in that, for me, it was extremely difficult to find, especially in the context of the disorientation of having recently arrived in an unfamiliar city.

Atopia, the feeling of being 'out of the way, the strangeness of the unfamiliar' (Webster's, 2014), is a key concept in Plato's formulation of philosophical *theoria*. Just as the *theoric* emissary travels to a foreign land to experience different cultural practices and is transformed by this otherness, so too Plato's intellectual *theoros* needs to, 'depart from his present point of view (and, in some sense, from the familiar world in which he lives) and enter into the aporia and atopia that characterize the activity of philosophic theorizing' (Nightingale, 2004: p. 24).

Approaching McNulty's piece on my first night in New York combined the geographical *atopia* akin to a *theoric* emissary at a festival in a foreign land with the intellectual *atopia* involved in negotiating different artistic conventions and the questions they raise. Should a visual artwork employing actors and script be assessed under the same criteria as more conventional theatre? Or does its designation as an artwork assert a different relationship with its audience? Entering into these types of negotiations with the viewer/audience through the use of performance in settings not normally associated with visual art presentation has been a key strategy for work considered part of the theatrical turn in the visual arts. Performa '11 was strongly characterised by artists siting work in unconventional venues (strip clubs, libraries, as well as opera houses and theatres) creating different rules of engagement with the work as they explored different conventions of spectatorship these spaces imply.[25]

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[25] These 'unconventional' relationships with the audience – indeed the fact an audience could be referred to at all – were key signifiers of theatricality for Michael Fried as we saw in the previous chapter.

In the analogy of the cave, the philosopher enters into the states of *atopia* and *aporia*[26] by leaving the darkness of the cave and emerging, blinking into the blinding light of the sun (of the land of the Forms). This interplay between dark and light, seeing and blindness are important signifiers of *atopia* and *aporia* in classical philosophy and central dynamics in Plato’s analogy and his description of a journey towards truth (Nightingale, 2004: p. 96). They are, of course, fundamental dynamics in our (at least contemporary) experience of performance, and were used to significant effect in McNulty’s piece.

Before the show began the audience was asked to wait in the small hallway between the street and the doors to the youth club’s main hall. The nature of the enclosed space, the lack of artificial lighting and the fact that it was night-time, meant that we waited in absolute darkness. We were given a paper booklet containing a set of ‘instructions’ but were unable to read it. These references to darkness and light, seeing and not seeing, ignorance and knowledge, were to develop as central themes in the piece.

Nightingale tells us that in *The Symposium* Plato makes reference to a specific Greek festival in his use of traditional *theoria* as an analogy for philosophy (*ibid*: p. 83). The character Diotima describes the contemplation of the Forms to Socrates and makes an explicit comparison with the initiation ceremony carried out at the festival of the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis, one of the most important festivals of the classical era.

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[26] ‘Aporia - the expression of doubt, puzzlement, an impasse’ (Shorter Oxford, 1993).

After participating in various rituals and rites of purification, the *theoros* was eventually admitted to an initiation ceremony involving dramatic re-enactments of mythological stories and the revelation of sacred objects, the highest mysteries, which were thought to impart great insight and guarantee a favourable fate in the afterlife. It is these revelations that Diotima compares with the philosopher's 'vision' of the truth in intellectual *theoria*. As Nightingale describes it, the ceremony was staged in a particularly dramatic way,

> Interestingly, the mystic ceremony featured the movement from darkness to light. At the beginning of the ritual, the initiates stood in darkness in a building called the *Telesterion*; when the hierophant opened the door of the *Anaktoron* – a stone chamber at the centre of the *Telesterion* – a stream of light blazed forth from the interior. To receive the revelation, the *mustai* enter the *Anaktoron*, where the *epoptai* are gathered with thousands of torches. (*ibid*: p 84)

The Eyes of Ayn Rand followed a similar sequence at the start of the show by inviting us to leave the darkness of the lobby and admitting us to the main hall of the venue. A circle of candles arranged on the floor and containing the glow of a spotlight illuminated the initial space we encountered. A performer entered the spotlight and introduced the show. There was a strong atmosphere of ceremony created by the lighting effects and the performer acting as a kind of guide (or *hierophant*) to what lay ahead. These similarities to contexts and procedures of initiation were apt for a show that dealt with different forms of knowledge, and that culminated in a final revelation. They also directly drew attention to the audience as a 'chosen few', fortunate enough to be initiated into this experience. Less explicit was the implication that it was our economic and intellectual background, as well as just being in this place at this time, that entitled us to take part in this initiation.

In theatrical terms the show was presented in a promenade style with the audience being led from one part of the hall to another, including onto the stage area, to watch a series of performed scenes with one or two actors and minimal set. Five of the six scenes were at least partly concerned with an artistic and/or philosophical manifesto ranging through constructivism, deconstructivism and finally, in the shape of Ayn Rand, objectivism. These brief performances or scenes were presentations and re-enactments of documentary texts relating to, and in some cases explaining, these movements. For example, one of the scenes involved the audience being given a booklet of photographs to look through depicting the building of the house of the Russian constructivist architect Constantin Melnikov, whilst an actor narrated the story of this construction project. Another scene involved an actor seated at a desk reading from a 1988 Museum of Modern Art (New York) exhibition catalogue for a show that surveyed the work of deconstuctivist architects such as Daniel Libeskind and Zaha Hadid. Another saw an actor on the stage area performing a series of choreographed gestures to a voiceover of an interview with Frank Ghery.

It is possible to identify a number of key aspects within McNulty's piece that characterise much of the contemporary visual artwork that makes use of theatrical techniques. The first device is the use of a performer as a guide through a space, employing professional actors to carry out a role that lies somewhere between a gallery guide and a fictional character. We have seen this role explored by artists such as Tino Sehgal in his 2007 Institute for Contemporary Art, London piece, *This Success or This Failure*, which employed a child to guide the visitor through the gallery, and his 2003 *Le Plein* which involved gallery guides unexpectedly jumping up and down and shouting when visitors entered, as well as the multimedia work of Andrea Fraser, amongst many others.[27]

The gallery guide might seem an obvious resource for visual artists attempting to work with performance, as a pre-existing physical presence and function within the gallery space. But the use of this figure also points to a concern with ways of understanding artworks, and the function of contemporary art more generally, that characterises much of visual art's turn towards the theatrical. The guide is there to explain and help us understand what is happening in the contemporary gallery space, a space in which understanding and explanations can be difficult to come by if we are to believe the criticisms of the popular press. We might look to the guide as a surrogate artist figure, with the authority to justify and contextualize the work (Sehgal's jumping attendants gave the title and date of the work, as well as the names of the artist and gallerist), and giving us clues as to how we should negotiate the piece. The gallery guide is also a security figure, regulating our movements and physical relationship with the work, governing who has access and who does not. There are interesting parallels to be made between the gallery guide as a kind of intermediary and the *hierophant* in the Greek ceremonial context, both bringing us into the presence of the 'sacred objects'. In the case of McNulty's piece, this figure functioned as a kind of theatrical prologue character, incorporating all these roles, raising the themes to be explored later in the piece, but also giving us information as to how we were to relate to the work.

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[27] *Hello, and welcome to Tate Modern* as part of World as Stage, Tate Modern 2007.

Another aspect of *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* that reflects a trend in visual art practice of recent times is that of re-enactment. This has ranged from the re-enactment of historical events such as Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2004) that staged the 1984 clash between striking miners and the police, through to the re-staging of past artworks, often from the sphere of performance. One of the most prominent and perhaps surprising exponents of the latter has been Marina Abramović. Her *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum in New York (2005) re-staged some of the most famously transgressive performances of the late 1960s and early 1970s conceptual movement including Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), Valie Export's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969), and Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974)[28]. This trend has been well documented and commented upon by writers such as Mellanie Gilligan in her *Artforum* piece *The Beggars Pantomime – performance and its appropriations* (2007), and the *Art Papers* piece *RETRO/NECRO: From Beyond the Grave of the Politics of Re-Enactment* by Pil and Galia Kollectiv (2005). The central questions raised by these commentators have been around the shift in political impact these works manifest from their original enactments to their later re-staging. Of Abramović's re-staging of *Seedbed* work Gilligan writes,

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[28] See also Abramović's Manchester International Festival show in 2009, *Marina Abramović Presents* that took over the entire Whitworth Art Gallery as a site for the presentation and re-presentation of performance work.

> The radical content of the work was kept intact, but to reassuring rather than transformative effect–creating a pronounced difference from Acconci's original, and so forcing us to ask what creative and critical potential there might be in such "conjuring of the spirits." (Gilligan, 2007: p. 1)

Here, we can identify a Platonic opposition of the ‘conjuring’ of the repetition, and the reality and truth of the original. The original is truly alive, the re-enactment merely a ghost or spirit. In order to contextualize her analysis of the political impact, or lack of it, of these re-enactments, Gilligan refers to the frequently quoted passage from Marx’s Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce” (*ibid*). For Marx, repetitions, at least of the world-historic kind, can be farcical in comparison to the seriousness and impact of what they repeat. Gilligan attempts to view the re-enactments of people like Abramović through this lens,

> For Marx, some historical repetitions succeed in "glorifying ... new struggles," others merely in "parodying ... the old." Is there an analogous distinction to be made here? Which practices involving re-enactments might be retrograde withdrawals from new aesthetic and political struggles, and which others are catalysts for them? (*ibid*)

The suggestion here is that re-enactment runs the risk of parody when it fails to generate the same political or transformative impact as the original. This criticism is surely an inevitable consequence of Ambrovic's privileging of the 'real' in her previous accounts of performance work[29]. The (original/'authentic') performance is not theatrical (indeed is *anti*-theatrical) because its effects and impact are not contrived or simulated and therefore repeatable. It must follow her rules, "no rehearsal, no repetition, no predicted end" (Abramović, 2002). Why then, did she so radically change her position on this as evidenced by *Seven Easy Pieces*? What is it that the theatricality of re-enactment offers as compensation for a loss of 'transformative effect'? Abramović has stated her desire to allow performance work to exist within the economies, both financial and critical, of a changing contemporary art world (in Cypriano, 2009). As performance becomes increasingly recognised as a legitimate practice within the art world, (and as the art world offers increasing financial rewards for such legitimacy), she has spoken of the need for a clearly identified process whereby performance artists are acknowledged for their work beyond the vagaries of memory and necessarily incomplete documentation. Events like *Seven Easy Pieces* are an explicit attempt to identify and institute such a process through generating further visibility and recognition for key works (*ibid*). This recognition by means of repetition and acceptance into the mainstream of the art market is a potentially ironic fate for work that was by definition originally transgressive and outside the mainstream. Rather than parody though, this type of re-enactment is an attempt to re-affirm the power and significance of the original work, and therefore make a claim in the present for work of that kind more generally. Paradoxically, this re-affirmation is made through admitting the very absence of that power and significance in the re-staging as Gilligan suggests. In fact,

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[29] See Chapter One, p.6.

I would argue, the re-enactments stage this absence. Theatricality here is the means by which a claim is made for the unrepeatable, transcendent moment of first performance through its very repetition. Part manifesto, part nostalgia, events like these attempt to stage ‘the real’, to put us in touch with a kind of truth by inevitably admitting its absence. In the terms of Abramović’s original arguments, this is a ‘real’ necessarily absent from the re-enacted work, but also from the present moment more generally, as it fails to offer the same transformative potential as the original performance context, or at least a memory of it. (This is an implicit admission of Gilligan’s assessment of the trend for re-enactments representing ‘retrograde withdrawals from new aesthetic and political struggles’.) However, I think there is something more profound going on in works like *Seven Easy Pieces* that ties it to works such as *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* and the trend for re-enactment more generally in the theatrical turn. These re-enactments can be seen to serve the same function as those employed in the festivals that were the *theoric* destinations of the Ancient Greek emissaries.

In the Eleusian mysteries re-enactment played a crucial role in initiating the *theoroi* into the higher mysteries or truths revealed in the *anaktoron*. There they spectated upon (and possibly participated in) dramatised scenes from the Demeter and Persephone stories – origin myths that were thought to explain the cycle of life and death. Along with the other rites, these re-enactments served to admit the initiates into the presence of divine truth. As Plato writes in *Phaedo*, "our mysteries had a very real meaning: he that has been purified and initiated shall dwell with the gods"

(69d).[30] Although these re-enactments may be theatrical, their meaning, at least for Plato here, is 'very real'. In a reversal of Gilligan's description of the 'profound difference' between Acconci's original performance and Abramović's re-staging, theatricality in the Eleusian context is the catalyst for transformation rather than a barrier to it. It is not how true (as opposed to mimetic) these re-enactments are that matters, but their revelatory function as a means of purification and initiation of the viewer into a different order of truth. As we will see, it is possible to consider this alternative view of theatricality, as a transformative means of coming into contact with truth rather than a deadening imitation, as a key distinction between approaches of certain artists working within the theatrical turn and those of their more modernist anti-theatrical predecessors.

Just as with the Demeter myth in the Eleusian Mysteries, Abramović and McNulty's work re-enacts the key stories of most relevance to a particular community, stories that need to be re-told in order for the community to understand itself and progress. These re-enactments stage the truths these communities are based upon. Of course, this is a paradox in light of the Platonic definition of truth as being necessarily anti-theatrical. How can truth be staged if the act of staging or repeating renders what is staged an illusion? A different definition of truth is therefore required to interpret the 'very real' that lies at the heart of these re-enactments, and it is to Heidegger's re-deployment of *aletheia* in his attempts to overturn a Platonic anti-theatrical conception of truth that we will look for this different definition.

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[30] As we will see later in this chapter this idea of 'dwelling with gods' is crucial to Heidegger's conception of *the festival* and its role in 'reminding' a society of its 'essential self'.

In *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* McNulty is staging and animating conversations and documents from art history rather than particular previous performances, as in the case of Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*. This is indicative of another related development in contemporary art practice of the last twenty years, that of the 'archival trend' (Foster, 2006). We can see this in a whole range of work from Jeremy Deller's attempts to create and exhibit an archive of historical and contemporary British 'folk' culture, Luke Fowler's use of documentary footage of figures like R.D.Laing and E.P. Thompson in his film work, to galleries and museums inviting artists to draw on institutional archives as the basis for exhibition. Performance can play a crucial role in much of this work's attempt to animate or stage this archival material, as in Gerard Byrne's filmed dramatisations of seminal art criticism and interviews with artists (Byrne, 2010), or performed live as in McNulty's piece. This type of preoccupation with art history is a key characteristic of the archival trend in contemporary art practice and can be seen as part of a broader move to use theatrical techniques to re-encounter and sometimes re-negotiate the archive of art history as a way of trying to understand and make a claim for the function of contemporary visual art in the present. *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* is a typical example of this in its focus on twentieth century artistic movements and some of the different 'isms' that made up modernism. It is instructive that modernism in its many different artistic guises is such a frequent point of reference for so many visual artists.[31] Recent Turner Prize winning artist Martin Boyce's work, which directly references designers like Charles Eames, has been described as "a sort of elegy to modernist purity" (Adrian Searle, 2011). This sense of nostalgia is present to a lesser and greater degree in much of the work that references modernism, as if that moment in art history represented a purity of purpose and clarity of insight that has somehow been lost today. McNulty's focus on architectural movements is also typical of much contemporary art practice (notably that of another Turner nominee, Toby Patterson and his use of architectural models of modernist buildings). Perhaps, architecture is an attractive subject matter because it is usually involved in translating theoretical ideas, and in this instance modernist ideals, into practice with a very real social impact. This connection (or sometimes disconnection) between utopian theory and practical application seems of great relevance for artists such as Boyce, Patterson and McNulty.

McNulty's show culminates with the audience gathering around a T.V. monitor placed in front of the stage. On it is played looped footage of a close-up of a pair of eyes, the eyes of Ayn Rand of the title, taken from a television interview for the CBS *Mike Wallace Show* in 1959. Her restless, piercing gaze is exaggerated by the looped nature of the footage and given an atmosphere of abstracted mystery by the flickering veils of colour that the artist has used to partly mask the black and white film.

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[31] Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is the Glasgow gallery The Modern Institute that represents many of Glasgow's Turner prize nominated and winning artists. The work of Martin Boyce, Jim Lambie, Simon Starling, Toby Webster and Michael Wilkinson all make explicit references to modernist architecture, design and thought.

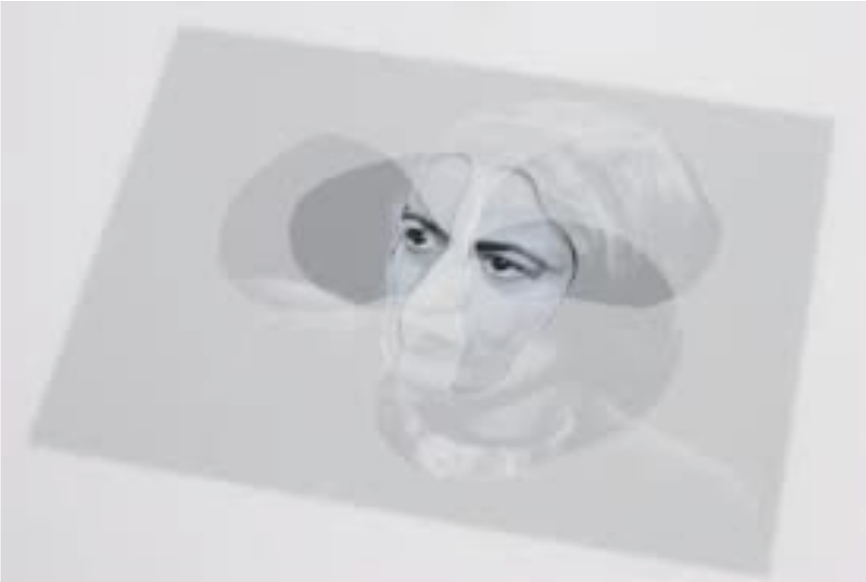

Fig. 7. *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* (2011)

Having watched re-enactments, listened to manifestos and disembodied interviews with artists, the audience now comes face to face, eye to eye, with the show’s central protagonist. In the 1950s Rand attracted a circle of followers (sometimes described as a cult (Walker, 1998)) dedicated to her ideas of objectivism - the belief that reality exists independent of consciousness and that the proper moral purpose of life is the pursuit of one’s own happiness within a laissez-faire socio-economic context. Philosophically an extension of Platonic and Aristotelian realism, objectivism has often been cited as a contemporary influence on the ideas of right wing conservative and libertarian politicians and economists[32]. One of her inner circle in the 1950s was future Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan who describes himself as an ‘acolyte’ and ‘convert’ to her philosophy and its practical applications, including the idea that taxation was immoral (Greenspan, 2007).

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[32] Adam Curtis’ documentary *Love and Power*, part of his BBC series *All watched over by machines of loving grace* (2011) explores this connection in detail.

At the end of McNulty's show we are invited to look into the eyes of Ayn Rand presented for us on a T.V. monitor. Her eyes restlessly look out from the screen and from the past of the moment they were caught on film, at us now in the present of the performance. Rand's eyes are looking into a future when her ideas have become an everyday feature of mainstream political thought. She is a kind of oracle who, in this very interview from 1959, prophesied a future reality where society will be orientated around the wealth creation of an elite few without interference from the state. It is interesting to compare Rand's role and influence to that of the oracle at Delphi for the Ancient Greeks. Also an elderly woman like Rand, the Pythia, pronounced in a trance-like state, on everything from matters of the heart to affairs of state when approached by the *theoros* in the inner sanctuary of her temple. But in McNulty's piece Rand is silent, looking out at our looking back. What trance there is, is induced in we who look at her, through the hypnotic image of her eyes and the droning soundtrack. This is an ocularcentric climax to a spectacle by means of which our own spectatorship has been brought into the 'sacred visuality' of Rand's seer-ing vision. This relationship between seeing and the sacred is a key concept in traditional *theoria*, as Nightingale articulates,

> …theoria implies and incorporates all possible vantage points: viewing the worshipers from the point of view of the divinity, viewing the divinity among the worshipers, viewing the worshiping community as divine or 'other' and recognizing the power of the divine…Thus, at religious festivals and oracular centres, the theoroi viewed the rituals, spectacles and sacred

> images even as their own religious activities were “viewed” by the presiding god or goddess. (Nightingale, 2004: p. 45)

Plato translated this sacred visuality into his idea of “seeing being” when contemplating the Forms as the object of philosophic *theoria*. Divine truth in the Form of the Good, the sun of the analogy, takes the place of the oracle or sacred objects within the festival setting. The sun emits a light that shines on all ‘real beings’ making them possible, "bestowing truth upon the objects of knowledge and giving the power of knowledge to those who know” (*Republic*: 508e). Similarly, Rand’s eyes shine out from McNulty’s monitor into the darkened hall where we have been brought into her presence. Through coming into contact with her and the other ‘isms’ referred to during the show, the enlightened audience, conscious of this art historical and philosophical/political background, has a fundamental knowledge re-affirmed, the knowledge that art can aspire to and communicate truth.

The Eyes of Ayn Rand utilises some of the festive theatrical procedures at the heart of Plato’s inspiration for the intellectual *theoria* that he proposes in *The Republic* and throughout his philosophical writings. By making use of the same dramatic techniques that we understand were used in Greek religious festivals, particularly those elements that pertained to the ‘presencing’ of divine truth, McNulty is able to stage the ‘sacred truths’ of art history in the form of its modernist manifestos, as well as presenting us with an oracular figure of divine wisdom in the form of Ayn

Rand.[33] McNulty is not necessarily proposing agreement with Rand's perspective, but nor is he offering critique. What seems to attract the artist here is the mystique around her vision, her ability to express truth, whatever that truth might be, and what might be termed her powers of prophecy.

This staging of art history seems to be part of a broader tendency within contemporary visual art to use theatricality as a means of assessing its own role and values by taking art and art history, particularly modernism, as the subject matter for its theatrical representations. In this sense it is part of a larger 'conversation' that is happening within the discipline of visual art in which theatrical techniques can play an important part[34]. These representations allow the art world to reflect and reflect upon those parts of its history, like modernism, when it seemed possible to make statements about art more confidently, subscribe to manifestos and be part of a movement with a political as well as artistic dimension, in ways that are perhaps less evident today. This re-staging and re-enacting of old truths therefore, functions within a complex matrix of nostalgia, self-analysis, critique and call-to-arms. All of these elements were on show in work at Performa '11.[35] We might see the irony of a turn towards theatricality in the visual arts being employed as the means by which the traditionally anti-theatrical aspirations and concerns of modernism are re-stated and explored. This is the same irony we find in Abamovic's *Seven Easy Pieces* in its re-staging of an anti-theatrical moment of transcendent 'realness', and is an irony at least as old as Plato's use of theatrical devices such as dialogue, as well as those drawn from the spectacles of traditional *theoria,* in his proposals for an avowedly anti-theatrical philosophy.[36] However ironic, much of the work in the Performa '11 festival seemed to draw on this process of staging truth in its enacted relationships with previous artworks and political contexts. Perhaps like the re-enactments of the festival of the Eleusian Mysteries, it is an attempt to transform the present moment by re-staging old stories and myths.

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[33] McNulty's piece was one of two separate shows at Performer '11 that dealt in a central way with Ayn Rand. *Gonda* by Ursula Mayer used as a voiceover extracts from Rand's philosophical play *Ideal (*1934*),* and exhibited a similar fascination with Rand as a cultural figure, rather than exploring the political implications of her thought.

[34] This might be evidenced by the large number of symposia at many biennials given over to the function of the biennial itself and the role of visual art practice in society more generally. This is a particularly relevant debate within the field of 'social' or 'collaborative' practice as described by Claire Bishop in her book *Artificial Hells* (2012).

[35] One of the festival's high profile commissions was *Happy Days in the Artworld* by Scandanavian artists Elmgreen and Dragset and scripted by British theatre maker Tim Etchells, in which Joe Feinnes and Charles Edwards play versions of the artists (Id and Me) in

The Festival

Ideas of 'the festival' and 'the festive', and their manifestations in ancient Greek culture, play a decisive role in Heidegger's thought as expressed in his lectures on the poet Friedrich Hölderlin (Heidegger, 2000). In Hölderlin, Heidegger identifies an artist and thinker who shares a similar analysis of the paradigmatic nature of Greek culture, and how it might inform contemporary insights. As Jonathan Young describes in *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (2001: p. 85), the current age is, for both

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a satirical take on artworld personalities and gossip making free use of Beckett and many artworld in-jokes. Another of many examples from Performa '11 is Nathaniel Mellors series of seven films, *Ourhouse* that depicts a family of artworld figures in an "absurdist sitcom".

