This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

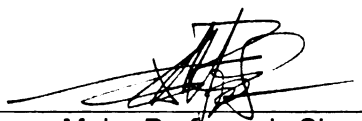
"A Different Kind of Failure": Rupture, Transfiguration and the Future of Indeterminacy in Modern Drama

presented by

Lance Norman

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in English



Major Professor's Signature

JULY 19, 2007

Date

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer

"A DIFFERENT KIND OF FAILURE": RUPTURE, TRANSFIGURATION AND THE FUTURE OF INDETERMINACY IN MODERN DRAMA

By

Lance Norman

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

2007

ABSTRACT

"A DIFFERENT KING OF FAILURE":
RUPTURE, TRANSFIGURATION AND THE FUTURE OF INDETERMINACY IN MODERN DRAMA

By

Lance Norman

"'A Different Kind of Failure': Rupture, Transfiguration, and the Future of Indeterminacy in Modern Drama" reconceptualizes the direction and stakes of an evolving twentieth-century dramatic practice. A productive interplay occurs between what I characterize as the theatre of rupture, and the conservative function of dramatic theory and criticism, which I name the theatrical meaning matrix. This theatre of rupture locates dramatic performance in the breakdown of dramatic signifying systems, and thereby conceptualizes dramatic innovation in the failure of seeing, and the failure of linear causality. Such a conception, which embraces the dramatic potential of dismemberment, incorporates the seemingly divergent theatres of Henrik Ibsen, Harold Pinter, Sarah Kane, Sam Shepard, Eugene O'Neill and Eugene Ionesco. Focusing on off-stage objects, the paradoxical proliferation of the dead child as dramatic emblem, and invisible objects, this project analyzes the dematerializing, dehistoricizing, and decontextualizing function of modern drama. Comprised of dramatic theory and dramatic criticism, the theatrical meaning matrix encompasses attempts to resist rupture by contextualizing the dramatic text and the theatrical event. Taken together, the theatre of rupture and efforts to interpret it enact a traumatic model. Traumatic in that despite the dismembering and decontextualizing structure of the theatre of rupture, the matrix attempts to overcome this indeterminacy by placing the drama in an understandable

historical and material context. This compulsion to contextualize is explicit in the semiotic approaches to the theatre characterized by Keir Elam, and the phenemonological approaches by such theorists as Richard Roach and Andrew Sofer. In the efforts to shield theatrical performance from the trauma of rupture, the theatrical meaning matrix ignores what it means not to see.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I:

"Philology Leads To Calamity!" [1]

Introduction: Perverse Possibilities Plaguing Modern Drama

> *If the essential theater is like the plague, it is not because it is contagious, but because like the plague it is the revelation, the bringing forth, the exteriorization of a depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind, whether of an individual or a people are localized.* (Antonin Artaud 30)

> *A dear friend of mine wrote to me that Virginia Woolf gnawed at her, and that such a play must have something to it – that it could not be ignored. That's right – there is no way in which we can ignore danger or disease. But it