[36] For Plato's theatrical devices see Martin Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas* (2010).

thinkers, one of spiritual poverty, ‘distress’ and ‘destitution’, an age, according to Hölderlin, of ‘the flight of the gods’ (*ibid*). This stands in marked contrast to Greek culture which, through ‘festive’ activities such as the performance of tragedies, ‘brought the presence of the gods, i.e. brought the dialogue of divine and human destinings to radiance’ (*ibid*: p. 73). As Young points out, this reference to ‘the gods’ and ‘divine destinings’ can be seen as equivalent to Heidegger’s use of the term ‘ethos’ elsewhere in his writing. Heidegger uses these terms to point towards the fundamental structure of beings, or ontology of a people, as brought to presence through its culture,

> *Ethos* means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which man dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to man’s essence, and what is thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear. (Heidegger, 1949: p. 233)

Ethos, in Heidegger’s figurative topology, is the place in which man can best know himself, or more accurately, be himself. It is the space in which ‘what pertains to man’s essence’ is allowed to appear – in order for a ‘dwelling with the gods’ to occur. What the modern age lacks, in contrast to the Greeks, is the opportunity for this abode or dwelling place. This, according to Heidegger, is what Hölderlin identifies as ‘the festival’.

In his lectures on Hölderlin, Heidegger elaborates this idea of the festival as a potential salvation from contemporary spiritual decline. For Heidegger, the festival allows people the opportunity to step out of the ‘everydayness’ of their selves and their familiar situation (in Young, 2001: p. 64). In this sense, it bears resemblance to our contemporary idea of a holiday as a break from the everyday. For Heidegger, however, the festival represents more than a break from the normal routine. Again referring to Hölderlin’s poetry he states,

> A celebration which is confined to a mere cessation of work would have nothing which it could celebrate, and hence essentially would not be a celebration. The latter is defined only through what it celebrates. That is the festival. Where does the festival come from? From this poet *who thinks of the holidays*, what is the festival? The festival, in the poetic sense of this poet, is *the wedding festival of men and gods*. The thirteenth stanza of “The Rhine” hymn says (IV, 178):
>
> Then men and gods celebrate the wedding festival
> (Heidegger, 2000: p. 126)

Hölderlin’s importance for Heidegger is that he ‘thinks’ the festival through poems like *The Rhine* cited here, or *Remembrance*, the poem Heidegger is analysing in the above extract. Indeed it is the festival that is the subject of Hölderlin’s *remembering* in this poem according to Heidegger, remembrance being a profound act, as I will discuss later.

Through his conception of ‘the festival’ via Hölderlin’s poetry, Heidegger re-instates the ‘holy’ aspect of holi-day, allowing for a sense of wonder at the essence of things beyond the everyday. He writes,

> …we step into the intimation of the wonder that around us a world worlds at all, that there is something rather than nothing, that there are things and we ourselves are in the midst, that we ourselves are. (in Young, 2001: p. 64)

In Heideggerian terms, the ‘festive’ is a mode of being through which we recover a sense of wonder at the essence of things by stepping out of our ‘everydayness’ and into our ‘true selves’. The festival provides an opportunity for ‘coming to ourselves’ or ‘putting things in their proper perspective’ (*ibid*:p. 87), both as individuals and as a community, through an experience of the ‘inhabitiual’. The idea of ‘everydayness’ here prefigures Heidegger’s later writing on *Gestell* (enframing) and *Bestand* (standing reserve or resource) as the epoch defining mode that characterises beings in modernity. We will look at these concepts in detail in the next chapter. However, Young provides a brief description,

> As resource things are simply used and – usually the same thing – abused. In everydayness one experiences the other not, as he is, a man with a character, temperament, feelings, aspiration and life situation that is uniquely his own but as, simply, ‘consumer’, ‘customer’ or ‘worker’ as human resource. (*ibid*: p. 87)

The festival offers an alternative, or means of escape, from this all-enframing experience of the everyday. Rather than 'man-as-resource', we experience our essential selves, 'man as he is'.

Heidegger ascribes a particularly *theoric* aspect to the role of the festival in Hölderlin's poetry. The poems *Remembrance*, *The Ister*, *As When On Holiday*, and *The Rhine* (Heidegger, 2000) all deal with journeys of one kind or another, be they the journey of a river, a memory, or a holiday maker. Often these journeys take the poet and the reader from north to south, either to the south of France or the Mediterranean Sea. Towards the beginning of Heidegger's 1942 essay on *Remembrance*, he makes the connection between the poet's use of the Dordogne as a location in the poem, and ancient Greece. He draws attention to a letter in which Hölderlin describes a holiday in France writing that, as Heidegger puts it,

> …the humanity of southern France had made him more familiar with the essence of the Greeks. His stay in the foreign land with its southern sky gave him, first of all and forever, a higher truth: the poet's "thinking of" [denken…an]" the land of the Greeks. (*ibid*: p. 107)

Heidegger points towards a deeper act of remembering within the 'remembrance' of southern France that the poem takes as its subject matter, a memory within a memory. It is a memory of the ancient Greek people, culture and 'land', that has a profound significance for both writers, and plays an instrumental role in Heidegger's elaboration of 'the festival' in Hölderlin's poetry. Heidegger makes the distinction in this passage between the journey in *Remembrance* to the south of France as the textual “content” of the poem, and to ancient Greece in “what has been composed into the poem” sub-textually, in order to explore “the higher truth” that the *theoric* destination, “his stay in the foreign land…gave him, first of all and forever…” (*ibid*: p. 107).

As with traditional *theoria* and Plato’s intellectual appropriation of it, so too Heidegger draws attention to the importance of the return home for the poet/*theoros* in order for the knowledge or “higher truth” attained at the *theoric* destination to be assimilated into the ongoing life of the community or *polis*, here described as the poet’s own “law”,

> This kind of reflection [Andenken] did not have its essential origin in the stay in France that he describes, for it is a fundamental trait of the poesis of this poet; for him the journey abroad to the foreign land remained essential for the return home into the law of his own particular poetic song. The poetic journey abroad did not come to an end with his trip to the southern land. (*ibid*: p. 108)

In an echo (remembrance) of the ancient Greek *theoric* emissary described in Chapter One, the poet’s actual journey south is made in order to ‘return home’ and make use of his knowledge through his poetic act of remembrance. His ‘higher truth’ is inscribed into ‘the law of his…poetic song’ just as the emissary’s new knowledge might be assimilated into the life (and potentially laws) of the Greek *polis*.

The festive mode or elsewhere ‘mood’, therefore, is broader in its conceptualisation than a specific reference to the ancient Greek festivals that were the destinations of traditional *theoric* journeys. Rather, these festivals and particularly the performance of tragedy that they sometimes involved, were for Heidegger the fullest expressions of this mode of being that Greek culture enjoyed and that contemporary culture lacks.[37]

For Heidegger, at least in this period, the poetry of Hölderlin manifests many of the qualities of this festive mode and, although it cannot fulfil the same significance as an artwork of the Greek paradigm in the contemporary context of the ‘default of the gods’, it does ‘remind’ us of this ‘heritage’ and the possibility of our ‘authentic’ selves. Hölderlin’s *Remembrance*, Heidegger states, is an act of profound consequence as an artwork, the significance of which is as much a looking forward as a looking back,

> If the poem were merely a thinking backward, a lyrical recollection, what then would be the meaning of its culminating verse:
>
> *But what remains is founded by the poets.*
>
> Is the poet “thinking” here of [denken…an] something past, which remains simply because it is left over? Then why would

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[37] A large part of Heidegger’s lecture on Hölderlin’s *Ister* poem is devoted to the influence he sees on the poet Sophocles and in particular the Ode to Man from the Antigone. We will explore this in detail in Chapter 4.

> there still need to be a founding? Does not the founding "think" rather "of" what is yet to come? Then remembrance [andenken] would indeed be a thinking-of, but in such a way as it thinks of what is yet to come. Supposing that this remembrance thinks ahead, then even a thinking-back cannot think of a "past", of which there is nothing more to be said except that it is irrevocable. This "thinking of" [denken an] what is yet to come can only be "thinking of" what has been, which, in distinction to what is simply past, we understand as what is still coming into presence from afar. What then is this ambiguous remembrance? The poet answers our question by composing into a poem the very essence of this kind of "thinking of". The poetic truth of this essence is what has been forged into this poem *Remembrance*. Its title says that here the essence of the poetic thinking of future poets is put into the poem. (*ibid*: p. 109)

By remembering the festive mode of the Greeks, the poet 'founds' what is yet to come and 'preserves' the possibility of the authentic artwork in our own age. This may be provisionally preparing the ground for the 'arrival of the gods' in the festival, rather than creating the authentic artwork itself in the ethos-defining sense of the Greek paradigm, but nonetheless contains "the essence of poetic thinking" that will be needed by future poets/artists to achieve this.

This idea of remembering as a way of looking forward is a useful context in which to further analyse the re-enactments of the theatrical turn. Might these performance strategies also constitute a "thinking backward" in order to "think of what is yet to come", and "what is still coming into presence from afar"? This is the function of remembrance in the re-enactments of the Demeter myth during the Eleusian Mysteries, a festival that, in Heideggerian terms, embodies ethos and ‘founds’ the Greek people. Might the re-enactments of McNulty and Abramović also be an attempt to look forwards, to “think of” (*denken…an*) the possibility of an authentic artwork for which these re-enactments prepare the ground? Re-enactment in this context would not be a paradoxical negation of authenticity but contain its possibility.

The possibility of an ‘authentic’ artwork is the subject matter of much of Heidegger’s 1935-6 essay, *The Origin of the Work of Art*. In it he outlines the significance of art in his conception of truth. ‘Great art’, for Heidegger, is ‘the happening of truth’ (Heidegger, 1950: p. 40). Referring to the Greek paradigm discussed above, he uses a broad definition of art that expands far beyond what we may refer to as ‘fine art’, to include different expressions of the ‘festive mode’ such as drama, sculpture, architecture and festive events such as the Olympics. Heidegger uses the Greek term *techne* to describe the way in which art is the ‘bringing forth of truth’ through craft, building and ceremonies as well as poetry and drama. It does this through the ‘opening up’ or ‘revealing of world’ (*ibid*: p. 44). The famous example he uses in this essay is that of a Greek temple,

> It is the temple-work that first fits together and gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline, acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open

> relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from this expanse does a people first return to itself for the fulfilment of its vocation. (*ibid*: p. 20)

The 'world' that is 'opened up' by the artwork is the 'all-governing…open relational context…of an historical people'. The artwork 'fits together' and 'gathers around itself' the relations through which human destiny is acted out. The great artwork then, is an expression of the 'truth of beings' or 'being of beings' (*ibid*: p. 52) in that it reveals the essential ethos of a culture. The artwork embodies this ethos in its expression of the fundamental ontology or structure of being within that culture. A true understanding of world expressed through the artwork is also an understanding of our place within it. The artwork of the temple both expresses and embodies the mythic, societal and ethical structures that are essential to the ancient Greeks. It is no mere representation of these ideas, it is the transparent means of their revelation and their coming into being. The same is true for Heidegger of Greek tragedy, 'a betrothal of men to gods' (in Young, 2001: p. 74), and in this sense the performance of tragedy forms part of his broader idea of a 'festive mode' rather than the more conventional understanding of a genre of drama. We will explore Heidegger's views on tragedy in detail in Chapter Four.

Unlike the anti-theatricality expressed by Plato, and those within the visual arts concerned with a Platonic idea of truth and 'the real', Heidegger sees in art, at least 'great' art, the 'happening' of a different kind of truth. Through art there is the possibility of *aletheia*, 'unhiddeness' or 'unconcealing' discussed in the previous chapter. How might this idea of art and the festival be manifested in contemporary artworks? What kind of truth might they reveal? If there are contemporary artworks that re-state Platonic ideas of truth, might there be uses of theatricality at play today that reveal this alternative idea of truth and the festive?

Bliss

A work from the Performa ‘11 programme that I think can be analysed in this way is Ragnar Kjartansson’s *Bliss*. *Bliss* was performed over a twelve-hour period on 19th November in the traditional Italianate theatre of Abrons Arts Centre, New York. Kjartansson’s idea was to take the resolution scene towards the end of Mozart’s opera *The Marriage of Figaro* and perform it repeatedly, without pause, between midday and midnight. He employed a professional opera cast, full orchestra and staged this two-minute scene on traditional sets and in full costume. What seemed to me from its description in the programme to be a somewhat flippant artistic gesture, and perhaps indicative of a sometimes dismissive or satirical attitude on the part of the art world to traditional theatrical forms, proved to be one of the most engaging and profound experiences I had during the festival. *Bliss* achieved wide critical acclaim and won the festival’s prestigious Malcom McLaren Award for the ‘most innovative and thought-provoking performance during the festival’ (Performa, 2011). The reasons the piece resonated so profoundly with me were because of the fresh set of relationships the work established with the content of the original opera, with the mechanics of its performance, with ideas of performance more generally, and finally with an idea of truth revealed through art that I think it is possible to view as distinctly Heideggerian.

I want to examine two connected aspects of *Bliss* through Heidegger's ideas of the 'happening of truth' and the 'opening up', or 'worlding of world'. The first relates to the fictional content of the original opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, its characters and the narrative in which they exist, and the way in which *Bliss* managed to 'remember' and reveal something essential about this. The second relates to the form of this performance specifically, and by extension, performance and theatricality as a medium more generally. I then want to look at how these two spheres combined in this performance to create an effect that I will argue corresponds to Heidegger's idea of successful art and the festival.

The resolution scene at the end of *The Marriage of Figaro* involves Count Almaviva asking his wife the Countess for forgiveness for the various infidelities and misdemeanors he has committed during the course of the day that the opera takes as its timeframe. This immediately follows the Count refusing to grant forgiveness to his wife and Figaro who he mistakenly thinks are having an affair. However, the Countess adopts a different frame of mind from her husband (*Piu docile io sono* – I am more mild), offers her forgiveness and allows the story to seemingly resolve with confusions dispelled and all parties satisfied (*Tutti contenti saremo cosi* – Thus everyone will be happy). By repeating this scene continuously Kjartansson draws our attention to aspects of the opera that might not be so prominent in a conventional staging. The repetition of the Countess's act of forgiveness echoes the Count's own repeated infidelities and gives a sense of the inevitability of their roles of betrayer and forgiver within their relationship and perhaps within the relationships of men and women more generally – *saremo cosi*, we will be like this – repeatedly, inescapably. The re-imposition of conventional gendered roles within the social order that this scene represents is emphasised by the presence on stage at this point of all the key characters from all strata of the opera's social world. In Kjartansson's staging the Countess's repeated act of forgiveness is the prompt for a repeated statement from all representatives of this society that they 'will be happy like this'. The repetition (and indeed the formal, presentational staging) lends this the feel of an oath or promise, drawing attention to the need to state it repeatedly in public to avoid the transgressions that have taken up the rest of the opera, as if saying it enough times will make it true. Arguably, the fact that the resolution within the story happens so quickly and is arrived at so easily is an important part of the original opera's questioning of this social order and individual roles within it. Kjartansson's gesture of isolating and repeating this one scene over a long timeframe, rather than re-interpreting the original work, serves to reveal the ways in which the scene is essential to the original. It makes a whole opera of this one scene. (In fact, there could have been four full-length operas within the twelve hours of *Bliss*). But this is an opera that seems unable to end, that needs to constantly, somewhat pathologically, repeat itself and re-affirm its values and aspirations. In its repetition the characters and the audience are denied any final resolution. They are trapped in the unending call and response of the need to ask and grant forgiveness. Musically too, this work is never able to fully resolve itself melodically and always moves from the suspended chord at the end of the scene back to its start again. The music is trapped in a continual cycle of aria and chorus that encapsulates the opera's (and this form of music's) relationship between individual desire and social order.

Unlike a mere excerpt or quotation from *The Marriage of Figaro* - a scene fragmented from a larger whole – *Bliss* managed to become a whole work in its own right whilst maintaining a relationship with the essence of the original opera. In fact it can be argued that it is only through the artist's intervention in making a new work of isolating and repeating this scene that this essence of the original was revealed. In Heideggerian terms the opera might be said to have 'disclosed' itself through its 'self-concealment'. The fact that the rest of the original opera remains hidden in this staging allows the opera to be somehow more its essential self for this contemporary audience.[38] In isolating and repeating this key fragment in this context, the meaning of the opera is 'torn from the everydayness' of its full conventional staging and reception, its world opened up, and truth (in the Heideggerian/*aletheic* sense) revealed to a contemporary audience looking at it afresh.

This process of unconcealment can also be identified on the level of the specific circumstances of the performance of *Bliss*. The durational aspect of *Bliss* drew attention to the demands that the art from of opera places on its performers and the ways in which they cope with these demands. Because here, these demands and the responses they elicited were made extreme by the very nature of this performance, they became a visible part of the work. The sight of the musicians and singers having to take on food and drink during the performance (justified as part of the scene with less and less artifice as the twelve hours progressed), visibly registering the mental and physical exhaustion of repeated performance, devising ways of maintaining interest and stopping themselves becoming bored (including the consumption of more and more alcohol), of trying to support each other through the performance by swapping difficult singing roles so as not to strain the voice more than necessary, all became revelatory of the usually hidden world of the performer and emblematic of the essential nature of performance. It was as if the off-stage experiences of touring and performing the same show night after night had been rendered part of the on-stage drama to the extent that the audience became familiar with the different personalities of the performers and their different attitudes and levels of enthusiasm for the work. An added dimension in this regard was the fact that the renowned Icelandic baritone playing the count, Kristján Jóhannsson, had decided to make this his final performance before retirement. As the kind of continuous use of the voice needed to perform *Bliss* is considered potentially very harmful for a singer, a fact of which the other performers seemed very aware, Johannsson's refusal to share his part with any of the others took on an almost sacrificial aspect. As the strain on his voice became increasingly audible as the twelve hours progressed, it was as if the exertions of a whole career were being summed up in this exhausting performance that was both final and yet drawn out in the extreme. It was a 'swansong' made all the more poignant by its reluctance to end and the commitment it demonstrated both to the work in process, and to the artist whose friendship had persuaded him to perform it the first place.

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[38] It could be argued that the rest of the story of the original opera is anyway implicit (albeit hidden) within this scene. The machinations of the plot thus far are implicit in the need to ask and grant forgiveness, and the final resolution to come is pointed towards but never reached.

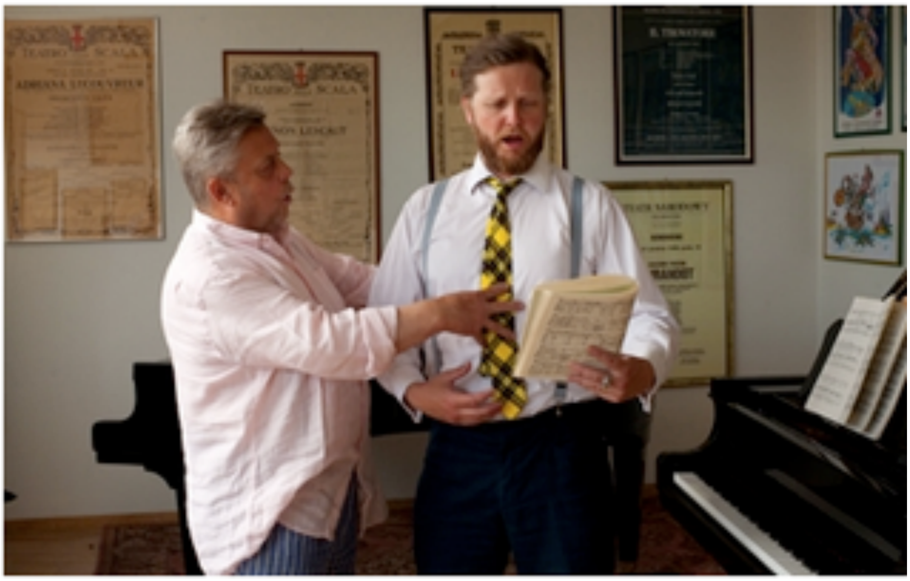

Fig. 8. *Bliss* (2011) - Johannsson (left) with Kjartansson in rehearsals.

The presence of the artist Ragnar Kjartansson as one of the performers in *Bliss* underlined this friendship and the tone of the artist's engagement with the art form of opera. As Kjartansson's other work testifies[39], this relationship is that of an enthusiast and the audience could sense his initial delight at being on stage with a professional opera company. Instead of maintaining the distance of the conceptual author of the work who has brought in others to execute it (a very common trend in contemporary art of a theatrical nature[40]), Kjartansson was complicit in the unfolding of the work itself, sharing in its exertions and tensions. There were times at which he seemed euphoric at his power to make all this happen, times when he seemed guilty and apologetic to his cast for what he was putting them through, and later too exhausted and drunk to care. This was another way that the usually hidden experiences of artistic creation were made visible and performed through the piece.

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[39] Kjartansson has engaged with classical music, and song particularly, in several works including *Du Holde Kunst* for North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012 in which he sings Schubert songs to a piano accompaniment.

[40] See 'Outsourcing authenticity:Delegated Performanc' by Claire Bishop in *Artificial Hells* 2011.

Through its use of duration and repetition *Bliss* rendered the text it staged (the final scene of *The Marriage of Figaro*) and the act of performance itself transparent to its essential meanings as well as its mode of production. Rather than a deconstruction of the original text into its constituent areas of production and meaning, this work functioned through a movement between citation and omission, disclosure and self-concealment, the hidden and unhidden that seems very resonant with Heidegger's ideas of art as the 'happening of (an *aletheic*) truth'. I would also argue that the performance was festive in the Heideggerian sense. Of course it was part of a visual art festival and therefore subject to the rituals and modes of engagement particular to such festivals. In fact, it is difficult to see how this performance would be possible outside of a festival context, with its invitation to experiment with form and requisite financial backing. The festival also provides a context in which audiences can come and go more easily from event to event.[41] But *Bliss* was a festive performance in a Heideggerian sense in that it revealed the truth of itself in ways that it could not as a conventional opera production. Kjartansson's creative gesture of isolating and repeating the resolution scene took the original *The Marriage of Figaro* out of its 'everydayness' and in so doing revealed its 'world' both in terms of fictional story and world of performance, and crucially a combination of the two, that speaks beyond its own specificity. *Bliss* re-contextualised *The Marriage of Figaro* as an art project within an ‘inhabitual’ festival context allowing for ‘putting things into proper perspective’, and in so doing disrupted the opera and its associated meanings as the ‘everyday’ ‘resource’ that its conventional production (and the personnel involved) would represent. Rather, *Bliss* disrupted this everyday enframing (*Gestell*) of the artwork as resource by presenting a resolution scene that failed to resolve, a performance that would not end, and that placed unreasonable demands on its performers and audience. But in so doing *Bliss* revealed itself as truthful (*aletheic*) in the Heideggerian sense of unhiding and unconcealing its essential meanings.

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[41] The atmosphere in the auditorium by the end of the twelve hours of *Bliss* was as euphoric amongst the audience as it was on stage. There was a sense of shared experience, effort and achievement that felt like it was in part due to this festival context.

Can this staging or ‘happening’ of a Heideggerian kind of truth inspire awe at the ‘worlding of the world’ and remind us of the ‘sacred’ in the way that Heidegger proposes for his authentic artwork? (in Young, 2001: p. 44) It can be argued that through a disruption of everydayness and resource the festive performance of *Bliss* allowed the audience to ‘put things in their proper perspective’ in terms of an essential relationship between performer and character, production and text that was ‘inhabitual’. Heidegger writes,

> The inhabitual is the permanently essential, simple and ownness of beings in virtue of which they stand within the measure of their essence and so demand of men that they observe this measure. (*ibid*: p. 87)

In the case of *Bliss* ‘measure’ here could be taken as the world of the performers and the way it becomes included and therefore ‘demanded to be observed’ within the performance text of the show. But the real achievement of *Bliss* for me was that these two levels of fictional narrative and specific circumstances of production did not remain separate but became intertwined with each other to create a coherent and enriched whole that might potentially gesture towards the ‘sacred’ in the way that Heidegger suggests. The attitudes of the performers and circumstances of performance were not a critique or undermining of the fictional characters and their story, but part of a new revelation of meaning that involved both. Both spheres of characters and performers combined to express something about the world to which they both, and we, belong. This is a world of social hierarchy, division of labour, gendered role-playing, loyalties and betrayals, efforts and exhaustions, and the overriding sense that we are part of an unending, inescapable repetition of the performance of all of this. This is the ‘measure’ in which we, all of us, essentially stand: the characters from an eighteenth century opera, the performers of a contemporary opera company, the members of the orchestra, and the audience. The euphoria at the end of this marathon performance experienced by all involved, and manifested in the ten minute standing ovation and the party that then took place on the same stage that lasted well into the next day, perhaps expressed something of the ‘awe’ Heidegger looks for in his ideal festive artwork, “the intimation of the wonder that around us a world worlds at all”(*ibid*: p. 86). We glimpsed something essential of ourselves, our world and our ethos in *Bliss*, “that there is something rather than nothing, that there are things and we ourselves are in the midst, that we ourselves are” (*ibid*), not through a linear narrative and conventional staging that aimed at any unified meaning or traditional idea of aesthetic beauty, but through a tearing out from everydayness, a disruption of resource, through the revelation or the unconcealing of a very Heideggerian kind of truth.

Festive truth and the artwork

Plato appropriated the Greek cultural practice of *theoria* – an emissary travelling away from a city-state to spectate upon and participate in a festival, and then returning home to communicate his experience for the advancement of the state – into his arguments for the usefulness of philosophy in the ideal republic. With this appropriation he replaced the festival that was the destination of the traditional *theoric* journey and provided the particular nature of the spectacle the *theoros* encountered, with the realm of the Forms, and in particular the Form of the Good represented in the cave analogy by the sun. This substitution of the festival with the Forms and the sun is a radical re-valuing of the significance and ontological structure of the original cultural practice. As far as we can tell, this practice would have taken the *theoros* to festivals involving theatrical performances, religious rituals including re-enactments of key myths, spectacles such as processions and games, and the exhibition of artworks such as sculptures. Above all, it seems these experiences were spectacular in a particularly theatrical sense, social and to a large degree, participatory. This contrasts significantly with Plato’s described encounter with transcendent truth as the contemplative goal of intellectual *theoria*. This is a necessarily solitary and cerebral encounter with a purity of meaning as represented by blinding white sunlight in the analogy. It is a truth that sheds light and significance on everything else rather than being revealed, performed or remembered as in the festival. This transcendent truth is famously opposed in the analogy with the illusions of the theatrical ‘performance’ in the cave. Indeed, Plato describes his form of intellectual *theoria* as a journey from ‘becoming’ to ‘being’. So, although there are key similarities between traditional *theoria* and Plato’s intellectual *theoria*, such as the *aporia* that motivates both, and the *atopia* experienced as a result of both the physical and intellectual journeys, there is a fundamental and ontological difference that centres around the exclusion in Plato’s formulation of the festival as the destination and goal of *theoric* practice.

Of course the festival of cultural *theoria* was also about coming into contact with divine truth. These were religious festivals dedicated to certain gods and often involving the initiation of the chosen few into the truths of that particular belief system. However, crucially these are truths accessed through the festive mode, often involving participatory performance through re-enactments as in the Eleusian Mysteries, and always it seems with a very developed sense of man-made spectacle. It is this theatricality and contrived spectacle as a means of accessing or revealing truth that is such a radical omission from Plato’s appropriation. Without the festival, we have truth as an external transcendent being (the sun) from which all other truths must take their meaning and agree, rather than truth as a process of revealing or ‘unhiding’ as an essential part of humanity’s being in the world, as in the original meaning of the Greek *aletheia*.

It is this ‘change in the doctrine of truth’ from *aletheia* to *idea*, from the process of ‘unconcealing’ and ‘unhiding’ described in the journey of the Guardian out of the cave, to the meaning-enabling light of the sun, that Heidegger identifies in his 1930 analysis of the cave analogy, *Plato’s Doctrine of Truth* discussed in the previous chapter. Heidegger’s idea of the festival and the festive as elaborated in his discussions of Hölderlin’s poetry come later in his writings (1939 onwards), and there is no specific reference made back to this earlier work. Indeed, Heidegger does not make the connection between his idea of the festive, and the festival as *theoric* destination in the cultural practice on which Plato draws for the cave analogy. However, I want to suggest that *Plato’s Doctrine of Truth* is an important context in which to understand Heidegger’s later claims for the lack of the festival in the modern era and helps us to understand what kind of truth Heidegger thinks the festival might reveal. As Young points out,

> …’the festival’ is nothing other than a more developed description of what ‘The Origin’ calls ‘the artwork’. For that which constitutes the festival is: first, the coming into salience of ‘world’, its coming out of obscurity, out of the ‘dissembling’ (PLT p 54) that belongs to everydayness and into its true ‘essence’ and ‘measure’ (the ‘world’ condition of the Greek paradigm); second, that world’s standing forth as a holy and hence authoritative order of things – its fundamental ethical structure, our ‘gods’, or ‘divine destinings’, is ‘greeted’ by the holy (the ‘earth’ condition); and third – the essential character of any festival – the gathering together of community within

> that ‘wonder’ that happens in the work (the ‘communal’ condition).
>
> Thus the description of our age as the age that has forgotten the festival - the age that retains only its ‘withered’ husk, the ‘break from the work’ – is a richer description of one and the same ‘lack’ or ‘destitution’ that ‘ The Origin’ describes by presenting modernity as the age without an ‘artwork’. (Julian Young, 2001: p. 88)

If the festival is a developed description of the artwork, and we know from *The Origin of the Work of Art* that Heidegger sees the authentic artwork as the ‘happening of truth’, then we can trace a direct line back to Heidegger’s analysis of truth in Plato’s Cave. Heidegger’s defining characteristic for such an artwork and his description of the festive mode are the same, Young argues. I want to suggest that these characteristics, the ‘worlding of world’ out of ‘everydayness’, the transparency of that world to ‘earth’, and its defining impact on community or a people, are precisely the qualities that have been omitted from Plato’s formulation of intellectual *theoria* in his exclusion of the festival as the *theoric* destination. An idea of truth in the Greek festival is revealed or brought to presence in the context of the *atopia* and inhabitual experienced as a result of the *theoric* journey, the spectating upon and participation in performance that seeks to transmit essential meaning (e.g. theological or originary) of fundamental, defining relevance to a community (ethos), and that community’s commitment to the significance of these experiences and their absorption into their self-identity. Might this function as a definition of truth as *aletheia* – a process of unhiding or unconcealing truth through performance and spectacle in an inhabitual context? It is a truth that seems to me, in this festive context, to have a particularly theatrical quality.

In Heideggerian terms the modern age lacks the festival in the same way that it lacks an understanding of truth as *aletheia*. It could be argued that both *aletheia* and the festival were lost at the same moment: the moment Plato instituted philosophical contemplation of epistemological, transcendent truth to the exclusion of a festive unconcealing truth. For Heidegger, Plato's analogy of the cave marks the beginning of Western metaphysics and its subordination of *aletheia* to *idea*. But it also marks a shift away from an understanding of the significance of the festival in gaining and processing knowledge, and a move towards individual philosophical contemplation.

In the previous chapter I made a connection between the inherent anti-theatricality of some of Plato's thought as evidenced in the cave analogy with the aspirations and rhetoric surrounding certain aspects of modernist art practice. This ranged from the idea of the white cube gallery as a space aspiring towards the Platonic realm of the forms, to the underlying anti-theatricality and insistence on a Platonic idea of 'the real' and transcendent truth in the writing and practice of critics such as Michael Fried and the performance artist Marina Abramović. The visual artwork that is seen to form part of the theatrical turn complicates and sometimes seeks to contradict these modernist Platonic ideals. Its use of actors, theatrical performance, sets, and free use of mimetic devices seems to fly in the face of the modernist tenets laid down by critics like Clement Greenberg and Fried. I want to suggest that these developments can be seen as a tentative re-instigation of Heidegger's idea of the festive and an attempt to address ideas of truth outside of the Platonic/modernist paradigm.

It is significant to this argument that the theatrical turn has coincided with the rise of the visual art festival and the international biennial over the past two decades. These events now form a central role in the operations of the art world in terms of the profile of the artists exhibited, the value of their work on the art market, and the opportunity for artists and curators to reach a relatively broad audience. I would argue that it is as a direct result of the proliferation of these festival contexts and their increasing significance in the art world that we have seen a parallel rise in work that can be described as theatrical in nature. I believe the festival context creates a demand for 'event-based' artwork. A leading international biennial can exhibit hundreds of artists and there is a potential pressure to stand out from the conventionally exhibited work with something that draws attention. Added to this is the fact that the majority of the art world's attention on a biennial will be focused over the opening week, sometimes only the first weekend. This creates an increased need to demand the attention of curators and critics and to be the work that is being most discussed. This is a context in which work that can be seen (or talked about) in terms of event can have an advantage. A very common way of creating work that feels like an event is through the use of theatrical concepts and devices. The very word 'event' denotes a work of a fixed, implicitly short, temporal duration in the manner of a performance rather than the more drawn out timeframe of a conventional exhibition.[42]

But perhaps there are more profound relationships between these art world festivals and the festivals of the classical era that Heidegger was referencing. They certainly ascribe to the conditions of *atopia* that characterize the festival going of Greek *theoria* and the conditions of the festive mode Heidegger describes. The biennial serves the function of taking artists, curators and visitors out of their everyday circumstances and into an inhabitual setting where they might discover something new about themselves and their 'world'. There is also an important community function to these events. They provide a space for the art world to meet and exchange ideas and practices in much the same way as the ambassadorial elites would come together at a pan-Hellenic festival to exchange and form opinion then to be communicated back to their home states. As well as the obvious setting of trends, this may be another reason an already self-referential art world seems to take the biennial as an opportunity to present and debate work that relates to the role of art itself. There are also prizes for the artists in a very similar fashion to the Greek dramatic and sporting festivals.

Heidegger sees the festival as an escape from the enframing 'everydayness' of beings that defines our modern age he later describes as *Gestell*. There is a comparison to be made here with the way in which the contemporary art market 'enframes' as resource and commodifies the artwork in its all-encompassing system of value and exchange. It is therefore interesting to note that the artwork of the theatrical turn has often been motivated by, and is said to represent a resistance to, this system of value (Tino Sehgal being a leading example). It is an interesting contradiction that bears testament to the all ‘enframing’ power of the art market that the art festival is both a frequent site for this resistance and one of the main engines of the market’s activity. Although this elite group of art professionals could hardly be said to constitute ‘a people’, or even the representatives of ‘a people’, in the Heideggerian sense of the participants of the authentic festival, it is informative to examine the theatrical turn in the visual arts in this context.

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[42] It is interesting that the term 'event' (trans. *Ereignis*) is crucial to Heidegger's ideas of the happening of art in his 1936-8 *Contributions to Philosophy* and his formulation of 'ereignis thinking'.

Heidegger’s idea of the festive, and a knowledge of the *theoric* function of the festival, allow us to examine the ways in which these works deal with truth in a manner that challenges some of the anti-theatrical assumptions of modernism. In this way we can view the work discussed in this chapter as a limited re-instigation of the Heideggerian festive mode, if such a limitation does not automatically disqualify it as properly ‘authentic’ in his terms. Works such as *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* draw on the processes and functions of the classical festival with its atopic approach to space and its use of performance. This piece seeks to initiate the audience into rarefied spheres of knowledge in order to address its ideas of truth. It offered the audience re-enactments of some of the founding myths of modernism and ultimately presented a modernist oracle whose prophecies can be seen acted out today. The creative gesture of repetition in *Bliss* allowed the world of the performers and the characters they portrayed to be ‘unhidden’ from the everyday resource of the opera in a ritual that, I would argue, spoke of the ethical, ontological essence, not just of those performers and characters, but of a contemporary people, as Heidegger suggests his festival should. Even the work of Abramović in her *Seven Easy Pieces* can be seen to offer a festive context to the modernist truths she attempts to re-affirm. The repetition of ‘unrepeatable’ works allows their truths to be ‘unconcealed’ as they are wrested from the rhetoric of their one-off, transcendent initial presentation, and re-contextualised in the festive re-enactment of the Guggenheim show. Rather than negating the meaning of these works, the theatricality Abramović employs in their repetition allows a different kind of truth to emerge. It is a truth that does not rely on a Platonic insistence of an anti-theatrical real – that this is *not* a performance – but that bears more resemblance to Heidegger’s understanding of *aletheia*. A truth that is an unconcealing of meaning that might speak beyond the specific circumstances of original production to a community and a people across an age.

We have seen how the introduction of ideas of theatricality into a festive context for visual art presentation allows for a re-negotiation and re-framing of ideas of truth in the artwork. Focusing on theatricality as a frame within which these different ideas can be staged seems a useful analysis in the light of the debates around art history and the re-definition of the possibilities of the artwork we have explored in this chapter. *The Eyes of Ayn Rand* employs a theatrical frame to stage the ideas of different artistic and cultural movements and their attempts to express their own truths. *Bliss* draws attention to its explicitly theatrical frame through repetition and duration allowing for the emergence of its own kind of truth as I have argued. In the next chapter I will analyse my own attempts to create a festive artwork within the visual arts that relies on ideas of theatricality and framing in its attempts to stage a 'happening of truth' in Heideggerian terms. The fact that this artwork is a film means that framing in its different senses becomes a central creative and practical concern as well as a key theoretical context provided by Derrida's idea of the *parergon* and Heidegger's theory of enframing (*Gestell*). This seems entirely in keeping with the *theoric* nature of this practice as research journey that seeks to follow the two paths of practice and theoretical enquiry simultaneously, acknowledging the original relationship between practice-based and intellectual *theoria*. This journey now leads to my participation in a festival setting in the creation of the interdisciplinary work *The Making of Us* with artist Graham Fagen for Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art 2012.

Chapter Three

Framing *The Making of Us*

> No “theory”, no “practice”, no “theoretical practice” can be effective here if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of (between) the interiority of meaning (protected by the entire hermeneutic, semiotic, phenomenological, and formalist tradition) and (of) all the extrinsic empiricals which, blind and illiterate, dodge the question. (Derrida, 1987: p. 24)

> Enframing [*Gestell*] means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is in itself nothing technological. (Heidegger, 1977: p. 20)

‘The Parergon’

In the first part of this chapter I will examine the idea that, as an example of practice as research, the film *The Making of Us* ‘rests on the frame’ in some of the ways that Derrida suggests in his essay ‘The Parergon’*,* first published in *The Truth in Painting* (1978). *The Making of Us* is a film that is conceptually and explicitly concerned with different types of framing and with negotiating and problematising what might lie inside and outside of these different frames. As an example of ‘theoretical practice’ this chapter will aspire to Derrida’s idea of efficacy and also ‘rest on the frame’ in its analysis of the initial 'framing sequence'[43] from the film as a means of exploring its approach to ideas of framing throughout. This analysis will then provide a further frame for examining the film's potential as an engagement with Heidegger's ideas of enframing (*Gestell*) from his essay *Questions Concerning Technology*[44] (Heidegger, 1977) in the second part of this chapter.

There is a shot at the beginning of the film *The Making of Us* when the central character Jonathan is framed behind the sliding glass doors at the entrance to the Tramway venue. He is outside looking in, hesitating to enter, as others empty out of taxis behind him and walk past into the building and towards the camera. He seems nervous about crossing this threshold, perhaps uncertain as to what passing through this particular frame might mean and what consequences such a move might have. Coming as it does in the film's opening (framing) sequence, this shot also seems to suggest a threshold between the start of the work and whatever might have come before it. In this sense the camera looks 'backwards' from the work itself, through the frame of the glass doors and across a border to what lies outside of or before the film. As if to emphasise this, the Tramway logo appears written backwards on the glass doors from the camera's perspective, announcing the name of the arts venue to the world outside. These doors then, that frame Jonathan in his moment of hesitation, can also be seen to separate the ‘real world’ outside of the building, and before the film, from the arts space inside, a place of fictions, storytelling and artifice, and the film itself. To cross this border, in the context of the film, means to enter into the work, a step Jonathan seems unwilling to take. A move inside means a move towards the camera frame, in which the frame of the glass doors is depicted. It is the camera frame, of course, which dictates what story we will see, and what and whom the film will frame as it unfolds. Perhaps it is the frame of the camera, rather than the doors, about which Jonathan is, or should be, anxious. Perhaps the glass doors, the frame within the frame, provide his last means of separation and protection from the framing power of the camera. But the glass doors are transparent to the camera’s gaze and in any case keep sliding open. They admit the flow of people moving past Jonathan seemingly willing to take their place inside. This frame is entirely permeable, an insecure border, offering little or no protection. The doors are an invitation to enter. Jonathan’s hesitation is, can only be, momentary, and the end of the shot sees him moving with the others through the frame of the doors, towards the camera frame, and into the start of the film.

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[43] By 'framing sequence' I refer to a conventional series of shots at the start of many films that introduces key elements of the themes and narrative to follow.

[44] It should be noted that Derrida is already referencing Heidegger to frame his discussion of Kant at the start of 'The Parergon' chapter (p.3). In a typically deconstructive strategy he frames Kant's ideas about framing – the relationship between the *ergon* (the work) and the *parergon* (the frame or material around the work) – via some of Heidegger's thoughts on Kant from his *Origin of the Work of Art*, with his own ideas. This layering of references and multiplication of theoretical frames of reference demonstrates in Derrida's writing practice some of the key themes of the essay.

In ‘The Parergon’*,* Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of Kant’s analysis of the frame from his *Third Critique*, Derrida draws the reader’s attention to the outer edge of the frame around different works of art. We tend to think of a frame, he suggests, primarily in relation to the work it surrounds at its inner edge, but here Derrida highlights the interaction of the frame with whatever is outside the work. He writes,

> The incomprehensibility of the border, at the border, appears not only at the inner limit, between the frame and the painting, the drapery and the body, the column and the building, but also at its outer limit. Parerga have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only, as Kant would have it from the body of the ergon itself, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, the space in which the statue or column stands, as well as from the entire historic, economic, and political field of inscription in which the drive of the signature arises. (Derrida, 1987: p. 24)

The frame not only circumscribes the work itself at the frame's 'inner limit', but in so doing delineates its position in relation to what lies outside of the work beyond the frame's 'outer limit'. The 'border' Derrida refers to here seems to be analogous to a geopolitical border of significance to the regions either side of it, rather than the conventional idea of an ornamental border placed *around* a work of art. The regions on the other side of the border from the work, he suggests, are not merely physically contextual, such as the wall on which a painting is hung, but also encompass the historical, economic and political contexts of the work.

In the light of this, we can see the shot described above from the opening of *The Making of Us* as looking through such a frame in filmic terms at its 'outer limit' and across such a border. This is the border between the inside of the work at the site where it is about to take place, and, quite literally, its exterior with its 'historic, economic and political field of inscription'. We're looking out from a place of artifice, both the arts venue as a setting for the film and the film itself as the work of art, through the physical frame of the doorway as well as the framing sequence of the film, to what lies beyond. In what is the only exterior shot (or more precisely a shot from interior to exterior) of the whole film, we look through the entranceway, with the Tramway logo in designer font on the steel and glass, across the border of the arts space, and out onto the south Glasgow Street behind Jonathan, with its crumbling Victorian red-brick industrial buildings. The border of these glass doors separates an impoverished area in the south of Glasgow and the remnants of its industrial heritage, from an example of their attempted regeneration. This is the 'field of inscription' in which the work arises.

But the border, Derrida tells us, at both its inner and outer limit, is 'incomprehensible'[45]. The name of the venue, written backwards on the doors, is a direct reference to the building's former use as a Victorian tram shed, inscribing its red-brick origins and industrial history as an essential part of the venue's current identity, even if only in a regenerative strategy of re-appropriation. As the film goes on, we see this historical legacy of industrial red-brick as a dominant aesthetic and visual context for the artwork. The separation between these histories and economies of industry and regeneration is therefore complicated, with resonances and influence seeping from one side of the border to the other, from outside to inside the frame.

As we have seen, the border of the glass doors in this shot is intentionally permeable, with people actively encouraged to cross it and enter into the building and into the artwork itself. How are we to comprehend this kind of border if it is so easy to cross? If we're looking out from inside an arts venue, and the people getting out of taxis and walking past Jonathan are audience members, then what is he? He seems to be thinking about moving from the outside to inside like them, but the camera lingers on him, focusing on his hesitation and his facial expressions as it might on an actor. The border between being an audience member and an actor also seems 'incomprehensible'. The film seems to be showing us a border that is potentially transformative as an entranceway and a beginning.

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[45] 'Subject to no limits' (arch.): Webster's, 2010.

This shot framing Jonathan in the entranceway can be seen, if we might extend Derrida's 'frame of reference' from the physical to the durational, to exist within the larger *parergon* that frames the film itself. This framing sequence has a 'thickness', as Derrida might describe it, of fifty-three seconds and is composed of ten shots that establish some of the key themes and dynamics of the film. At its outer limit temporally is the time and place 'outside' the film that the viewer is experiencing before it starts[46], and at its inner limit is the title card and the beginning of the rest of the film. But this is not a frame that offers a stable demarcation of the artwork by establishing any clear 'inside' and 'outside' to the work. Instead, at the same time as introducing some of the film's key concepts, this framing sequence from the start problematizes and throws them into question. It undermines itself as a Kantian *parergon* by collapsing the oppositions of what is 'inside' and 'outside' of the work, what is real and what is artifice. In problematising the idea of the frame, this framing sequence corresponds to Derrida's deconstructive questioning of Kant's

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[46] Or, depending on the circumstances of screening, the real time countdown illustrated by the film leader clock traditionally placed at the start of this and many films to synchronise image and sound. This indicates the reality of time passing in front of the screen before the viewer is subject to the fictional edited time of the film itself.

parergon. Derrida writes,

> However, this frame is problematic. I do not know what is essential and what is secondary to a work. Above all I do not know what this thing is which is neither essential nor secondary, neither proper nor improper, which Kant calls *parergon*, for example, the frame. What is the place of the frame. Does it have a place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its inner limit. Outer. And the surface between the two limits[47]. (*ibid*: p. 26)

As we will see, it is questions such as these about framing *per se* that are raised in the film's opening sequence and, as much as anything else, frame our experience of the rest of the film.

The very first shot in this sequence seems to be from a CCTV camera. The way the image flickers into life, its grainy texture, the angle from which it is shot, the fact that it is a locked-off image of an interior space, all indicate that it belongs to the world of surveillance. But the space seems to be a kind of theatre or performance space in which we can see parts of a set and what seem to be audience members moving around. The shot implies questions as to who is carrying out this surveillance and what the authority needed to secure this space might be. Also, in what ways does this surveillance differ from spectating on a performance in a 'fictional' space that we might see in a more 'conventional' film?

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[47] There are no question marks in the original text.

We then see a close up shot of leaves on branches with what looks like theatre light sources exposed behind them. The leaves seem to belong to an exterior, natural world, the theatre lighting to an interior world of artifice. Are the leaves still real and natural if they are part of a set or a theatrical prop? They seem as though they should be connected to the tree that a young woman is walking past in the next shot. Again the tree seems real enough, but certainly inside, and part of the artificial space or set. The woman seems excited, in anticipation of something, but it is unclear as to whether she is a performer or spectator.

The film now cuts to a foyer space, presumably outside of the performance space of the previous shots, that we now see people entering. Official looking people in headsets are asking them for forms that they have been given to fill in. This writing and signing process is the subject of the next close-up shot. They seem to be signing some sort of consent form, begging the question, ‘consent for what?’ Is it for the filming we are now watching? Is it to be the audience who are under surveillance, in which case on whose authority? Are they in fact the performers? The form makes it clear they will receive no payment for their participation implying that this possibility could also exist as it would for a performer. This consent form provides a legal frame within which the audience’s experience will take place. But very soon we will see it become a prop in the film, and this legal process a seemingly fictional action within what passes for the narrative. And is this consent purely a legal frame or also a framing of a more colloquial kind in which the audience is tricked somehow in front of the cameras - implicated in something for which they feel they bear no responsibility? It is the same form that Jonathan holds in his hand, presumably as yet unsigned, in the next shot showing him smoking outside. He seems wary of signing the form, as he later explains to Helen, entering into the legal frame and therefore submitting to the possibility of being framed both on camera and as some kind of deception (which here seem like they might be the same thing).

This is the film at its outer limit, explicitly negotiating with what lies ‘outside’ of its frame, artistically and ontologically in the case of the performer/audience and nature/artifice oppositions. It also deals with its ‘historic, economic and political field of inscription’ in the form of the legal and emotional contracts, stated and unstated, between an artwork and its audience and the site in which it takes place. It is this negotiation that provides the ‘surface’ of the film’s frame in the form of its framing sequence and makes up its ‘thickness’. At its inner limit, immediately before the start of the rest of the film, come two title cards either side of (forming another frame) the shot described at the start of this chapter. The first card reads, “A film by Graham Eatough and Graham Fagen”, providing the audience with another frame of reference for their experience. The film, it tells us, has an authorial entity behind it, some people who are ‘owning up to’ and signing this film in the manner that is conventional to this medium. Although what type of film this is, fiction or documentary, remains unclear. Then comes the shot of Jonathan outside the entranceway, hovering emblematically at the frame of the doorway but also at the edge of the border between the rest of the film and its outside. Finally, in the culminating frame of this framing sequence, comes the title card, potentially the most important information in the sequence and a key to the rest of the film. Here too though, there is a blurring. As well as naming the film in the manner of a possible fiction, the title also seems to make reference to the ‘making of’ documentary convention. These films, often featured as ‘extras’ on DVD’s, are perhaps a contemporary equivalent of Kant’s’ *parerga*, for example the drapes he describes placed around a statue that frame and draw attention to the artwork (*ergon*) whilst being other from it (in Kant’s view). Here though there is no such distinction. If this film were to be *parergonal* in the Kantian sense then the *actual* film it is intended to frame should be called “Us”. However, this film is nowhere to be found and the title collapses in on itself with a pun that suggests that, if the film is about the making of anything, then it might be the ‘us’ who are viewing it. A first person plural that might also include, as our representatives, those we’ve just seen entering the performance space as audience *made* into performers. The film then, and inevitably its initial framing sequence, seems *parergonal* in the Derridean sense in that it offers no clear distinction between what lies outside and inside of its various frames. The potential oppositions it offers are blurred and, as a frame, this sequence merges both with what falls outside of it and the rest of the film it precedes. Derrida describes this dynamic in terms of the frame ‘disappearing’ both into the context outside of the work and into the work itself. He observes,

> The parergonal frame is distinguished from two grounds, but in relation to each of these, it disappears into the other. In relation to the work, which may function as its ground, it disappears into the wall and then, by degrees, into the general context. In relation to the general context, it disappears into the work. Always a form on a ground, the parergon is nevertheless a form which has traditionally been determined not by distinguishing itself, but by disappearing,

> sinking in, obliterating itself, dissolving just as it expends its greatest energy. (*ibid*: p. 24)

By ‘expending the energy’ of drawing attention to itself as a frame, as a sequence that both forms a frame to the rest of the film but also deals with framing of different kinds, the opening sequence of *The Making of Us* blurs the distinction between the work and its ‘general context’. In relation to the ‘ground’ of artifice it shows us the ‘reality’ of foyers and exteriors, audience members and contracts being signed. But this general context seems subsumed within the work itself. We will continue to see audience and the ‘outside’ of scenes and sets throughout the film, and the contract signing will become a key scene in its ‘fiction’. Just as the Tramway’s doors before which Jonathan hesitates are transparent and slide open, so too the framing sequence in which we see them, ‘disappears’ and ‘dissolves’ in the manner Derrida describes, into what lies either side. Rather than demarcating the boundary at the film’s beginning, this framing sequence forms a continuum both with the ‘reality’ of what lies before the film and the fiction that makes up the rest. The viewer, and the live audience we are watching, move from the outside to inside of this work without ever being sure when this border has been crossed.

Beyond the ‘inner limit’ of this framing sequence lies the rest of a film made up of different kinds of frame. We see window frames and doorways that make up large parts of the set. We see the same consent form from the opening featuring in each scene in different guises[48] but always functioning as a legal frame in which Jonathan must operate. Perhaps above all, we are aware of the photographic frame of the film camera dictating the picture we are being shown. To draw our attention to this we are repeatedly shown this technical process of ‘framing-up’ carried out by the camera crew, through the frame of a second ‘documentary’ camera.

As we have seen, this repeated use of different forms of framing problematises any conventional (Kantian) understanding of the frame and instead creates a kind of *mise en abyme* equivalent to those Derrida refers to in painting. He uses examples of different pictures within pictures and frames within frames to undermine the certainty of the Kantian frame,

> What would Kant have said about a frame which frames a painting representing a building surrounded by columns (there are many examples) in the form of the draped human figure (…) and which is set on an easel – the whole thing represented in another painting. (Derrida, 1987: p. 26)

The frame within a frame within a frame etc. described here is a useful analogy for *The Making of Us*. In the film though, the *mise en abyme* does not just function on a visual level but also on a narrative and character level. The film presents a series of narrative frames through which Jonathan passes. Just as one contextual narrative frame has become established, another, often contradictory frame, is introduced.

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[48] In the different scenes of the film the same consent form from the opening functions as a contract for an actor, a press briefing sheet, a commissioning contract for a script and a legal deposition.

For example, at the start of the film we are presented with an audience member, or at least an actor playing an audience member, entering the auditorium and, like the other audience members, approaching the bar to get a drink. At the bar he meets Helen, or more specifically a performer playing the character of a Production Assistant called Helen, who has been serving drinks to the audience. She tries to persuade Jonathan to take part in some unspecified filming, although not presumably the film we are now watching. However, just as Jonathan seems to be deciding whether to agree to Helen's request or not, 'Cut' is called and we find ourselves in another narrative frame, that of the filming of the action we have just been watching. We see lots of camera equipment and the Director entering shot to give instructions for the next 'set-up'. Without any discernible change in attitude, (he displays varying degrees of confusion and anxiety throughout), Jonathan now seems to accept his role as an actor on set between takes. We now focus on the activity of the crew as they prepare for, and frame-up, the next scene. Cameras are repositioned, focal lengths measured, set and props brought into frame, until finally Jonathan is directed into position. 'Action' is called and we slip from one narrative frame to another as Michael comes over to further persuade Jonathan to take part in the filming, a process, in another narrative frame, he has clearly already begun.

As the film continues, no clear sense of Jonathan as a consistent character emerges. At times he seems to be an actor who has been chosen from that evening's audience to be part of some impromptu filming, at others a more established actor involved in making a feature film, then a writer, and finally some sort of political figure. Just as Jonathan seems to appear and reappear in different narrative frames, the distinctions between them blurred, so too the film seems to constantly reframe itself as either a documentary about the making of another film, or the film itself, with no clear distinction between the two. In this regard the whole film can be seen as a problematisation of the relationship between the *ergon* and the *parergon*, the ‘real’ film as an artwork (*ergon*), and a ‘making of’ documentary, *parergonal* in its nature.

Gestell

If *The Making of Us* can be seen as a particularly Derridean form of practice in its ‘resting on the frame’, I will argue that it is also Heideggerian in its exploration of framing as a set of ideas[49]. In *Questions Concerning Technology* (1977), Heidegger attempts to define a process of ‘enframing’ (*Gestell*) that he identifies as the essence of modern technology. Throughout the essay Heidegger asks the reader to look beyond a narrow understanding of technology stating, ‘the essence of technology is by no means anything technological’ (*ibid*: p. 4). Instead he connects it back to the Greek term ‘*techne*’ and its broader meaning of a way of revealing or ‘bringing forth’ the real. (*ibid:* p.12). For Heidegger *techne* is the means by which truth, in keeping with his definition of truth as unconcealment or ‘*aletheia*’, is revealed or brought forth. We can see therefore, that Heidegger’s inquiry into the essence of technology is fundamental to his understanding of the nature of truth and how it manifests itself, and therefore to his whole philosophical work. I want to draw parallels between *The Making of Us* and its exploration of framing through practice, and Heidegger's elaboration of the concept of *Gestell* in *Questions Concerning Technology*. At the start of the essay, Heidegger establishes what he feels are the necessary conditions for exploring the 'essence of technology',

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[49] Derrida makes a connection with Heidegger at the start of ‘The Parergon’ albeit by referencing *The Origin of the Work of Ar*t rather than *Questions Concerning Technology* which is my main focus here. Again we can see Derrida manifesting in his writing practice the theoretical ideas from the essay by using Heidegger’s comments about Kant’s *Third Critique* as a way of framing his own writings – a frame within a frame.

> We shall be questioning concerning technology, and in so doing we would like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology. When we can respond to this essence, we will be able to experience the truth of the technological within its own bounds. (*ibid*: p. 3,4).

By establishing a 'free relationship' to technology, one not restricted by previously narrow definitions and assumptions, we can explore its fundamental relationship to our 'human existence' and recognise its true nature whilst being subject to it. We need to view the essence of technology, Heidegger argues, not as something purely technological in the sense of a means to an end, but as an essential operation that has to do with the very nature of our being in the world. *The Making of Us* is, in many ways, a practice-based exploration of technology with just such a 'free' relationship. As we will see, by exposing and deconstructing the technology of film making, it attempts to open up an exploration of how the technological operates in the creation and revelation of being.

Instead of a means to an end, technology, Heidegger states, can be seen as a form of *poiesis* or bringing-forth [*Hervorbringen*]. Drawing on Plato's *Symposium*, Heidegger tells us that this bringing-forth is a fundamental process by which things 'go forward into presencing from not presencing' (*ibid*: p. 10). It is a process that encompasses artistic and handcraft production as well as the bringing-forth at work in nature such as the blossoming of a flower, this latter process he identifies as *physis*, a 'higher' form of *poiesis.* Therefore, it is *poiesis* that is originally at the heart of technology, in the sense of revealing or unconcealing that which presences through technology rather than a process of cause and effect in any conventional sense. However, in modern technology he identifies a particular kind of revealing. He writes,

> And yet the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiesis*. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such. (*ibid*: p. 15)

The revealing that 'rules' in modern technology, unlike that in the natural world or under the care of a traditional craftsman or artist, is a 'challenging-forth'. To illustrate this overriding quality of modern technology and the way in which it differs from technologies of the past, Heidegger refers to the contrast between the 'peasant' who 'takes care of' and 'maintains' the field (in the past), and modern industrialised farming and mining processes that 'set-upon' the land and make a 'challenge' to the soil (*ibid*: p. 15). In contrast to the windmill that creates energy without disrupting the natural order of the ‘wind’s blowing’, Heidegger gives us the example of the hydro-electric plant,

> The hydroelectric plant is set in the current of the Rhine. It sets up its water pressure that then sets the turbines turning. This turning sets machines in motion whose thrust sets up electric current, for which the long distance power station and its cable network have been ordered and set up. In the realm of the interlocking effects of this placing-on-order of electrical energy, the Rhine current itself appears as something placed on order. (*ibid*: p. 16)

The ‘challenging-forth’ that is at work here is an imposition on nature rather than a ‘caring-for’ or ‘maintaining’. It is a process that transforms the very nature of the river itself by ‘placing-on-order’ the energy that this technological intervention reveals. The ‘current’ of the Rhine is ‘unlocked, transformed and stored’ (*ibid*) for future distribution becoming a potential electrical current. The effect of contemporary technology therefore is to change the nature of the subject itself, the River Rhine in this example, forcing its identity to be subject to the demands of energy production. In this sense, this placing-on-order is a re-ordering of place. The subject is reconstituted as being on ‘stand-by’, awaiting further orders.

> Everywhere, everything is ordered to standby, to be immediately at hand, indeed just to stand there so it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. (*ibid*: p. 17)

I think there are parallels here between the placing-on-order of subject ('everywhere, everything') that Heidegger describes and the processes of filmmaking that *The Making of Us* explores. Clearly, the people, things and places that make up the subject of a film are literally 'ordered to standby' by the crew as the filming is about to take place. But in a more fundamental way, filmmaking can be seen as a process of 'unlocking, transforming, storing and distributing' human experience. In a conventional film experience is ordered into narrative, edited, recorded and stored on the film stock (or hard drive) with the potential to be distributed on demand. Jonathan's experience in the film is processed in just this way, continually subject to the further demands of the process itself. All these continual demands are directed towards the creation of a standing-reserve that will exist in the form of a finished film. Even after the demands the film makes of Jonathan, and therefore the film itself, cease with his death, further orders can be placed on him in the form of the film available for distribution. Jonathan's transformation into standing reserve (*Bestand*) is complete. Heidegger goes on to describe how man (sic) belongs to the standing reserve in that it is he who is called upon to order nature in this way (*ibid*: p. 18). The fact that he is commanded to order nature in this way indicates that he is also placed on demand within the bounds of modern technology. Heidegger references the current (at the time of writing) use of terms such as 'human resources' and 'supplies of patients' as examples of this. However, a much more sinister reference point would be the 'supply' of bodies for the gas chambers of Nazi concentration camps. Heidegger fails to mention this example *in extremis* of the subordination of humanity to the inexorable demands of a technological process and its appalling and fundamentally transformative power.[50]

It is the process by which this transformation into standing reserve takes place, and its specific relationship to humanity, that Heidegger defines as enframing [*Gestell*]. He explains,

> *Gestell* is called the collecting of that setting and placing that sets after humans, challenging them to reveal and unsecure the real in the manner of the placing of orders as standing stock. *Gestell* is called the kind of revealing that prevails in the goings-on of modern technics but that itself is not at all technical. (*ibid*: p. 20)

Heidegger tells us that in 'ordinary usage the word *Gestell* [frame] means some kind of apparatus, e.g. a bookrack…[or] skeleton.' (*ibid*: p. 20) Here though, he connects it back to its roots in the word *Stellen* [to set upon or set up], and its associated meanings of producing and presenting. This allows Heidegger to use the term to suggest a kind of structural framework, but also a quality of 'movement' into this framework. As the translator William Lovitt points out,

> …the reader should be careful not to interpret the word as though it simply meant a framework of some sort. Instead he should constantly remember that En-framing is fundamentally a calling-forth. It is a "challenging claim," a demanding

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[50] For a full exploration of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism see *Heidegger and the Nazis* by Jeff Collins (2000).

> summons, that "gathers" so as to reveal…an ordering for use
> that it is forever restructuring anew. (*ibid*: Footnote 17, p. 19)

The concern here seems to be that a translation of *Gestell* risks effacing at least two significant aspects of Heidegger's use of that term. Firstly that *Gestell* refers not only to the specific act or moment of enframing itself, but also to a preceding movement toward or 'gathering' into the frame as such. This is an acknowledgement that *Gestell* has to do with movement as well as containing something or holding it still[51]. Secondly, that this movement is a response to a 'calling forth' or 'demanding summons'. We might also add a third aspect of *Gestell* that Lovitt identifies here as 'forever restructuring anew' which is alluded to in the use of the gerundive enfram*ing* as a necessarily continuous process.

I want to suggest my own practice-based definition of *Gestell*, drawn from the world of filmmaking as exemplified in *The Making of Us*, that I believe elucidates this term in respect of the three aspects mentioned above. I will illustrate this with reference to a sequence that begins with the Director calling 'Cut' at 5:21 and ends with

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[51] It is interesting to note here Samuel Weber's commentary on alternative translations of *Gestell*, that lead him to his own suggestion,

> This tension [*between movement and stasis*] resounds in the word proposed by Lacoue-Labarthe to render Gestell: installation. I would like to suggest an other possibility, however, one that has the virtue of pointing to-wards the lexical 'root' of Gestell, stell: emplacement. If I prefer the word to 'installation', it is because it signifies not so much the setting-up of an apparatus, as the set-up tout court, "the assigning or appointing of a definite place" (Webster's Unabridged: Globe Press 1954) (Weber, 1989: p. 988).

Here Weber chooses to focus on the re-ordering of place that we discussed earlier in relation to the hydro-electric plant and that is such a crucial part of modern technology according to Heidegger.

'Action' being called at 7:28. This is a sequence that sits between what would conventionally be described as scenes, but that in *The Making of Us* flow in and out of, and merge with these 'in between' moments, complicating conventional notions of what is inside and outside of the frame of the scene as discussed. This sequence depicts the crew in the process of setting-up, and specifically *framing-up*, for the next shot. It is this process of framing-up that I want to suggest as a practice-based elucidation of Heidegger's term *Gestell*.

Framing-up

The calling of 'Cut' at 5:21 is already a moment of reframing that re-contextualises our understanding of the action by introducing a new layer of reality (that of the filmmaking) into the film, as discussed with reference to Derrida's 'The Parergon' earlier in this chapter. What the film now depicts is just over two minutes of the very technical reality of the crew getting ready for the next 'set-up', as instructed in the film at 5:26 by the First Assistant Director. The term 'set-up' itself has a direct relevance to Heidegger's use of *Gestell* and its 'preservation' of the root *Stellen*. It also echoes Lacoue-Labarthe's suggestion of 'installation', both in the sense of the act of installing or setting-up, but also in its reference to the set itself as completed installation (Weber, 1989: p. 988).[52] In addition to this, it is impossible in English to ignore the more colloquial meaning of set-up as a trick or deception. This is of particular significance in *The Making of Us* as previously discussed in relation to similar ambiguities around the term 'framing'. There is an important way in which every situation Jonathan enters, every set he is called to perform upon, is a set-up in this colloquial sense.

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[52] There is an added resonance with Lacoue-Labarthe's use of 'installation' as a translation for *Gestell* in *The Making of Us* because the sets on which the filming takes place also function as an installation in the visual art sense of that term. The arrangement of set pieces, furniture, screens and so on, in the Tramway 1 auditorium can be seen in their entirety as constituting an immersive installation. The tables and chairs and seating bank

The end-board sounds on the previous scene and we see the Director talking to the Director of Photography about the technicalities of what the camera will be framing in the next shot. This information is crucially given at the start of this sequence, as everything else that happens during this preparatory phase is purely in the service of that framing. Everything and everyone in the room is ordered and arranged in relation to that frame. This process of ordering and arranging, a 'gathering so as to reveal' in Heideggerian terms, is the main subject matter for this sequence. Jonathan is put on standby until the framing-up is complete and the crew are finally ready for him to be called into shot. Even this standby mode is captured by the cameras, a fact that is underlined by the shot of the documentary camera filming Jonathan between scenes. We see complicated, heavy equipment being moved about the space and through the audience, forcing them to re-position themselves. At 6:22 we see one of the large Alexa film cameras being wheeled hurriedly into its next position by the crew and nearly colliding with an unsuspecting Jonathan as he

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that the audience can sit on, the working bar, the way in which the different sets are arranged around the central tree, all signify in the language and conventions of visual art installation. Added to this is the fact that this space and the film is a collaboration between a visual artist and theatre maker who in other contexts are know for creating installations, as well as the live performance being staged as part of a visual arts festival. In fact, once the filming/performances were over the sets functioned as an installation open to the public to visit for the duration of the festival.

waits between scenes. It seems as though the camera is physically following Jonathan even in this 'down-time', and determining his positioning within the space even when it is turned off. The tension created by the crew's need to move from one set-up to the next in the shortest time possible, motivated by the constant promptings of the 1st Assistant Director, builds as the sequence continues, an atmosphere that Nick Powell's score for the film underlines and augments. We see the audience having to negotiate its way around the space as this intense activity goes on around and through it, until a group self-consciously adopts a position from which to watch the next scene at 6:26. If this is the more general re-arrangement of the space and the people inhabiting it, governed by the re-positioning of the camera, we then focus in detail on the technical process of framing-up once the camera is in position. At 6:11 we see the Camera Operator sat behind the Alexa camera, flanked by her Camera Assistants, focusing the camera as they adjust the flaps over the lens. At 6:34 we see a Camera Assistant measuring out the focus marks with a measuring tape, giving a sense of the trigonometric precision involved in framing-up. 'Picture up on A' at 6:35 indicates that the Director and Director of Photography are now able to check the frame that the Camera Operator has established on the two monitors (A and B) in the monitor desk. We see this entire arrangement of elements in the next shot at 6:38 which shows us the monitor desk at the bottom right of the frame, the Alexa camera to its left, and above them both, the table and chairs that the camera is focusing on, and that constitutes the image in the monitors. This is the frame into which, and around which everything else in this space and timeframe is ordered. It is a tense, pressurised process that *The Making of Us* depicts both through showing us the frame being established by the lens of the Alexa film camera itself, but also through the documentary footage which allows us to see the technicalities of framing-up. A hush descends on set and amongst the audience as the clapper-board is sounded, signalling the beginning of recording. The final element to be summoned into the frame is Jonathan himself, instructed to ‘Just take a wee seat in that chair’ by the 1st Assistant Director. There is a moment of stillness here that exists between the setting-up and framing-up activity of the previous sequence, and the ‘scene’ about to be played. It is a moment into which all the preceding activity, all the frenetic movement and noise of the crew and audience, seems to have concentrated itself in a necessary stasis before the more focused (scripted) action of the scene can take place. There is still movement of a kind in this tension. The 1st Assistant Director tells everyone ‘We’re still running’ to emphasise the pressure of time passing as the camera records. Eventually, it is this very stillness that allows for ‘Action’ to be called and the scene to proceed.

The process of framing-up for the next shot that this two-minute sequence depicts contains the tension between stasis and movement that the translators of *Gestell* cited above feel are a crucial part of its definition. There is a movement of people and equipment into and around the frame that is being established. The frame itself is a fixed parameter, both in prospect, as the equipment is being moved, and in actuality, as the camera frames the shot. It is this still frame that ‘demands’ the movement of everyone and everything and draws all towards it. This is the other quality of *Gestell* that Lovitt encourages us to bear in mind, that the movement it implies is a response to a ‘calling forth’ or ‘demanding summons’. It might seem obvious to cite the demands placed on cast, crew, and here audience, to move around the space and towards the camera frame as an example or analogue for this ‘summons’. However, I think there is something fundamental about the motivations and dynamics of this movement in the context of *The Making of Us* that allows it to significantly resonate with Lovitt’s description of *Gestell* as ‘gathering to reveal’. It is, after all, revelation that is at the heart of Heidegger’s analysis of technology, in the sense of the coming to presence of ‘the real’. And it is revelation that is the motivating factor in this sequence for all concerned, and that is enabled by the framing-up process. The gathering of people and equipment is in the service of the next scene being revealed through the frame. The next section of the story, the characters within it, the fictional transformation of the space, will all be ‘brought to presence’ as a result of this preceding movement and the framing-up that defines it. It is this drive towards revelation that is at the heart of the ‘calling forth’ or ‘demanding summons’ in this context.

There is a sense of the inexorable momentum during these sequences of ‘gathering and revealing’ in *The Making of Us*, emphasised by the rhythm of the editing and the underscoring of the music, that resonates with the all-pervasive character of Heidegger’s *Gestell* as a defining operation of modern technology. This brings us to the third aspect of its definition mentioned by Lovitt above. He tells us *Gestell* involves ‘an ordering for use forever restructuring anew’. Again, we can clearly identify two levels on which this ‘ordering for use’ resonates within *The Making of Us*. Firstly, we can see the ordering of all the elements in the room (set, actors, audience etc.) for use in the filming of a specific scene. We see this process repeated throughout the film between the different scenes and with increasing intensity. This repetition can be seen to demonstrate a ‘restructuring anew’ of these different elements for use in each subsequent scene. Each preparatory sequence has its own momentum, but there is also a cumulative effect that builds through their repetition, climaxing in the final preparations for the hanging. There is a grinding, machine-like noise that forms an increasingly dominant and sinister part of the soundtrack as these different sequences unfold. It gives a sense of the inexorable progress of the filmmaking technology as it drives everything in the room along with it. Everyone and everything seem to be in the service of this machine, keeping it running, feeding its appetites. The main material ‘fed into’ this machine is, of course, Jonathan, who is drawn into its workings at the start of the film, increasingly entangled in its machinations (both technical and narrative), until he is eventually disposed of at the end, having served his ‘use’. The film ends abruptly with Jonathan being hanged, at least in one layer of the film’s storytelling. But there is no sense that the machinery of filmmaking depicted in *The Making of Us* ceases with him, and we can suppose that it can go through the same, or similar process again with another subject, so long as there are subjects to enframe, ‘forever restructuring itself anew’. Even on the level of performance, which the film clearly shows us this hanging is, with its visible safety ropes and winches, we might think that this will all be performed again for the next take or the next evening’s performance, as the machine dictates.

Secondly, we are aware of the fact that this filming is part of a greater ordering of all the scenes to be ‘used’ in the finished film. There is an authority beyond the direction of movement and elements on set that has selected and edited the filmed material into its final form. This finished film can then be ‘ordered for use’ by those who wish to show and view it. The material the live audience has seen filmed is ‘restructured anew’ for this film audience.

We can see the different layers of enframing at work in *The Making of Us*, ‘forever restructuring anew’ both within the work and *as* the work in the world. From the mechanics of film recording on set, through editing and post-production, to the distribution and screening of the finished film, we see the repetition of the same processes of gathering and revealing (or ‘unlocking, transforming, storing and distributing’ described above) through technology, albeit in different but related contexts or technological frames. However, *The Making of Us* was not made as some sort of practical demonstration of Heidegger’s concept of *Gestell*. It was a project created in collaboration with another artist and, although I had read *Questions Concerning Technology* and Samuel Weber’s commentary on this text beforehand, the project developed through this relationship and according to its own needs and momentum. However, I think there are key ways, as outlined above, that Heidegger’s ideas of enframing directly resonate within *The Making of Us*. Perhaps, if we follow Heidegger’s argument, this is inevitable, as to be alive in the era of modern technology is necessarily to be subject to its all-pervasive enframing operations. *Gestell*, he argues, governs our relationship with the world and dictates a way of being within it. Any activity we carry out in this context therefore, can be seen to subscribe to the dynamics of technology that he has set forth, whether we are conscious of this or not. This question of consciousness is a key one for

Heidegger, and another way in which *The Making of Us* can be seen to fulfil some of the aspirations he lays out towards the end of the essay for challenging the all-pervasive nature of *Gestell*.

‘The saving power’

As already indicated, ‘man’ is directly implicated in the enframing process both as the one who ‘orders’, but in so doing is ‘ordered’ himself. It is this implication that makes it very difficult for man to attain any useful self-consciousness about this process. As Heidegger points out,

> Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of Enframing that he does not apprehend Enframing as a claim, that he fails to see himself as the one spoken to… (*ibid*: p. 26).

This failure to realize that he is also subject to an enframing ‘claim’, as well as having the power to carry out the enframing, leads to all sorts of delusions, Heidegger argues. Man feels he can subjugate the world around him to his own end, mistakenly viewing technology in the conventional sense, as the means to this end, to the point where he ‘exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth’ (*ibid*: p. 27). What man needs to realise, Heidegger urges, is that ‘Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is…’, but also ‘banishes’ him from a way of being that allows man to reveal himself in his ‘true being' (*ibid*). Man is only able to reveal himself through the 'regulating and securing' of the standing reserve, rather than the 'truthful' unconcealmant of *poeisis* that *Gestell* disallows. Heidegger sees the implications of *Gestell*, therefore, as dangerously fundamental:

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. (*ibid*: p. 28)

This continues Heidegger's theme of technology being 'not merely technological', but having to do with the essential conditions of contemporary existence. Man is unable to reveal himself in the 'original' sense of *poeisis*, because of the challenging-revealing that orders his being through *Gestell*. Heidegger argues that building an awareness of the threat or 'danger' of modern technology, however difficult that may be from within the bounds of technology itself, is the first step in the potential transformation of that 'danger'. The threat may have 'already affected man in his essence', but Heidegger reassures us,

> … never too late comes the question as to whether we actually experience ourselves as the one whose activities everywhere, public and private, are challenged forth by enframing. Above all, never too late comes the question as to how we actually admit ourselves into that wherein Enframing itself comes to presence. (*ibid*: p. 24)

Here, Heidegger is urging the reader to consider the means by which it might be possible to recognise the implications of *Gestell* for the nature of being for 'ourselves', even though we are subject to it. How do we 'admit ouselves' into a space where we can be conscious of these processes of enframing and thereby 'admit' *to* ourselves that we are also subject to these processes. It is to these questions of self-awareness in relation to the all-pervasive implications of *Gestell* that Heidegger turns towards the end of his essay *Questions Concerning Technology* and in his subsequent essay *The Turning*. And it is through a necessarily brief summary of his tentative gesturing towards a 'saving power', and a potential role for artistic production, that I will make a claim for *The Making of Us*.

Heidegger returns to the poet Hölderlin to introduce the idea that it is in the very occurrence of the threat or 'danger' inherent in *Gestell* that the key to its transformation might lie.

> *Wo aber Gefahr ist,*
> *Wächst das Rettende auch.*
>
> *But where danger is, grows*
> *The saving power also.* (*ibid*: p. 28)

Heidegger argues that because *Gestell* is itself a form of revealing, albeit a challenging-forth rather than the revealing of 'true being' through *poeisis*, it still participates in the fundamental process by which humanity experiences being. In this sense, although it prevents humanity from having a 'true' relationship to being (the danger), by its very nature, it points towards what that relationship might be (the saving power – *das Rettende*). Heidegger uses the concept of 'granting' to make a connection between the revealing of enframing and the revealing involved in a more 'true' relationship to being.

> Every destining of revealing comes to pass from out of a granting and as such a granting. For it is granting that first conveys to man that share in revealing which the coming-to-pass of revealing needs. (*ibid*: p. 32)

'Granting' [*Gewähren*] is the means by which revealing of any type 'comes to pass'. Whether it is the 'destining' of enframing or a more *poeitic* form of revealing, both are 'granted' in a fundamental sense[53]. It is this granting which 'conveys to man' the means by which he participates in revealing, of whatever nature. It is because of this connection between *Gestell* and *poieitic* revealing through the common 'origin' of granting, Heidegger argues, that man has the opportunity to understand the possibility of a truer relationship to being at the very point at which it is most in danger. Heidegger writes,

> It is precisely in enframing, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender of his

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[53] As Heidegger points out with reference to Goethe, granting in the German [*gewähren*] has a strong association with [*währen*] to endure. This enduring has to do with the very nature of being or essencing [*Wesen*] itself. 'Only what is granted endures. That which endures primally out of the earliest beginning is what grants.' (p.31) The other strong association is with *wahren* (without the umlaut), to watch over or keep safe and that has particular resonance here with Heidegger's idea that we should 'nurture' the 'saving power'.

> free essence – it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we for our part, begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology. (*ibid*: p. 32)

Heidegger therefore, identifies an apparent paradox, or ‘ambiguity’ (*ibid*: p. 33) as he puts it, as to the essential nature of technology. Enframing allows us the opportunity to recognise a different ‘destining of revealing’ out of granting even as it enforces its exclusion. This alternative would return us to a ‘belongingness’, with its connotations of being at one with nature and a sense of home, or ‘earth’ as Heidegger might express it. This ‘belongingness’ is ‘innermost’ and ‘indestructible’ and therefore able to endure even within the all-pervasive realm of technology that threatens to blind us to its possibility. However, there is a vital provision that Heidegger insists man needs to make to allow this ‘belongingness’ to ‘come to light’. We need ‘to begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology’ (*ibid*: p. 32). By this Heidegger means that we need to recognise the essence of technology for what it really is, a process of enframing to which we are also subject, rather than continuing to see technology as an instrumental means to an end over which we exercise control. If we can identify the essential workings of technology in this way, we are able to also identify our potential ‘belongingness’. It is this possibility that Heidegger refers to as the ‘arising of the saving power’ (*ibid.*). But it is a possibility that needs our careful attention as he explains,

> Everything then depends upon this: that we ponder this arising and that, recollecting, we watch over it. How can this happen? Above all through our catching sight of what comes to presence in technology instead of merely staring at the technological. (*ibid*: p. 32)

Being conscious of the essence of technology as a destining of revealing as enframing allows us to 'recollect' the 'innermost belongingness' that enframing encourages us to forget. This is the 'saving power' within the 'danger' of technology. If we are able to look beyond the merely technological to the essence of technology itself, we can 'watch over' and nurture this potential for salvation. The most important thing is for us to recognise technology in its essence rather than 'merely staring' at it as a means to an end, subject to it whilst under the delusion we are in control.

The Making of Us can be seen as playing a role in this consciousness-raising as to the essential nature of technology in Heideggerian terms. Heidegger himself tentatively suggests that it is to the arts that we might look as a possible site for the nurturing of the 'saving power'. He observes,

> Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is on the one hand akin to the essence of technology and the other, fundamentally different to it. Such a realm is art. (*ibid*: p. 35.)

Art is a field in which it is possible to raise awareness of, and also challenge, the essential nature of technology because, Heidegger argues, art is also a revealing, but not in the sense of the challenging-forth of *Gestell*. Presumably, here Heidegger has in mind an idea of art, such as that he describes in *Origins of the Work of Art* with reference to Greek tragedy, that is a more *poietic* coming-to-presence of truth nurtured or 'cared for' by the artist. It is interesting to question the status of film within these Heideggerian terms as to whether it is an art form or a technology, and whether it embodies *poeisis* or enframing, or some combination of the two. It can be said that, conventionally, film is adept at hiding its own workings or technicity. Unlike theatre, where there is a greater awareness of the means by which artifice is created (for example, through the visibility of the stage and the presence of performers), conventional film seems to be showing us something resembling reality without displaying how this reality is brought-to-presence, as Heidegger might describe it. We can associate this with the 'disguising belonging to enframing' that Heidegger describes in *The Turning*. He tells us that the 'danger' posed to being by its coming-to-presence through *Gestell* 'remains veiled and disguised' (*ibid*: p. 37). Indeed it is this disguising that is 'most dangerous in the danger' (*ibid*). 'Man' cannot know the threat the essential operations of technology pose to his being because of this disguising, and instead he deludes himself 'as if technology were a means in the hands of man' (*ibid*). In this sense then, it is possible to see film as an example of an enframing technology that disguises its essential nature. It enframes both the subjects of its technological processes of filmmaking, that are literally framed by the camera, but also all those responding to the 'demanding summons' to service this technological pursuit. Its processes are disguised in the service of verisimilitude, as if it is showing us being as directly revealed, rather than enframed as standing-reserve. All involved in the filmmaking can be seen in Heideggerian terms as part of this disguising, consciously attempting to make it as credible as possible, but unconscious of their own inevitable absorption into the standing reserve.

If film as a medium disguises its own technicity in a way that theatre cannot, *The Making of Us* incorporates elements of theatricality in order to break through this deception and challenge these enframing processes. The film *stages* its own making, and the processes of filmmaking more generally, and in so doing attempts to draw attention to the fundamental levels on which 'being' is enframed through technology in Heideggerian terms. Throughout the film the viewer is aware of the audience that is a part of the live performance. Indeed the whole film is given a very theatrical dimension through the presence of this live audience, tangible in everything from the staging of the different scenes to the performance style of the actors. The audience has been 'caught on camera' as the action takes place in and around them. They are both visible witnesses to, and also implicated in, the story of Jonathan. Their actions are framed by the camera as a constant part of the film and, within the narrative, as an integral part of the story. Whether drinking at the bar during the first scene, standing with the crew and overhearing Jonathan's phone conversation in Scene 3, becoming the members of the committee in the quasi-judicial hearing of Scene 5, and finally the onlookers to the hanging at the end, the audience's role encompasses that of conventional extras[54] as well as more developed characters. Of course, these narrative frames are imposed upon the audience rather than them acting as an expression of their own will. Although the filmmakers have gained the audience's consent at the start of the film, its not clear to what extent they know they are signing up to *act* in this way. In a performative distillation of the processes of *Gestell* that the film draws attention to, the live audience willingly answer a demanding summons in order to be challenged forth into revealing in an enframed manner. As an extension of this enframing that blurs the real and the fictional, the audience then watch one of their own in the form of Jonathan, drawn even further into this enframing process to the point where, in at least one narrative frame of the film, he or his character no longer exists. More precisely, one 'revealing' of Jonathan's being no longer exists because it has been transformed through the completion of the film's narrative into standing reserve in the form of the finished film. In this sense the film can be seen as a type of contemporary 'everyman' play in which the central character functions as a representative of the audience, and 'man' in general, in order for some morality tale to be played out. This influence can be seen in the film's reference to Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* (published in 1604), which itself draws heavily on the everyman tradition, through the characters of Michael and Helen who function as versions of Mephistopheles and, to a lesser extent Helen of Troy, from Marlowe's play, and the instigating action of the signing away of the protagonist's soul.

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[54] In *The Making of Us*, the audience are not 'extra' in the parergonal sense that Kant uses and Derrida critiques (see discussion of DVD 'extras' on p.121), but rather they are drawn into the work in a manner suggested by Derrida's concept of the parergon discussed earlier.

This function of identification of the live audience with the figure of Jonathan can be seen to extend from the theatrical dimension of the live performance to the viewing of the film. In highlighting the enframed role of the live audience in this way, the film attempts to create a self-consciousness on the part of the viewer. It raises questions around the extent to which similar dynamics might be at play in both the theatrical and filmic spectating of *The Making of Us*. It suggests that the viewer in the cinema is also drawn into a process of enframing, both in their viewing of this particular film, but also in their relationship to contemporary film and media technologies more generally.

The film's aspiration for self-awareness on the part of the viewer can be seen as an attempt to engender the kind of 'essential reflection upon technology' that Heidegger thinks might be possible in art. Through puncturing the 'disguising that belongs to enframing' that is the realistic surface of conventional film with elements of theatricality, *The Making of Us* allows a 'catching sight of what comes to presence in technology instead of merely staring at the technological' (*ibid*: p. 32). As Heidegger argues, it is this awareness that allows us to nurture the 'saving power' that exists in the very moment of its attempted exclusion. The film's staging of its own making and consequent exposition of the effects of its technological procedures on being, allow a 'decisive confrontation' with the essence of technology within the technological sphere of film making. That this confrontation can happen at all, is due to the entire phenomenon taking place, as Heidegger proposes, within the realm of art and specifically, I would argue, within the frame of theatricality. In staging the making of a film and including that staging as a key element of the film itself, *The Making Of Us* renders transparent the mimetic operations that more conventional film seeks to make invisible. Mimetic theatricality is always revealing as it conceals and both these simultaneous operations are at work in *The Making of Us*. The theatrical frame of audience and performance in the film draws attention to its enframing processes and the 'disguising that belongs' to it. The theatrical frame renders the activity it attempts to contain within it as clearly mimetic, revealing the *aletheic* truth that, by its very nature, the film seeks at the same time to conceal.

Without my realising it at the time of making, *The Making of Us* contains many of the elements of tragic drama to which my research would subsequently turn. Although it is a fragmentary and inconsistent narrative, the film obviously centres on a figure that is attempting, with an element of hubris, to better himself in a very public way, but is brought low, and ultimately meets his death, due to forces out with his control. There is a sense that this failure is fated from the outset, and that the forces arraigned against Jonathan are at the same time mysterious, sinister and overwhelmingly powerful. I think there is a connection between the framing procedures that are depicted and constitute *The Making of Us* and certain conceptions of tragedy that we will explore in the next chapter. The film corresponds to a definition of tragedy put forward by Dennis J. Schmidt in his book *Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (2001)*,*

> In tragedy we are summoned to an experience of that which is greater than us and yet to which we belong. In this summons we are brought before our finitude…by being

> reminded of…the infinity and inexhaustibility of our limits. (p. 8)

Schmidt's book explores the decisive role played by Greek tragedy in the thinking of several German philosophers including Heidegger. In the above definition we can recognise resonances with Heidegger's 'demanding summons' that we discussed earlier with reference to *Gestell,* but also with Derrida's 'incomprehensibility of the border' in the description of 'our limits' as 'inexhaustible'. As we will explore in the following chapter, Schmidt suggests that what attracts Heidegger to Greek tragedy is that it is an art form that stages these limits and the enframing procedures that attempt to confine us within them, but crucially, also that which escapes this frame. Tragedy deals with human experience that comes into conflict with the enframing of metaphysical thinking but cannot be contained within it. As Schmidt writes,

> In the end, what we find in tragedy is the presentation of the experience of limits, of what is beyond measure and capture by any calculus. This experience, as tragedy reminds us, is finally the experience of death – the preeminent force of the limit in mortal life – and so it is this experience out of which each of us must think and understand ourselves. (*ibid*: p. 9)

Tragedy therefore, is the art form to which Heidegger looks for the possibility of the 'saving power' in its 'watching over' the enframing processes of metaphysical thinking, and also for a presentation of experience and an idea of truth that is beyond these limits. It points towards a knowledge that is often arrived at through an experience of suffering and ultimately a consideration of mortality. Perhaps this is why death felt like the necessary end for the character of Jonathan, and his only escape from the enframing process, in *The Making of Us,* even though as makers we were not consciously referencing tragic narratives at the time. It was in my next piece of practice, the play *How To Act*, that I was able to explicitly explore these ideas of tragedy and how they might provide the necessary next development within my research.

Chapter Four: Tragic truth

How to Act

> In Aeschylus' words, 'We must suffer into truth'. Tragedy is the undergoing of a suffering that might permit an experience of a truth that is neither contemplative (i.e. philosophical) nor deterministic (i.e. scientific), but emerges out of a visceral experience of the conflicts endemic to human action, conflicts we encounter personally and politically on a day-to-day basis. (Critchley, 2011a)

Throughout this practice as research project I have drawn an analogy between the interdisciplinary 'movement' of my research and the classical Greek cultural practice of *theoria* on which Plato based his cave allegory, as discussed in the first chapter. I have attempted to map my experiences as a theatre practitioner working in a visual arts context onto the journey of the *theoric* emissary travelling from their home city to a festival elsewhere. In the terms of Plato's analogy my process could be seen as a journey from the 'cave' of theatricality and delusion towards the ideas of transcendent truth within the visual arts, particularly in certain their modernist discourses. In contrast to Plato however, who replaced the festival destination of the Greek cultural practice with the transcendent conception of truth as the sun in his allegory, my work suggests a re-instigation of a *festive* mode in Heideggerian terms. I have explored this idea of the *festive* through my journey to the Performa festival of visual art in New York and an analysis of some performances I encountered there, and also through my own work, *The Making of Us* (April 2012) for the Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art. Both these analyses have pointed towards the possibility of the ‘coming to presence’, in Heideggerian terms, of a different kind of truth through artistic practice. Rather than the anti-theatrical, transcendent truth that Plato illustrates through the image of the sun as his *theoric* destination and the purpose of philosophy, Heidegger points us towards truth as *aletheia* or *unconcealment*, a more contingent and, although he never states this explicitly, intrinsically theatrical kind of truth in my opinion. It is this theatrical conception of truth and how it might be brought to presence through practice that I will explore in this chapter.

A key element of the traditional practice of *theoria*, and the central if problematic imperative of Plato’s journey towards the sun, is the necessity of return. The emissary had to report back to the city and its citizens who had sponsored his trip to the festival, in order to apprise them of his experiences and bring them up to date on the latest political news from foreign lands. Plato’s guardian has to return back to the cave of the allegory in order to impart the insight into truth that he has gained in the land of the forms to the prisoners who are still in the chains of delusion. It is through this idea of return that I will consider the developments in my theatre practice during the course of this research project.

The second piece of practice undertaken as part of this research is a new play that I have written and directed called *How To Act* (2014). This project can be seen as a return in several different senses. It represents a return to a ’mono-disciplinary’ practice of theatre making after the interdisciplinarity of *The Making of Us*. It also sees me assuming creative control as writer and director after the collaboration with visual artist Graham Fagen.[55] But more significantly than this, *How To Act* marks a return to an engagement with ideas of theatricality in my theatre practice, having examined their function within a visual arts context. In this sense, I have sought to apply some of the theoretical ideas developed during the earlier interdisciplinary research, particularly around notions of truth and what might constitute a 'theatrical truth', to a new example of theatre practice. If the *theoric* emissary returns home newly informed by the experiences of their journey, so too my return to theatre making is informed by my interactions outside of this discipline and in the *festive* contexts I have described previously. Finally, as the last element of this research project, and as a piece of practice that will extend beyond the term of this PhD[56], *How To Act* can be seen as a return from the academic theorising this practice as research PhD has afforded me, to the 'everyday' of my work as a professional theatre maker. Plato's guardian leaves the everyday delusions of the cave to engage in spectating on truth, or philosophy in its emblematic form, in order to return and enlighten those he left behind. For Plato the theorising has to be put to practical use back in the *polis*. Whilst my own journey might not have such grand objectives, and whilst the knowledge I feel I have accumulated from my experiences is in some ways diametrically opposed to that put forward by Plato, my journey from practice to the academy has meant I can return with fresh insight and a desire to share it through my work as a theatre maker. This return to theatre making takes the form of an exploration of Greek tragedy. Although superficially this development might seem like a tangential departure from my line of enquiry thus far, I hope to demonstrate how an engagement with tragedy represents a necessary next stage in my research.

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[55] Of course, all theatre practice can be seen as inherently interdisciplinary and collaborative. Indeed, it is these characteristics that mark out the theatre and theatricality as 'degenerate', compared to the 'purity' of a solitary modernist visual art practice, according to critics such as Michael Fried (see Chapter One).

[56] *How To Act*, originally titled *Masterclass* has been in development from 2014 – the second year of this four-year research project. It has been constantly influenced and changed by this research and has developed in form and content as my understanding of the theoretical ideas that underpin it has developed. It was commissioned by National Theatre of Scotland in 2013, received a rehearsed reading in 2014, considerable re-writes and a new title early in 2015, and is now programmed to be presented by NTS in 2017 as I will outline in the Conclusion.

It was always my intention to carry out a process of continuous practice based development on a theatre project throughout the duration of this PhD. This was in order to have an ongoing forum in which I might allow my developing understanding of the ideas raised both in my theoretical research and also my interdisciplinary work to be reflected in my theatre practice. To facilitate this reflective process I decided to limit some of the parameters of this theatre project. It seemed important to be able to work in conditions that did not have the specific pressures and complexities of large-scale, interdisciplinary and explicitly collaborative work that I experienced with *The Making of Us* in order to carry out a more personal consideration of my developing theatre practice. To this end I decided to work on a small-scale with two performers and with studio theatre spaces in mind for the staging. I also decided to take responsibility for writing the text for the project as well as directing it, so as to attempt as much control and as direct an expression of my ideas in this context as possible. In keeping with this aspiration, at the very beginning of the process I also considered performing in the work. As my ideas developed this felt less necessary, but the presence of a theatre director as one of the central characters is partly a result of this stage of development. This high degree of personal stake in the project seemed important because of an ethical dimension that I wanted it to have from the outset. In these early considerations I was influenced by Nicholas Ridout's book *Theatre and Ethics* (Ridout, 2009) and its analysis of the ways in which theatre has functioned ethically throughout its history. Indeed, the initial and eventual title of the project is directly drawn from Ridout's discussion of the story of Philoctetes from Sophocles at the start of the book and the central question it poses of 'how shall I act?' (*ibid*, p. 1)[57] That this question has an implicit theatrical, as well as straightforwardly ethical aspect is a relationship that Ridout goes on to explore in the rest of his book and one that became a key foundation in the development of my project.

As my theoretical research began to focus on the Platonic interpretation of theatricality as the negative of a certain conception of truth, and the challenges to this posed by thinkers such as Heidegger, I started to look for a means of staging these oppositions through my practice. In reading around this area of research I became aware of the relevance of ancient Greek tragedy to these debates. Tragedy plays a pivotal role within Platonic discourse as a problem for his conception of truth as well as to the life of his ideal republic. To an extent, it is the theatricality of Greek tragic drama that Plato is opposing with his foundational idea of truth in the analogy of the cave and the sun. I also found the lectures on tragedy by Simon Critchley for the European Graduate School (2011b) particularly useful in his analysis of Greek tragedy as the staging of two competing, and perhaps unresolvable, claims to truth. This seemed to suggest a possible form within which I might attempt to explore the oppositional ideas of truth I was interested in. Critchley also provides an engaging overview of the significance of tragedy in a tradition of philosophy that includes Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger and that can be seen as exploring alternatives to a Platonic metaphysical tradition (2011a). Finally, as my understanding of the role of ancient Greek culture, and tragedy specifically, in Heidegger's thought developed, I saw the possibility to attempt a contemporary version of this form of drama as a means of exploring some of these ideas through practice. The performance of Greek tragedy took place in a festival setting, the same festivals that were the destination of the *theoric* emissary mentioned above on whose journey I have mapped my research, and that I have suggested Plato crucially omitted from his analogy of *theoria.* To re-instigate, or 'remember' as Heidegger might express it, an idea of the festive through tragic drama seemed in keeping with Heidegger's ideas of the festive mode as a potential salvation for contemporary humanity explored in chapter two, as well as his use of tragedy more generally throughout his writing. I will return to explore further certain aspects of the role of tragedy in Heidegger's thought after first offering an analysis of my attempts to create a contemporary tragedy that draws on some of the key aspects of the ancient Greek tradition.

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[57] *How to Act* was the project's original title before it was renamed *Masterclass* before its reading at Lancaster University in 2014. The title was then changed back to *How to Act* in 2015 after the discovery that there was another show with *Masterclass* as its title.

My approach in writing *How To Act* involved a process of appropriation of some of the key formal aspects of Greek drama within which to locate equivalent contemporary themes and characters. Structurally, there are obvious ways in which the form of *How To Act* is influenced by classical tragedy. The play is for two actors in the manner of Aeschylean tragedy. It is made up of a series of four episodes that correspond to the different exercises of the masterclass that is its setting, interspersed with four chorus sections, and bookended by a prologue and epilogue. The chorus sections, whilst also played by the two actors, provide an opportunity for comment and reaction to the action of the episodes. There is use of music and dance in these choric sections and an attempt to mimic the direction of travel of the chorus across the stage in the *strophe* and *antistrophe* of Greek tragedy in the physical movements of the performers in this contemporary version. Thematically, like *Oedipus the King* and many other Greek tragedies, *How To Act* opens with a monologue that deals with the idea of crisis and sickness, here, in the current 'state' of theatre. This is an example of the challenging process I encountered of finding equivalents for elements of Greek tragedy in a contemporary context. One of the distinguishing features of the classical tragic hero is their high status, usually a member of a royal family. This aspect of authority is conventionally seen as crucial to the stakes of the tragic drama, the extent to which the protagonist can be brought low, and the presumed political resonance with its audience (Aristotle, 1968: Ch. 15). I chose not to deal with contemporary politicians or heads of state, instead looking to a different kind of authority in the artistic realm. The state or *polis* over which the theatre director protagonist Nicholl presides is that of the specific realm of theatrical production that can be found within a rehearsal room or workshop scenario, where a director can have a high degree of authority over those with whom he or she works. Having a successful theatre director in a masterclass context as the protagonist allowed me to present a world not too distant from the play's audience, but at the same time to present a character with enough sense of authority to explore the play's key issues around power and democracy in a meaningful way.

How To Act raises political questions around authority and democracy on a number of different levels. In the context of the theatre masterclass, the play deals with the authority of the theatre director and the ethical implications of his approach to the creation of material and storytelling. We see Nicholl encourage Promise to share her experiences in order to use them as the basis for the different exercises they undertake. Nicholl's view is that through his supervision of these exercises, as well as making Promise a better actor, he can enable her to render this experience available to an audience in a form that is universally accessible. He premises this view on the idea that there is a universal truth at the core of any experience that theatre can uncover and present. According to this view, theatre can be seen as a democratisation of experience in which the broadest group of people are given a stake in the experiences of the different individuals portrayed, thereby engendering a sense of shared understanding and community. In commenting on the dinner party exercise from scene two, Nicholl argues,

> Nicholl: The truth of who you were in that moment spoke
> beyond time and place to all of our feelings about
> childhood, all of our feelings towards our mothers
>
> Promise: And these people?
>
> Nicholl: Of course, the others…

> Promise: Does it matter who they are? (p. 12)

Nicholl believes that theatrical representation can communicate beyond specific circumstance to a shared sense of identity. He believes that it is the task of theatre, as exemplified in this exercise, to uncover and share these universal 'truths' in a way that transcends difference and promotes a community of shared experience. Even at this early stage Promise questions Nicholl about the specific individuals represented by the shoes in the exercise, but not given any clear sense of identity. She raises the question of whether the representation of specific individuals is sacrificed in the pursuit of universal affect. She develops this challenge to Nicholl's view in the subsequent chorus in which, through reciting a dense list of factual information about the dinner party guests, she insists on the specificity of their identity and the experience she has been asked to relate. Her monologue is an attempt to counter Nicholl's universalist interpretation by foregrounding the specific political, economic and personal contexts in which that group of people came together. She states,

> Promise: My name is Timi Freeman and I'm 34 years old. I was born and grew up in Benin City 300km to the east but I've lived in Lagos since I moved here to study engineering in 1971. I am a foreman for Idowu Construction, a company that has grown from 28 employees to 312 employees in the last 12 months thanks to the $154.8bn investment…
> (p. 13)

Rather than looking beyond specificity to some essential truth underlying her experience as Nicholl suggests, here Promise presents a biography of facts in which understanding of an individual and their situation is gained through being exposed to the unique complexities and detail of their circumstances. Promise is not asking us to empathise with the guests at the dinner party in relating their experiences to our own, but to locate them in a specific time and place as a way of noticing the crucial and irresolvable differences between us rather than the similarities.

Nicholl denies his authority in general terms from the start of the play. In an attempt to diffuse the hierarchical relationships implicit within the term 'masterclass', he states,

> Nicholl: And I for one am no-one's master. (p. 2)

Promise later challenges this denial of authority by drawing attention to the fact that Nicholl is authoring her story through his interpretation of her experiences,

> Nicholl: I'm sorry. It can be difficult. We're digging deep
> and…
>
> Promise: But we're not.
>
> Nicholl: Not…?
>
> Promise: …'digging'. 'Finding the truth'. You're covering the
> truth over.

Nicholl: Ok.

Promise: I mean these things happened but this isn't my story.

Nicholl: I think we're finding something universal here that…

Promise: It's yours.

Nicholl: …
Ok. That's fine. Let's think about that. (p. 21)

Again, Promise suggests that the truth does not lie in the universal as Nicholl proposes. In fact, she states that it is his search for the universal in the creative interpretations of her experience that 'covers over' the truth. It is this 'universalising' process that means the experience no longer belongs to her in the form of the story as he is telling it. Even this challenge is absorbed into Nicholl's methodology within the masterclass as if, by allowing for a different point of view, he is actually reinforcing the authority that he apparently denies.[58]

In his *Twelve Theses on Tragedy* (Critchley, 2011b) Simon Critchley contends that Greek tragedy was a political as well as artistic invention (0:25), a self-conscious and sophisticated cultural construct that fulfilled specific needs for its audience. Drawing on the work of Jean Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, he questions the view, in part drawn from Nietzsche, that the performance of tragedy had a predominantly ceremonial function with its origins in the religious practices associated with gods such as Dionysus (Nietzsche, 1993). In particular, Critchley foregrounds a crucial political dimension to Greek tragedy that, he argues, spoke directly to contemporary debates around ideas of authority and democracy within the state. Referring to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, Critchley proposes that Greek tragedy was the Athenian city-state representing itself, and the key issues it faced, on stage. He argues that this form of theatrical representation of issues of direct political relevance through tragic drama had a profound significance for that culture, including those within it opposed to this approach to politics. This opposition to the political aspect of tragic drama, and the tragic poets generally, came famously from within the nascent discipline of philosophy and, arguably its 'founding father', Plato. We have already discussed in some detail in the first chapter Plato's anti-theatricality and his exhortations to turn away from what he saw as delusions ruled by the emotions to his own particular conception of truth. Critchley points out the concerns Plato also has about *theatrocratia* (0:50), an approach to political organization based on theatre, or the 'sovereignty of the audience' (Republic: 701a). Plato fears that theatrocracy, and its only slightly more desirable relation democracy, have a dangerous disregard for the necessary rules of organization and social and emotional boundaries that are needed for the proper functioning of society as he sees it.[59] According to Plato, on the tragic stage passions rage unchecked, authority is challenged and the very notion of a subject able to govern itself and be in control of its place within the world is thrown into question. Plato fears that these behaviours, and what Claude Lefort has described as the 'dissolution of the markers of certitude' that tragic drama represents will inevitably infect society more generally and lead to eventual tyranny (Lefort in Critchley, *ibid*). Critchley lays out this battleground between Platonic philosophy and tragedy in order to demonstrate that Greek tragic theatre was a democratic expression of the concerns of its audience through the staging of different sets of ideas, usually brought into conflict with one another, that have important societal implications. It is in this sense of Greek tragedy as a powerful and potentially dangerous societal force that Critchley sees it as a political 'invention'.

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[58] I was influenced here by Judith Butler's interpretation of Walter Benjamin's ideas of a progressivist view of history that 'covers over the history of the oppressed' (Butler, 2011:83) from his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1999).

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[59] It is interesting that it is theatre's mixing of different artistic disciplines – separate genres of music with sculpture and dancing etc – that Plato extrapolates to a disregard for the idea

If Greek tragedy directly reflected the concerns of the society that make up its audience by staging the ideological conflicts of the time, *How To Act* can be seen to attempt a similar operation in a contemporary context. It presents a politics of democracy and authority within its world of the theatre masterclass as a way of exploring the performance of democracy and liberal values today more generally. In this way the 'world' of the theatre masterclass acts as a kind of microcosm for society as a whole. It is the *polis* within which this particular story takes place but allows for the staging of certain political relations that can be extrapolated beyond the immediate context of the play. The political relations that the play depicts challenge the idea of a single truth that can be uncovered and shared with the

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of discipline per se and a prompt to societal decline. (This is explored in Samuel Weber's chapter on Theatrocracy in *Theatricality as Medium* p. 31.) We can connect this to Michael Fried's ideas around disciplinarity discussed in the first chapter.

requisite technical knowledge. In the form of Promise, the play offers the alternative point of view that such an approach does a kind of violence to the irresolvable differences and contradictions of specific experience and therefore an injustice to those involved in that experience.

These ideas connect with another of Critchley's contentions, that the subject of Greek tragedy is not the tragic hero but the city-state (*ibid*: 12:20). He identifies fourth century Athens as a society in transition from one being governed by ancient laws and myth to a society attempting to function within a newly created legal framework to which all citizens had access[60]. Greek tragedy, in Critchley's view, stages the conflicts between these two *nomoi* (laws) in the context of a society where the rule of myth has broken down, but the residue of which remains within the new rule of law.[61] This can most clearly be seen in plays like *Antigone* (Sophocles, 441BCE) in which one set of laws pertaining to family and burial rites are in conflict with the laws of an authoritarian state attempting to project its power and control. In *How To Act* it was my intention to situate the debates the play throws up in the context of a contemporary society going through its own difficult ideological transitions. I wanted to explore the idea of a society where the liberal consensus around an ethics of race and inequality have proved to be ineffective and the idea of what constitutes an ethical life for a western liberal has been thrown into question. In this approach I was influenced by Critchley's remarks about the German political theorist Carl Schmitt (Critchley, 2011c) in relation to Greek tragedy. Schmitt's anti-liberal views critique post-war ideals such as universal human rights, and the organisations that are supposed to embody these ideals such as the United Nations, as a mask for western capitalist imperialism and a denial of a real politics of change. These universal values, he argues, deny specific political realities at work in diverse situations and instead allow for the perpetuation of an iniquitous hegemony. I wanted to portray a character who saw himself not only as someone with broadly recognisable liberal beliefs in these kinds of ideals, but actively attempting to do good in his approach to inequality and difference where he found them. I then wanted to introduce another character that would problematise this political world view and throw Nicholl's stable sense of a liberal self into question. In this way *How To Act* follows a similar trajectory of self-discovery as *Oedipus the King* (Sophocles, 429BCE) with the central character of Nicholl self-consciously involved in a quest for knowledge. In Nicholl's case this is an attempt to understand what makes vital theatre and engaging performance, but also a quest to understand something fundamental about Promise's character and life. Through this process he unwittingly discovers a truth about himself that destabilizes his own sense of identity and understanding of the world as he previously saw it. Promise presents a version of events and herself that undermines Nicholl's artistic, political and personal identity by forcing him to see himself through the radically different set of values that make up her idea of the truth.

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[60] Critchley tells us (*ibid*: 12:25) that there were no lawyers in ancient Athens but that all citizens had the right to sue each other, a right they exercised with some frequency. This is one of the reasons that the skills of sophistry were so important to the Athenians, skills we see enacted at the heart of Greek tragedy.

[61] Critchley cites American Western films (*ibid*: 12:40) as an example of a more contemporary art form that seeks to negotiate the boundaries within a culture informed by the founding myths of the 'old west' and a modern legal state.

Nicholl’s tragic fate in this context is sealed by ideological and historical forces at work beyond his specific individual behavior and code of ethics either in relation to Promise or his previous encounter her mother. As Promise points out, the innate inequalities between an older white western man and a poor Nigerian woman in the form of Promise’s mother meant that any ‘normal’ relations were impossible and that any interaction would be dominated by the economic, historical and cultural divisions which governed them. As she states towards the end of the play,

> Promise: So how old were you when you were in the Delta?
>
> Nicholl: …
>
> Promise: 36? 37?
>
> Nicholl: Yes…
>
> Promise: And those girls, my mum, were what 18, 19?
>
> Nicholl: I’m not…
>
> Promise: And they wanted money. That was the deal right?
>
> Nicholl: …
>
> Promise: How much?
>
> Nicholl: …
>
> Promise: How much did you give her?

> Nicholl: I don't…
>
> Promise: Because you had money right? You were being paid to be there. By your government? Sponsored by their corporations? I mean compared to them you were rich. Was it covered by the per diem or did you have to dip into your fee?
>
> Nicholl: …
>
> Promise: Probably the per diem would have covered it.
>
> (p. 27)

Promise strips away Nicholl's romantic version of events to reveal the much less attractive material realities that underlie his relations. This is the truth of the situation according to Promise as opposed to Nicholl's experience of some transcendent moment of human interaction. For Promise there is a whole context of power relations that extend beyond individuals to the broader political and corporate exploitation of Nigeria's resources by foreign interests. This reminds us of the idea about the continuing power of fate that Napoleon is said to have expressed to Goethe, that 'the role fate had in the ancient world becomes the force of politics in the modern world' (Critchley, 2011d). Politics, like fate, the quote seems to suggest, represents the systems within which we exist without our choosing, and the forces that exceed and determine human agency. Nicholl's actions in their broader political context therefore, are an inevitable playing out on the personal level of these geopolitical forces. He is responsible for his individual actions, but he is also the subject to the inexorable forces of history within which he acts. In this Nicholl subscribes to F.W.J. Schelling's definition of the tragic hero, also referenced by Critchley, as a 'guiltless guilty one' (Schelling, 1989: 255). For Schelling, tragedy is an art form with the potential to embody the otherwise irreconcilable concepts of freedom and fate (or necessity as we will discuss later) through the figure of the tragic hero who voluntarily accepts his punishment despite not having consciously transgressed but seeing the ultimate truth of his actions. This acceptance represents the necessary fulfilment of his fate but also an act of free will, a contradiction that tragedy alone, according to Schelling, is able to contain. For thinkers such as Schelling and Critchley, tragedy reveals a world only partially receptive to human agency and therefore, to a profound degree, unintelligible. Critchley draws on the work of Bernard Williams in his book *Shame and Necessity* (1993) to suggest that tragedy is potentially relevant to us today because contemporary society finds itself in an ethical situation more in common with the ancient Greeks than at anytime since (Circhley, 2011b: 39:30). To paraphrase, Bernard Williams suggests that today's society is no longer Christian, in the meaningful sense of believing the universe was created for it, but nor is it 'post-Christian' in the Hegelian or Marxist, progressivist sense of history ultimately culminating in some sort of redemption. The grand narratives, according to this view, have dropped away and our response should be to let go of the urge to fully make sense of the world. In this light tragedy is highly instructive in its depiction of subjects fundamentally limited in their agency and understanding.

Tragedy presents us with a world in which the subject is ultimately forced to accept the limitations of their claims to autonomy and authenticity. Instead, they are reminded of their innate interdependence and the radical instability of their circumstances through the course of the tragic action, and are often destroyed in the process. Nicholl starts the play with a stable sense of self and a strong claim to authority. He is a kind of hero in his particular field (the master of the masterclass) and claims an almost divine insight into the challenges he sets himself. But by the end of the play he has been shown to be all too human in his sexual relations with Promise's mother specifically and his understanding of events more generally. Consequently, his sense of identity as an authority with access to a higher truth is radically thrown into question. This unsustainable combination of the divine and human in tragedy is one that Hölderlin identifies as constitutive of the tragic hero as 'monstrous', his translation of the key term *to deinon* in the Choral Ode from *Antigone* that we will examine later in this chapter (Heidegger, 2014: p.139). The tragic hero is monstrous in the sense that he is both masterful in his agency and utterly impotent at the same time, full of insight and wisdom and yet fundamentally ignorant. The tragic hero and the contradictions they embody are, in this sense, a problem to be solved (and often a poison to be driven out of the *polis*) rather than representing a heroic ability to solve problems in the narrative. Nicholl, like Oedipus presents himself as the solver of problems, in this case Promise's uncertainty over 'how to act' and 'how to be truthful' (p. 6). But it is Nicholl as the embodied contradiction between his good intentions and the consequences of his actions that is exposed as a problem through the course of the play. This exposure culminates with Promise creating the monstrous image of Nicholl in her mother's dress, his face blacked up with oil and forced to dance in the middle of his own ritualistic circle (p. 29).

The character of Nicholl and the experiences and views on theatre that I have attributed to him, draw heavily on the work of the British theatre director Peter Brook and in particular his activities as described in John Heilpern's book *The Conference of the Birds, The Story of Peter Brook in Africa* (1977). In it, Heilpern tells the story of Brook's journey from the north of Africa south to Nigeria with his company of actors and musicians and their attempts to create and perform meaningful theatre for the communities they meet along the way. They encounter many challenges in communicating with audiences from different cultures and with different languages. They are attempting to put into practice Brook's philosophy about making theatre that can transcend these differences as he outlined most famously in his book *The Empty Space* (Brook, 1968). It is Brook's idea of 'the deadly theatre' (*ibid*: p. 11) that he criticises in this book that I draw on for Nicholl's initial monologue and his diagnosis that 'the theatre is dying' (p. 2). This is both to situate the opening of the play within the traditional formal and thematic structures of Greek tragedy as mentioned above, but also to identify Nicholl as part of a certain tradition of post-war theatre making that proposes a reforming agenda and a desire to rediscover in theatre an idea of a more authentic communication with its audience[62]. The play, and this brief description, provide only a partial and to some extent simplistic representation of the ideas that Brook and others have explored.

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[62] We might look at the work of Antonin Artaud, Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski and Bertolt Brecht for examples of this. I will explore this 'reforming' set of attitudes towards the audience further in the conclusion to this thesis.

However, it is not my intention to satirise or offer a straightforward refutation of these ideas within the play. For the play to be successful in my view, these ideas need to be presented in a credible and persuasive manner. The exercises Nicholl stages with Promise should, where possible, succeed in their attempts to effectively communicate a situation and set of emotions to an audience. For example, the childhood scene with Promise hiding under the dinner table looking at the light shining through her mother's dress, should genuinely attempt to evoke childhood memories in the audience in the way Nicholl suggests (pp. 10-11). Similarly, the 'call and response' exercise with the bucket and the water (pp. 16-17) should effectively tell its emblematic story with only this minimum of props in as emotionally an engaging way as possible. The audience needs to see that Nicholl's ideas about theatre and the specific techniques he uses are effective (as I personally believe are Brook's) in order for there to be genuine conflict between the different ideas of truth the play puts forward.

At the end of *The Conference of the Birds* the author describes attending a ritualistic dance in a house in a Nigerian village that he experiences as a transcendent moment. He describes the dancers,

> Worlds turned on them. The spirits of the forest had shown themselves to us. Human bodies became a vehicle for the spirit. And the spirit spoke. Life of reason. Life of so much hope and love. Never had I seen even a dream like this. Yet I can neither describe nor explain it. That in a room I received a

> vision of sheer existence. And that God passed before our eyes. (Heilpern, 1997: p. 297)

It is this experience that provides the conclusion of the quest that Brook's journey through Africa with his company represents and is the key source for Nicholl's experiences in Nigeria as we will see. Throughout the book Heilpern repeatedly explains that Brook's company, of which he was a part, were all 'looking for something' even if they are unable to always articulate what that 'something' might be. Heilpern ultimately realizes that it is a kind of spiritual truth that he is seeking that he thinks, like Brook, exists beyond language and that he finds in the ecstatic dance of the Nigerian women he describes above.

It is interesting that we find in Heilpern's book and the quest it describes the same *theoric* topography and dramaturgical structure that has underpinned so much of my research. The company of actors must take themselves out of their everyday circumstances in order to journey towards and then experience a different set of practices that embody a kind of truth. They are then able to return to their previous lives enlightened by what they have learned and with the potential to pass it on to others. This obviously resonates strongly with the participation of *theoric* emissaries in religious rites at 'foreign' festivals in ancient Greece described in the first chapter. We can also find resonance with the Platonic interpretation of *theoria* as an educational re-orientation of the soul towards truth in the way Brook urges his actors to re-orientate their attitudes towards performance during this journey, and even with the figure of Brook as a kind of Platonic philosopher-king. In the play, Nicholl derives his authority from his experiences in Africa and the lessons he learned there,

> Nicholl: So I guess the reason I've been asked to come here tonight, the reason you're all sat there listening to me, is simply that I've been lucky enough to have stood around some of these circles, in the few places they still exist, and witness this kind of theatre made by those who have not yet succumbed to the sickness. Not that they call it theatre. (*How To Act*, p. 3)

Like the *theoric* emissary or Platonic guardian, Nicholl attempts to impart the wisdom he has gained from his journey to those to whom he returns. It is this knowledge that has the potential to save his *polis*, here in the form of a world of theatre that is 'dying' (p. 3), and gives him the authority of the philosopher-king of this particular sphere. The 'circle' Nicholl refers to is the 'bare circle of earth' (*ibid*) that is the minimum requirement for a stage and therefore for a theatrical performance to take place. As well as being a reference to Brook's *The Empty Space*, this also refers to the circle of shoes that Nicholl creates during this opening monologue and that becomes the setting for the various exercises of the masterclass. It is through this device of the circle of shoes and its different functions within the play that I want to examine some further aspects of this work.

Even during Nicholl's introduction he is gathering together the shoes from the audience in a fumbling, comical manner, interrupting and apologising at the same time. As well as introducing a slightly eccentric but likeable character, at pains to undermine his authority, this action establishes the circle of shoes as a central device and image for the rest of the play and the fictional masterclass it depicts. The shoes demarcate the space in and around which the rest of the action will take place.[63] It is significant that they are taken from the members of the public as I wanted to suggest an onstage audience without actually moving them from their seats. I hoped this audience ‘presence’ on stage would resonate through the different functions that the shoes fulfil, implicating the audience both in the theatre games in which the shoes feature, but also the circle of watchers around the Nigerian dancers in the story Nicholl tells during the chorus sections.

The first chorus section of the play immediately follows this introductory monologue and activates the image of the shoes in a specific way. Although it is only hinted at in this first instance, the shoes in the chorus in part represent the circle of people stood around the dancing Nigerian women that Nicholl saw as such a transcendent performance during his travels, and the story of which he narrates through the subsequent three choruses. In this first chorus we only hear the rhythmic clapping that accompanied this dancing and see Nicholl encourage Promise to join in and copy him in moving around the circle. At this stage the audience can perhaps associate this action with the ‘circles of earth’ Nicholl has described in his monologue, and an attempt to recreate one of them as a condition for further performance. However, from the start there is an indication that the chorus sections exist outside of the rest of the play's unified sense of time and place. They often begin by interrupting the preceding action and end abruptly with a return to the action in the middle of a scene, but having jumped forward in time. The choruses allow for a different, non-naturalistic mode of expression involving a distinct soundscape and more choreographed, non-naturalistic movements. They also allow for a kind of time travel in the sense that they enable Nicholl to narrate in flashback, but also to re-enact, the experience of watching the dancing in the woods in Nigeria. This might resonate with the positioning of the shoes like the dial of a clock face.

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[63] The setting up of the shoes has direct parallels with Brook’s laying out of the carpet on which his company would perform and that was carried out with ritualistic importance before their African performances.

Simon Critchley discusses the idea of tragedy as fundamentally anachronistic in its disruption of the order of historical time in two of his *Theses on Tragedy* (Critchley, 2011b: 7:00). He suggests that tragedy depicts the ways in which the past interrupts and acts on the present outside of our control. The drama of tragedy is not merely a reflection of the past or representation of the present but a disarticulation of the two in which time is necessarily always 'out of joint'. An idea of temporal disjunction is one that features significantly in *How To Act*, both in the manner that Nicholl is relating his Nigeria story in flashback during the choruses, but also because Promise, in the second and third chorus, is referring to a very different timeframe during these same moments.[64] These different timeframes are interspersed with, and run contrary to, one another during the choruses and are accompanied by contrary movements around the circle of shoes in an echo of the

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[64] In Chorus Two Promise is describing the dinner party from her childhood (p. 13) and in Chorus Three she is describing the conditions of the Niger Delta (p. 19).

‘dialectical’ movements of the ancient Greek chorus that accompanied the presentation of different aspects of an argument. Crucially, in *How To Act* we see the past being brought to bear on the present in unexpected ways through Promise making Nicholl aware of the full consequences of his past actions. But Promise also embodies the past in the present. She is herself the result of Nicholl’s past actions and his encounter with her mother at the ‘ritual’ dance in Nigeria. During the course of the play she also plays the part of her mother in a re-enactment of that ritual dance and seduces Nicholl in the same manner, bringing present and past together in a disturbing (and possibly ‘monstrous’) disjunction. This is all done with a determined self-awareness by Promise in the view that this re-enactment, and the exposure of which it is part, is the fulfilment of a prophecy, or chain of destiny, that was set in motion when the original ritual dance took place. Through these actions Promise intends to force Nicholl to confront the monstrousness of his actions and who he is, in an attempt to redress the perceived wrongs of the past.

For Promise the chorus sections provide an opportunity to express information outside of Nicholl’s jurisdiction of the masterclass. In the second chorus, as we have seen, she opposes Nicholl’s universalising philosophy with the specific facts and figures behind the ‘characters’ in the dinner party scene. In the third chorus, as Nicholl reaches the transcendental climax of his story, Promise again focuses on facts and statistics, this time relating to the Niger Delta region and the corruption and pollution endemic to it. This comes directly after Nicholl’s exercise, ‘the story of the water and the land’ (pp. 16-17) in which he works with Promise to create a kind of allegorical mime that attempts to express her attitudes towards her origins in a poetic manner. The chorus therefore can be seen as a reaction to this idea of truth and an opportunity to present contextually specific information that she feels is vital to our understanding. She begins,

> Promise: Between 2003 and 2007 Shell alone admitted it had suffered more than 1,000 oil spills due to what it identified as 'sabotage'. In January 2008, Nigeria's National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency said it had found more than 1,150 oil-spill sites abandoned by various oil companies in the Delta. These oil spills have poisoned the water, destroyed the vegetation and agricultural land, and rendered much of Delta region uninhabitable.
>
> Nicholl: Here it is. Right in front of us. Everything we've been looking for. All the questions we've been asking of how to act, how to be, answered. Everything we've thought about truth and beauty showing itself to us, so close you could reach out and touch it. (p. 18)

Instead of the ritualised circle Nicholl refers to in his story, and that he has recreated for the masterclass, Promise uses the stage as a map and a means of representing her factual version of the truth. The chorus therefore, and the circle of shoes in which it is played out, creates a space in which these two different versions of Nigeria, and the Delta specifically, can exist. Nicholl's transcendent revelation of authentic being in the woods, and Promise's landscape polluted and destitute, are both conjured into being within the chorus sections and presented in tension with one another.

The final chorus brings together these two elements of Nicholl's story and Promise's historical and political specificity, in her version of his transcendent experience of the ritual dance told from her mother's point of view. This comes as a direct result of the previous exercise in which Nicholl encourages Promise to 'become' her mother by putting on her dress as a way of unlocking a more truthful performance. In the chorus Promise uses this as the opportunity to reveal the truth of her relationship with the woman Nicholl danced with and the circumstances of why her mother was present at the dance in the first place.

> *Promise is dancing in the middle of the circle.*
>
> Promise: To make some extra money, the women from the town would put on shows for the tourists at night in the forest. Most of us were trying to save up to get out of there. (p. 24)

She describes the dance as taking place in the past whilst re-enacting it in the present, drawing Nicholl towards her, dancing with him sexually and eventually kissing him. This moment embodies a re-enactment of a past liaison as well as a potentially incestuous act in the present. It is enacted at the same time as Promise elucidates the curse that her mother made at that very moment in the past and that Promise's present actions fulfil.

She starts to kiss him. Increasingly sexual.

Promise: But at the same time, along with all the laughing and the dancing, we were cursing them. We cursed them standing there watching us. Being interested in us. We cursed them trying to understand our traditions, our culture. We cursed their clapping along, their awkward moves, their clumsy advances. We cursed their coming here and their drilling. We cursed their endless need for this dirty stinking liquid that drove them crazy. We cursed all their cars and their planes and their factories and their plastics and their money and their energy and their growth.

We cursed them so that one day all of this would come back to them. What had happened here. What they'd done to these people. To us.

She draws him down to the floor. She kneels over him, straddling him.

So that they'd finally see. Finally see who we really are. How we matter. Finally see the truth. (p. 24)

This is an attempt to portray the kind of tragic temporal disjunction discussed earlier where the past acts upon, and becomes confused with, the present in ways that are impossible to predict. The curse that Promise's mother makes is not specifically about Nicholl but all the circumstances that have led to both he and she being in that situation, forces to a large extent outside of both of their control. Nicholl is Schelling's 'guiltless guilty one', individually guiltless in these historical, geo-political crimes, but guilty of being a product and beneficiary of them and a part of their human consequences. Nicholl went to Africa with the best of intentions to attempt to communicate and share his art. He met and slept with a woman as part of what he describes as a beautiful and life changing experience. None of which necessarily represent crimes or even morally reprehensible behaviour in and of themselves. However, his actions cannot exist outside of their historical and economic context that involves insurmountable inequality and difference. These actions become part of a destiny in tragic terms that bring his past behaviour and present attitudes in the time of the play, into conflict with Promise's version of events. This conflict depicts these attitudes as repulsive from the point of view of Promise and morally ambiguous to the audience. Nicholl is the recipient of the curse of Promise's mother and Promise the means by which it is played out. Ultimately, Nicholl accepts the truth of Promise's verdict whilst at the same time protesting the truth of his individual innocence.

This kind of moral ambiguity is one that Critchley sees as being at the heart of tragedy (Citchley, 2011b: 19:15). Citing Vernant he describes tragedy as consisting of one claim to justice (*dike*) in conflict with another. The debate between these two claims is not carried out in a legalistic manner but by means of the depiction of characters living out these issues, usually involving a great deal of suffering. The power of tragedy persists in its ability to portray this kind of moral ambiguity through the lived experiences of its characters and their different claims to truth. It is this ability that has made tragedy the subject of such fascination to philosophers such as Heidegger engaged with the question of truth and how it might be approached. It is through some of Heidegger's thoughts on tragedy that I will conclude my analysis of *How To Act*.

Much of my thesis to this point has dealt with different ideas of truth. I have examined the anti-theatrical origins of a Platonic idea of truth that, I have argued, inform certain thinking around visual art practice, including specific examples of performance art. This conception of a transcendent, universal and stable truth has been identified by Heidegger as the founding and defining limits of western metaphysics that he feels have now become exhausted.[65] The all-encompassing 'enframing' operations of *Gestell* as manifested through contemporary technology examined in the previous chapter are, he states, an inevitable result of this form of thinking and its approach to knowledge and being. As we have seen, he opposes this form of thinking with a critical analysis which draws on the pre-Socratic concept of truth as *aletheia* or 'unconcealment' and ideas of a *festive* mode in which this 'unconcealment' might take place. In his attempts to overturn the tradition of metaphysics and the assumptions he feels are so dangerous, Heidegger turns to the tragic poets of ancient Greece in order to elaborate what a new kind of thinking might be. As Dennis Schmidt points out in his study of Heidegger and tragedy in *On Germans and other Greeks*,

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[65] This is the central thrust of the argument of Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1959).

> Part and parcel to the call for a new beginning, for an overthrow of the presumptions of metaphysics, is the sharp critique which is leveled against the final forms which metaphysics has taken: the reign of values and the ascendance of technology… Greek tragedy will provide the counterforce to this metaphysical sense of human being. (Schmidt, 2001: p. 240)

It is not surprising that Heidegger looks to Greek tragedy for insight given the importance he places on ancient Greek thought as the crucible of western culture.[66] If we see Plato as the founding father of metaphysics and the author of a conception of truth that Heidegger opposes and that he feels has led to the inevitable conditions for *Gestell*, then it seems clear that Heidegger would look back to the contemporary ways of thinking that Plato himself was seeking to oppose and overthrow. As we saw in his analysis of Plato's Cave discussed in the first chapter, Heidegger is often attempting to rehabilitate the language of pre-Socratic (and therefore pre-metaphysical) thought in his use of terms such as *aletheia,* in order to provide a framework for thinking about truth and being outside of, or before, the 'presumptions of metaphysics'. These ways of thinking, Heidegger feels, can be seen in the work of the tragic poets that provided an important public discourse in Greek society, a discourse that Plato found so problematic and sought to replace. The exclusion of the poets from the 'Republic' and the specific anti-theatricality of Plato's cave analogy, can all be seen as a very conscious attempt to challenge the dominance of tragic and poetic forms of thinking. For Heidegger, conversely, there is a vital, non-metaphysical thinking of being and truth that is presented, “in the highest and purest manner in the poetry of Greek tragedy.” (Heidegger, 1953: p. 106).

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[66] By 'western culture' Heidegger is referring specifically to Western Europe and not North America or Russia.

In fact it is a character from a Greek tragedy, rather than the more expected figures of Plato or Socrates, that Heidegger identifies as ‘the first philosopher’ in his infamous inaugural address as Rector to the University of Freiburg in 1933,

> An old story was told among the Greeks that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. Aeschylus had this Prometheus utter a saying that expresses the essence of knowing: “Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity.” That means that all knowing about things has always already been surrendered to the predominance of destiny and fails before it. (Heidegger, 1933)

Prometheus speaks this line in Aeschylus’ tragedy as he is chained to a mountain in punishment for giving humans technical knowledge (*techne*) in defiance of Zeus’ wishes. Most famously Prometheus gives humanity fire, but also, as *Prometheus Bound* details, all the arts of writing, mathematics, architecture, agriculture and medicine. Prometheus’ statement is about the limits of knowledge in the face of ‘necessity’ or ‘destiny’ as Heidegger explains. His gifts to humanity are great, and crucially in the myth are what set us apart from other beings, but not greater than the forces of destiny, or in a more contemporary interpretation, history. This can be seen as a warning to humanity but also a reflection on Prometheus’ own situation. The statement is made from a position of suffering. Perhaps it is a statement only made possible through the experience of suffering. Heidegger's definition of a philosopher then, becomes not just about knowing the limits of knowledge itself, but that such knowledge is acquired through a lived experience of suffering rather than the theoretical enquiry practised through the kind of philosophy advocated by Plato. We see here again the opposition and interdependence of fundamental ideas of practice and theory that have been present throughout this research. Prometheus embodies a pre-Socratic idea of knowledge through experiential *theoria* as opposed to the contemplative theory then proposed by Plato and Aristotle.

The rectoral address is infamous because it signals Heidegger's implication in the National Socialist Party of which he became a member upon accepting the post at the University of Freiburg. In the address, Heidegger attempts to set out his "spiritual leadership of this institution of higher learning", and its role in "forcing the destiny of the German people into the shape of its history" (*ibid*).[67] This is a role that Heidegger feels has been previously misunderstood through a false idea of 'the sciences' and knowledge in general as "self-sufficient" and "without presuppositions" (*ibid*). This is why he raises the idea of the limits of knowledge in relation to destiny through the figure of Prometheus. Education, and the knowledge that it leads to, can only be of true value if it acknowledges its limits and 'submits' itself to an essential understanding of the forces of history of which it is a part. These remarks seem all too prophetic in their specific historical context of 1933.

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[67] In this proposal for how a society should educate itself and the ethical and historical implications of such an education, Heidegger's address bears distinct parallels with Plato's objectives in *The Republic*.

Whatever Heidegger was trying to achieve in leading this institution of learning was rendered inconsequential by the forces of history unleashed by the Nazis. We can read the statement “all knowing about things has already been surrendered to the predominance of destiny and fails before it” from the end of the above quotation as prophetic of the accommodations to Nazism Heidegger made and the very clear limits to knowledge and learning that their ideology enforced. The fulfilment of this prophecy through Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazi’s is a ‘destiny’ that has overshadowed any engagement with Heidegger’s thought from this point on and can be seen to constitute the tragedy of his career.

The masterclass setting of *How To Act* is in some ways a self-conscious exhibition of technical knowledge. Nicholl is there, despite his protestations to the contrary, as the master of his particular technical discipline, to impart knowledge to those on stage, in the form of Promise, and the audience who have come to learn. Although he would not express it so explicitly, he has returned, like Plato’s guardian, from his transcendent vision of truth around a campfire in Nigeria, to relieve those left behind of their delusions and to show them ‘the light’. The whole premise of the masterclass therefore, makes the metaphysical presupposition that this kind of knowledge can be instrumentalised and transmitted in this way. What Promise forces Nicholl to confront through her revelations are the clear limits of his technical knowledge, both about the ‘seminal’ moment in his theatre making practice in Nigeria, and his sense of his own identity as an ethically liberal individual. Nicholl’s ‘knowing’ is indeed far weaker than the ‘necessity’ of history of which Promise makes him aware. In the end his technical knowledge is no match for the force of destiny that has brought Promise into the world in these particular circumstances and to the moment of this ultimate confrontation. This contemporary idea of destiny is made up of the sexual, personal, economic and geopolitical relations at work in Nicholl's encounter with Promise's mother in Nigeria and their unfolding consequences. By the end of the play the previously stable hierarchies of knowledge have been upset and the role of teacher/director/author and pupil/performer/subject have been reversed in a humiliatingly parodic performance of Nicholl's technical methodology.

> Promise: So what was it like?
> What was she like?
>
> *Promise quickly walks towards Nicholl and forces the dress over his head and down over his body. Nicholl tries to resist but she slaps him again.*
>
> Was it like this?
> Was she like this?
>
> *Promise gets water container and pours oil over Nicholl's head. She smears the oil all over his face.*
>
> Promise: Did she look like this? Pure and beautiful.
>
> *Promise leaves Nicholl in the centre and moves to the edge of the circle. She starts to clap out a rhythm for him to dance to.*
>
> How did she move?
> How did she dance?

Dig deep. Let the memory come back to you.
Try and put yourself in those shoes.
Instead of looking at her from outside, you *are* her.
The truth of who she was.
Come on. Be her.
Move how she moves.
Think how she thinks.
Feel what she feels.
Tell the truth.

The clapping gets louder. (p. 29)

As Promise forces Nicholl into the dress that he asked her to bring along as a tool to unlock the 'truth' of her experience, Nicholl is literally bound up in the means of his own system of representation. Like Prometheus, he is constrained by the limits of his knowledge in the face of the 'necessity' of Promise's revelations and made to understand a different type of knowledge through suffering. Promise forces Nicholl to 'become' her mother by putting him in her dress and blacking up his face with the oil she brought with her. In a parody of his own exercise she asks Nicholl to empathise with her mother by means of this performance thereby drawing attention to the potentially impossible gap such an understanding would have to bridge. This performance emphasises the public dimension of Nicholl's process of self-discovery and moment of tragic reversal in front of the masterclass audience. This reminds us of a similarly ethical dynamic in tragedies such as *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles where it seems important that the tragic hero not only has to suffer a new and unbearable self-knowledge but that this new identity is established in the public sphere for all to see.

Heidegger looks to *Oedipus the King* in a fuller analysis of the thinking expressed through Greek tragedy and what Schmidt describes as "…the most profound insights of the early Greek thinkers regarding the simultaneity of unity and contradiction. This double bind of being which repeats the *aletheic* movement of truth…" (Schmidt, 2001: p. 241) In the character of Oedipus, Heidegger sees the embodiment of these ideas of *aletheic* concealment and unconcealment, ignorance and knowledge, and the complex relationship between them. Oedipus' journey within the play is one from ignorance to knowledge but also, because that knowledge is ultimately unbearable, from seeing to blindness and light to darkness. He begins the play by saving the city through his wisdom in solving the riddle of the sphinx ('in the brilliance of glory', (Heidegger, 2014: p. 117)), but ends it by blinding himself and removing himself from public sight. Heidegger discusses the play's treatment of these themes in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*,

> Step by step he must put himself into unconcealment, which in the end he can only endure by putting out his own eyes, i.e. by removing himself from all light, and letting the protective cloak of night fall around him, and, by crying out, as a blind man, for all the doors to be opened so that such a one could be manifest to the people as that which he *is*. (*ibid*: p. 107)

We can see how, for Heidegger, Oedipus represents the "aletheic movement of truth" from concealment to unconcealment by simultaneously embodying these contradictory values of ignorance and knowledge, darkness and light, seeing and blindness within one character's journey or 'act' of being in the world. These contradictory values are all *true*, in the aletheic sense, of Oedipus' being – 'that which he *is*' - and demonstrate the 'simultaneity of unity and contradiction' that tragedy can portray. Oedipus's determination to *know*, signalled by his solving the riddle of the sphinx before the story of the play begins, is one of his defining characteristics and provides the driving force towards his own destruction. For Heidegger, Oedipus is indicative of the destiny of all human beings to be brought into conflict with a world in which they must try to understand their significance and to take their place in the realm of the universal. Heidegger views this drive to know as constitutive of the human condition and of being in the world, "the passion for the unveiling of being, that is, the struggle over being itself". (*ibid*: p. 117). This is what Heidegger describes, in a phrase borrowed from Karl Reinhart, as 'the tragedy of appearance' (*ibid*: p. 118). Humanity's appearance in the world is a tragedy because he is destined to strive to reconcile the singularity of that appearance within an understanding of the universal. Like Prometheus, Oedipus' knowledge comes through suffering. His previous understanding of himself having been destroyed, it is a knowledge similarly bound up in its own limits. What emerges from this reading is a view of human life that stands in stark contrast with the metaphysical sense of the human being as a stable subject, an agency, standing over and against a world of substances that it seeks to master.

Nicholl can be seen to be 'drawn into unconcealment' throughout the play in that he and the audience are made aware of all the contradictions and ethical complexities that he and his views represent as Promise's revelations are made. He simultaneously embodies both supreme knowledge of his technical discipline and fundamental ignorance of the consequences of his past actions. At the start of the play he is the master of his own world with a strong determination to share his technical knowledge to help others and to ‘cure the sickness’ (p. 3) of his particular domain. In the end however, he cannot reconcile the singularity of who he thinks he is with the realities of the universal context in which he operates. His drive to know the truth and help others do the same is the same striving that drives him to his own unintended self-discovery at the necessary limits of his knowledge. There he experiences the tragedy of who he really is and his ‘appearance in the world’.

It is interesting to note that there is the same play of darkness and light, seeing and blindness, used to describe this process of unconcealment, at work in Plato’s cave analogy. As Heidegger identified in his analysis discussed in Chapter One, it is a process of unconcealment that initially underpins Plato’s story of a quest for knowledge and his proposals for philosophy. The would-be philosopher emerges from the darkness of ignorance represented by the cave into the light of knowledge represented by the sun. But this light is so bright that the philosopher risks blindness, in an echo of Oedipus’ fate at the end of his own educational journey that reveals the knowledge and truth of his identity. However, Plato argues that by gradually reorienting the soul towards the highest truth through the practice of philosophy, and growing accustomed to the light of the sun little by little, this blindness can be avoided. In this way we can see Plato offer an alternative to the ‘tragedy of appearance’ put forward by Heidegger. The tragic trajectory of man’s drive to knowledge and seeing that ends in inevitable blindness is here averted by developing a different relationship with truth. As opposed to truth as a tragedy of being, Plato proposes an idea[68] of knowledge that can be systematised and instrumentalised through the discipline of philosophy.

It is this instumentalisation of knowledge through philosophy, and more broadly science, that Heidegger considers the whole 'tragedy' of western metaphysics since Plato. In this sense, for Heidegger, the play *Oedipus the King* functions as an allegory (or perhaps a kind of prophecy) for humanity's developing relationship to knowledge through this philosophy. As Schmidt concludes,

> Oedipus is linked with metaphysics and its fate, and ultimately the figure of Oedipus serves as a model for the fate of western culture, which has defined itself in terms of the possibility of the foundational knowledge of science conceived in a metaphysical manner. (Schmidt, 2001: p. 241)

In this way I think we can see *Oedipus the King* and Plato's Cave as representative totemic manifestations of the competitive discourses of tragedy and philosophy. Both attempt to deal with man's need to know himself and his place in the world, and represent this as an appearance out of darkness into light. For Heidegger, Western culture has defined itself since Plato through an idea of truth as an external, transcendental given which can be systematized and instrumentalised through the practices of metaphysics, theology and science. In tragedy, Heidegger sees the possibility of uncovering or recovering (unconcealing) an idea of truth that pre-dates this defining moment and understanding the fundamental conditions and experiential truth of human existence that we have subsequently become blind to.

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[68] It is the Greek word *idea* that Plato introduces at this point in *The Republic* to describe this form of knowledge, and that Heidegger precisely identifies as the 'change in the doctrine of truth' from *aletheia* to *idea*.

Heidegger spends much of his analysis of the Choral Ode (the *Ode on Man*) from Sophocles' *Antigone* (lines 332-375) in exploring the concept of *deinon*, the term Sophocles uses to describe this fundamental human condition. As so often with Heidegger, he draws our attention to the extreme problems of translation of any ancient Greek term due to the radically different understanding of fundamental concepts we now have. However, it is precisely the recovery of this understanding that Heidegger is urging, and he sees *deinon* as lying at the heart of a pre-metaphysical concept of being. For his translation he uses the German word *unheimlich*, which in itself can be difficult to translate into English, but is usually rendered as 'uncanny'. He uses this term to open up three aspects of the concept of *deinon* in order to attempt to recover something of its original meaning. I would like to examine briefly these three elements and their relevance to *How To Act*.

Firstly, Heidegger refers to the opening three stanzas of the choral ode in which humanity's achievements in taming nature are listed. He does this to emphasise the sense of humanity's power in mastering his environment, and developing beyond the limits of nature, implicit in the idea of *deinon*. For Heidegger, it is important to note that there is a necessary element of violence in this power,

> The first strophe and antistrophe name the sea, the earth, the animal as the overwhelming that the violence-doer allows to

> break into openness in all its excessive violence. (Heidegger, 2014: p. 173)

Rather than simply stating that humanity is violent, Heidegger here points to the intrinsic violence bound up in the event of humanity's being and its relationship with the world. There is a necessary, 'excessive' violence in man's relationship with the world that he is born into and inevitably seeks to master.

We have already discussed the ways in which Nicholl might be seen to be attempting to 'master his environment' through the putting into practice of his technical knowledge of the theatre and storytelling more generally. He assumes authority over, and re-interprets, Promise's experience by means of this technical expertise and by so doing enacts a kind of violence to it, or 'covering over' of the truth as Promise puts it. However, this is done with the good intentions of enabling her to communicate her experience in a more effective way and become a better actor. For Nicholl this is an obvious goal for any actor and an assumption on which the whole idea of a masterclass is based. This violence then, can be seen to be bound up in and inherent to in the necessary circumstances in which Nicholl and Promise appear.

For the second aspect of *deinon* that Heidegger discusses, he makes use of the *heim* (home) element of *Unheimlich* to give a sense of humanity's inability to feel 'at home'. Because man is a technical being, Heidegger argues, with the power to master his environment through making things, both physically and in language, he will never feel comfortably at home within it. In this sense he ‘re-makes’ his home (also his sense of self) through his technical abilities therefore exiling himself from his ‘original’ home.

> The extent humanity is not at home in its own essence is betrayed by the opinion human beings cherish of themselves as those who have invented and could have invented language and understanding, building and poetry. (*ibid*: p. 174)

Our pride in the technical abilities that set us apart (remove us) from our essential sense of self in the world ‘betrays’ how much we cannot feel ‘at home’. This seems to connect directly with Nicholl’s urge to make stories through language and performance in the play. It is this urge which has driven him out of his home to seek and share truth in foreign lands, an act that inevitably means he is both literally ‘not at home’ but also culturally and ethically adrift as we have seen. It is also his fundamental belief in the power of these stories, and of language and performance generally, to communicate truth that provides the drive towards tragic self-discovery that results in Nicholl being fundamentally undermined and humiliated in his own domain. Heidegger connects this idea of *unheimlich* to Sophocles’ phrase *pantoporos aporos,* which he translates,[69]

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[69] This translation itself ‘does violence’ to the original as many have noted including Stathis Gourgouris in *Does Literature Think* (p. 138). Heidegger conflates the two concepts of *pantoporos aporos* (and later *hypsypolis apolis*) that would have originally been separated by some punctuation, thereby functioning in separate phrases. It obviously serves Heidegger’s argument towards the inherent contradiction and paradox of humanity that these words in Sophocles become singular counterturning phrases rather than separate ideas as they might have originally been intended.

> Everywhere moving forward, underway, lacking
> experience
> having no exit,
> he comes to naught. (*ibid*: p. 164)

It is the hubris of 'everywhere moving forward' that takes Nicholl to Nigeria, a place where he inevitably and crucially 'lacks experience' in terms of the ethical complexities of his very presence there. For Heidegger, there is a sense of constant exile in the 'everywhere moving forward' (or 'journeying everywhere' as it is sometimes translated), but with no hope of resolved arrival other than in death – 'comes to naught'.

It is this idea of 'having no exit' other than in death that Heidegger explores in the next part of his elaboration of the concept of *deinon*.

> The slow pressure that he cannot evade by means of any
> flight is death, (*ibid*: p. 164)

Not only can human beings not escape death, because of our knowledge (*techne*), we are unique in being conscious of its inevitability. This makes our existence, according to Heidegger, fundamentally uncanny. The same technical knowledge that gives us the ability to overcome so many challenges of nature, also gives us knowledge of our helplessness ('lack of resource' in Heidegger's translation from Sophocles) in the face of its ultimate challenge. We see here again an idea of knowledge as being bound up with its own limits as well as a sense of tragedy and destiny that knowledge contains. This echoes Heidegger's earlier comments about death from *Being and Time*,

> Here the entire strangeness of this greatest strangeness is disclosed; not only . . . that as the violent one he drives himself beyond his familiar home, but he becomes the most strange first of all insofar as, on all paths he has no exit, is thrown out of every relation to the familiar, insofar as *atē*,[70] ruin, unholiness, catastrophe, come over him. (Heidegger, 1962a: p. 116)

Heidegger here refers to the beginning of the choral ode that names man (*deinon*) as the 'strangest of the strange' (or uncanny as Heidegger later translates it). The 'tragedy of man's appearance' lies not only in the violence of his inevitable striving to exercise his inherent technical powers thereby disallowing any essential experience of the familiar, but also in the destiny that this striving beyond the familiar can only end in death.

Heidegger connects another phrase from Sophocles' ode, *hypsipolis apolis*, to this fundamental sense of alienation or uncanniness inherent in the concept of *deinon*. He translates this phrase as 'towering high above the place, forfeiting the place' and uses it to add a political dimension to his definition of the human condition. For Heidegger the *polis* is the social space made possible out of the violent appearance of human beings. It is through our technical strivings to overcome nature that this space of human relations is formed. Heidegger tells us that this is the organisation that makes history possible,

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[70] *Atē* refers to the concept of reckless impulse in the tragic hero towards the course of action that leads to their downfall.

> *Polis* means most of all the place, the there, wherein and as which da-sein [being-there] as historical is. The *polis* is the historical place, the there, *in* which, *out of* which and *for* which history happens. (Heidegger, 2014: p. 152)

Where humans appear they must exercise their technical ability to know, master and recreate their world. Heidegger identifies the place where these activities happen (*take* their place) and the relations they involve as the *polis*. However, it is this same activity that drives us to 'tower above' and therefore 'forfeit the place'. The technical knowledge (*techne*) that means we create the *polis*, also exiles us from that sense of place because of its inherent nature. The nature of that knowledge is one of incessant mastery and striving allowing us to 'rise above' rather than being *in* place, destining a 'forfeiting' rather than a being 'at home'.

If the theatre is the *polis* in microcosm for the purposes of *How To Act*, then it can be seen as the place 'in which, out of which, and for which' this particular history is allowed to happen. The masterclass can only exist because of a master, someone 'for which' this space comes into being but who must inevitably rise above it through the very act of being a master. Nicholl literally creates this space by arranging the shoes to act as the forum in which his knowledge will be played out and also to represent the seminal site from which he draws his authority. Through creating this space he unwittingly allows the history of which he is unaware to emerge, forcing him to forfeit his claim to the same space he has created. That it is the realm of theatricality that allows for this exploration of the contradictions and instabilities of the polis in *How To Act*, further elaborates the ways in which an *aletheic* experience of truth might be made available through theatrical means, as this research has argued.

Of course, these issues of an individual's relationship with the *polis* as manifested by the ancient Greek city-state are a central subject matter for Greek tragedy. Plays such as *Oedipus the King* depict a striving for knowledge that can only end in forfeit and exile. Oedipus needs to save (again) the *polis* of Thebes and feels sure he can achieve this through his technical prowess. In gaining the knowledge of his true relationship to this place in order to save it however, he must forfeit his place within it. This is why for Heidegger, Sophocles can be considered a political thinker in that he gives expression to the fundamental nature of the appearance of human beings in the world and how that nature manifests in political life. If we can understand this fundamental nature and the political relationships it necessitates as portrayed in Greek tragedy, Heidegger argues, we can develop a true sense of history in which to contextualise the events and politics of our own times. This was of utmost importance to Heidegger given the earth-shattering events ('shattering against the limits of nature' as Heidegger interprets Sophocles' definition of *deinon*) of the time of writing.

Heidegger sees in Greek tragedy an alternative way of thinking to the assumptions about the human being as a subject with a stable sense of self that he identifies as the cornerstones of Western metaphysics from Plato onwards. Like Plato's *Republic*, written as a challenge to this tragic mode of thought, tragic drama attempts to present an understanding of what it is to be human, the implications of striving for knowledge, and how we relate to each other through political organisation. In tragic drama however, Heidegger sees the possibility of returning this understanding to a pre-Socratic concept of *deinon* that expresses the unresolvable contradiction of human existence in all its strangeness, violent power and uncanny relation to place, self and death. Through this understanding he hopes to develop what he calls elsewhere in his *Letter on "Humanism"* an 'original ethics' (Heidegger, 1949: p. 150) with which to interpret the historical events of his own time.

In *How To Act* I have attempted to put into practice some of Heidegger's ideas about tragedy as well as drawing on Critchley's overview of some of its key attributes. I have attempted to create a central character that embodies some of Heidegger's key definitions of the concept of *deinon,* and to open up a space for a consideration of an ethics that challenges some contemporary artistic and political assumptions. I mentioned earlier the problem of equivalence in this project with reference to the 'noble' status of the tragic hero. My response to this challenge in its various manifestations has largely been to create a microcosm in which the key attributes of Greek tragedy could be said to pertain without the broader significance they might have in the original Greek form. The implications of this strategy can be seen in rendering the equivalent of the king figure from Greek tragedy as a theatre director and the subsequent conflation of ideas of power and political authority within a state with notions of authorship and professional authority within an artistic realm.

The potentially reductive implications of this strategy can also be seen on a philosophical level in relation to ideas such as the *polis*. In *Oedipus the King* for example, the entire city-state of Thebes is in dire existential crisis because of the plague that threatens its people if they do not find its cause. The extremity of this imperative and the implications of success or failure are obviously diminished by finding a contemporary equivalent in the microcosmic world of theatre and the 'sickness' of its perceived artistic failings. Perhaps the most crucial omission in this strategy however is the avoidance of the ultimate narrative event and defining limit of tragedy, death. This is an essential ingredient in the dramatic intensity and conceptual profundity of Greek tragedy that I did not feel able to incorporate into my contemporary version. I think it is fair to say that this alters the fundamental nature of what a Greek tragedy attempts to deal with in an attempt to bring it into line with contemporary narrative expectations in this form, or at least my interpretation of them.

It is perhaps for some of these reasons that most of the thinkers so drawn to Greek tragedy that I have referenced in this chapter, including Hegel, Heidegger and Critchley (Critchley, 2011b), ultimately conclude that any modern attempt at creating a tragic drama that seeks to emulate some of the functions and the significance of the ancient Greek model is doomed to failure. Conditions are so radically different in both our understanding of theatre, but more fundamentally of ourselves, that such an exercise would seem to them purely academic according to this view. The truth of this judgement in relation to my own work will be tested as

How To Act is put into production and reaches its audience over coming years. I will discuss these ongoing and future aspects of my research in the following conclusion.

Conclusions

> Napoleon is alleged to have said to Goethe that the role that fate had in the ancient world becomes the force of politics in the modern world. We don't therefore require the continued presence of the gods and oracles in order to understand the ineluctable power of fate. (Critchley, 2011d)

The tragic turn

There have been an extraordinary number of Greek tragedies of one form or another presented on British stages during the term of this project. In 2015 there were three major new productions of the *Oresteia* trilogy alone in London and Manchester with another to follow in Scotland in 2016. Robert Icke's contemporary adaptation for the Almeida, that subsequently transferred to the West End, was many critics' production of the year (Gardner, 17.12.15). This show formed a part of a Greek season at the Almeida that included *The Bakkhai* and *Medea* as well as an extensive programme of readings and talks that explored Greek tragedy, epic poetry and its contemporary significance. There was also a major new production of *Antigone* played by Juliette Binoche and directed by Ivo Van Hove at the Edinburgh

International Festival and The Barbican in London, as well another *Medea* at the Gate and stagings of *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey* at National Theatre of Wales and Liverpool's Everyman respectively. There have been various theories put forward as to the reasons for this proliferation of interest in Greek tragedy, including editorial features in *The Guardian* (22.5.15) and *The Observer* (4.10.15) newspapers commenting on the phenomenon. *The Observer* suggests that the strong female roles presented in Greek tragedy offer todays theatre makers a way of reflecting contemporary gender politics suggesting, 'for radical feminism, look no further than the ancients' (Editorial, *The Observer*, 2015).[71] Matt Trueman, in his *What's On Stage* article, draws attention to the parallels that have been made in recent productions with the continuing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria (*What's On Stage*, 15.6.15). Whilst acknowledging these factors, Charlotte Higgins in her *Guardian* article also points towards the ability of Greek tragedy to re-work ancient myths in order to examine contemporary issues, often of political urgency. She explains that *Eumenides* from the *Oresteia* deals with the origins of the democratic Greek state and legal system that was in crisis at the time of the play's performance,

> *Eumenides* takes place in a city with no king – the only extant Greek tragedy to lack a royal ruler. This is a play about a kingless society, a democracy; it is about presenting a mythical origin for modern institutions.

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[71] This chimes with another of Critchley's theses – that "tragedy is gender trouble" in its disruption of patriarchal norms (2011b).

The high court at the Areopagus, that provides the main setting for *Eumenides*, had been thrown into crisis three years prior to its production in 458 BCE, with the assassination of its democratic reformer Ephialtes. Aeschylus, therefore, is presenting a story about the values of democracy and rule of law, albeit in a historico-mythical setting, that would have been very current to his audience.[72] Higgins implies that these debates have once more become vital to us today and that we have a renewed appetite for stories that deal with the complexities, often contradictory and irresolvable, of these issues. The limits of democracy and the rule of law, as well as the capacity of people to kill and protect in the name of what they believe to be true, are tested throughout Greek tragedy and resonate strongly with contemporary debates around terrorism, democracy, religious fundamentalism and human rights. That these debates were vexed from antiquity is perhaps of salutary interest if little consolation for contemporary audiences. As Higgins points out in her description of Sophocles' treatment of democracy as a subject matter,

> So it is that the *Oresteia* dramatises democracy as it is invented
> – troublingly. (Higgins, 2015)

This idea of Greek tragedy staging the debates around a society's key values is in keeping with Critchley's contention that these plays were created at a time of difficult societal transition (Critchley, 2011b). He suggests that it was a community attempting to understand and assimilate the previous values of a myth based belief system within a modernised legislative democracy. Perhaps we face a similar challenge today in reconciling the power of ancient religious beliefs, and the extreme force with which they can manifest themselves in contemporary ideology, with the values of democracy and law that are presented as the foundational principles of a Western liberal consensus. Greek tragedy offers us the opportunity to explore the originary complexity of these values of democracy and law and their inherent conflict with other, less rational forces. As the quotation at the start of this chapter attributed to Napoleon asserts, we might look to these belief systems and ideologies for the forces beyond our control that act upon us in an equivalent role to that of fate in ancient Greek tragedy. Perhaps it is the re-assertion of these older (myth based) belief systems and the challenge they pose to contemporary ideologies of democracy and rule of law that give Greek tragedy its current relevance. Equally, Greek tragedy provides a comprehensive study of the uncompromising violence that these ideologies exercise in order to maintain their authority in the face of such challenges, and its repercussions throughout generations.

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[72] Higgins quotes Hall's suggestion that Ephialtes' assassin would likely to have been in the audience of the original performance of the *Oresteia*.

In the light of this perceived relevance of Greek tragedy and the quantity of adaptations and productions on our stages, it may be possible to identify a ‘tragic turn’ in contemporary theatre practice, at least in the United Kingdom, that we might examine alongside the ‘theatrical turn’ that I cite as a starting point for this research. *Instead of accepting the anti-theatrical tenets of Plato’s critique of mimesis as a reason to abolish the inherent dynamics of its own theatricality, theatre is looking towards its origins as a mimetic practice that offers a different account of experience and truth.* One of Rupert Goold’s primary motivations for presenting the

Almeida's Greek season was to 'to go back to the roots of western drama…to understand why we make plays… or why we put any theatre on for that matter…' (*Watch why Greeks matter panel*, 2015). For Goold as a new artistic director there was a need to ask fundamental questions of the form of theatre and the possibilities it has to offer. This kind of exploration of the fundamental dynamics of theatricality in the form of Greek tragedy presents the possibility of a paradigm shift in the ways that contemporary theatre makers view the perceived problems and potential of their own art form. Perhaps Western theatre is finally turning away from its own modernist anti-theatrical tendencies as outlined by Jaques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2009) with reference to Brecht and Artaud, where he observes, "In both cases, theatre is presented as a meditation striving for its own abolition" (p. 8).

Rancière makes the connection between the manifestos of these and other twentieth century avant-garde theatre practitioners in their attempts to reform the relationship between the spectator and the spectacle, with Plato's anti-theatrical philosophy.[73] This has resulted, he argues, in the 'paradox of the spectator' in which an attempt is made to abolish the 'separation' between spectator and performance thereby undermining a perceived passivity on the part of the audience. He writes, "the paradox of the spectator pertains to the curious device that adopts Plato's prohibition of theatre for theatre". (p. 7)

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[73] In Brecht's case this included overcoming the perceived passivity of the audience in favour of an attitude of criticism and enquiry into the action with which they are presented.

Rancière identifies theatre's own anti-theatrical strand in the form of two, admittedly very different, giants of supposedly progressive twentieth century theatre practice. Although they might seek different results, both their manifestos, Rancière argues, rest on the same Platonic anti-theatrical prospectus that we identified in discourses around modernist visual art earlier in this thesis. Might a 'tragic turn' within theatre practice intimate a desire to break free of this paradox and embrace the inherent possibilities of theatricality that I have explored in this thesis? It is interesting to note that it is not just contemporary productions of ancient Greek classics that have been filling our stages, but new plays and new interpretations of contemporary writing that have been greatly influenced by Greek drama. Zinnie Harris' *Oresteia* for the Citizens Theatre and National Theatre of Scotland in 2016 takes the form of three new plays that have been inspired by the Greek original rather than being a direct attempt at adaptation. Ivo Van Hove's award winning production of *A View From the Bridge* (Young Vic, 2014) was premised on his interpretation of Miller's play as a contemporary Greek tragedy. This range of work suggests a potentially broader concern with the fundamental qualities of Greek tragedy than a mere programming fashion.

This contemporary deployment of some of the ideas behind Greek tragedy has, of course, been the starting point for my own play *How To Act*. The process of creation of this piece over the last five years has coincided with this 'tragic turn' in British theatre more generally to the extent that an attempt at producing a contemporary tragedy seems a less esoteric choice now than at the project's outset. In this context the project will form part of a continuing debate around tragedy that has developed over this period. The intention is to present the play alongside a symposium event that will debate many of the ideas raised in this thesis. An initial presentation of the play and accompanying symposium will take place at the Citizens theatre in May 2016 to coincide with Zinnie Harris' new trilogy of plays inspired by the *Oresteia*. Organised in collaboration with Glasgow University and The Theatre and Performance Research Association, the symposium will debate issues raised by *How To Act*, Zinnie's plays and the proliferation of tragic drama more generally with practitioners and academics. The play will then tour to a number of university towns both in the UK and internationally where it will involve students and academics from those universities in the symposia. In this sense the practice as research origins of the play will be embedded within its eventual mode of presentation that will maintain a continuing relationship between the play and the academy. This also feels appropriate to the ideas of *theoria* that have informed my research in its attempts to practice a contemporary *theoric* mode that re-connects philosophical enquiry with knowledge accumulated through practice. It is hoped that holding academic debates around the performances of the play will enable a productive relationship between these different approaches to knowledge that are at the heart of the project. As with tragedy itself, the ambition is not to assimilate or reconcile these different forms of knowledge generated through practice and theoretical debate, but to productively explore the tensions and possibilities of their juxtaposition. There is also a sense in which the tour of the play itself can be seen to constitute a *theoric* journey in its ambition to acquire new knowledge as it travels 'abroad' before a 'return' that will allow for this knowledge to be assimilated into a developing practice. It is hoped that this knowledge will accumulate as the tour progresses and more symposia are held, and this accumulation will be acknowledged within the symposia themselves. Perhaps most fittingly given the explorations around *theoria* that led to the writing of *How To Act*, the National Theatre of Scotland is currently intending to programme the play as part of the Edinburgh Festival in 2017 thereby giving the play's *theoric* journey a festive destination.

My relationship with the visual arts has continued to develop as a result of this practice as research project. I am currently involved in two collaborative projects with different visual artists that build on the explorations around theatricality begun here. The *Enderby* project with video artist Stephen Sutcliffe extends the explicit use of staging devices within the medium of film that I explored in *The Making of Us*. We will be working with the Royal Exchange theatre in Manchester and the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford as the theatrical settings for two stories by Anthony Burgess from his *Enderby* series of novels (1963-84). This theatrical setting will be the frame within which we explore Burgess' ideas of posterity of the artist and afford us the opportunity to develop the idea of the theatre building as a kind of time machine. Time travel features heavily in both narratives as the means by which the protagonists search for the truth in both contexts.[74] This provides an interesting new temporal dimension to the *theoric* journeys explored in this thesis and the encounters with different ideas of truth that provide their destinations. The other project is with Turner Prize winning artist Simon Starling and continues his exploration of Japanese Noh theatre as a way of staging different figures and events from art and literary history. In this piece, *At Twilight,* we are working together to create a performance that draws on the Noh tradition to stage the relationship between W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound and the time they spent together during the First World War translating and adapting Noh plays. In a development of the ideas around tragedy examined in this thesis, the war provides a distinctly tragic backdrop to this relationship and the play we are creating. It raises issues around the role of mythical stories, of particular interest to Yeats in his reinterpretations of Irish folk culture, and their value in a contemporary context of crisis, in the manner of Greek tragedy discussed earlier.[75]

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[74] In *Inside Mr Enderby* it is a school trip run by Educational Time Travel that allows the students to discover the 'real' living conditions of their set text poet. In *The Muse*, a literary historian travels to a parallel universe to discover the truth of the authorship of Shakespeare's plays.

It would be the work of another study to attempt to identify a developing interest in tragedy in the visual arts as a possible further extension of the broader 'theatrical turn' I have identified. As the work of visual artists employing theatrical devices continues, might they also be turning to ideas of tragic drama to deepen their understanding and further explore the potential of theatricality in a visual arts context? Might this be a corollary development to the potential tragic turn in theatre practice discussed earlier? An interesting example of this possibility is my former collaborator Graham Fagen's project for the Venice Biennale in 2015. He brings together the poetry and biography of Robert Burns, as one of the founding figures of Scottish cultural identity, with the politics of race and slavery, through the story of Burns' near involvement in the slave trade.[76] We can identify in Fagen's explicitly theatrical work an exploration of the complexities and contradictions of contemporary cultural politics by means of a staging of iconic (and in a sense mythic) figures from the past and the horrors of history that are bound up with our cultural identity. This seems to me to employ the same strategies as Greek tragedy and its re-deployment of myth as a way of addressing issues of relevance to its audience.

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[75] The play by Yeats and Pound that the project focuses on is *At the Hawk's Well* that depicts a warrior and an old man searching for the waters that will give them immortality. The warrior figure, who is eventually drawn off to war as a distraction from his quest, seems particularly resonant in the context of WWI, and the relationship between the young man and old man pertinent to the relationship between the younger Pound and the old master Yeats. The themes from an Irish myth that Yeats was adapting into a Noh form, can be seen to play out in the context of their production with particular relevance in the manner of Greek tragedy.

From this conclusion of my *theoric* journey of practice and research, other journeys have now begun. *How To Act* will go on its own journey of further exploring the significance of tragedy in a contemporary context, and continuing and extending the *theoric* practice begun here by enabling a mutually affective relationship between the practice of the performances and theoretical enquiry of the accompanying symposia. The interdisciplinary collaborations will continue my journey into visual arts and its exploration of theatricality as a means of framing experience in those artworks. Notions of the festival will continue to play a significant role in my practice, both as a 'destination' for presenting work but also as a historical and philosophical framework within which to situate my ideas. Supporting all this activity will be a *theoric* practice that combines the creation of new art works with academic research, illuminated by the work I have done here to inform and enrich that relationship.

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[76] In 1792 Robert Burns was booked on a ship to Jamaica from Scotland where he was to take up a position as a slave overseer. It was the positive reception of the Kilmarnock edition of his poetry that gave him incentive to remain in Scotland.

By mapping this project onto the journeys of practice-based and intellectual *theoria*, I hope to have provided the reader with their own *theoric* experience. They will have followed the theoretical paths I have plotted out through ideas of theatricality and philosophies of truth. They will have engaged in the practice-based journeys I describe, both as a spectator and a creator, to the ‘festive’ presentation of work. This journey will hopefully have offered insight on both levels of theory and practice and allowed for a ‘return’ from this reading, having identified useful connections, resonances and tensions between the two.

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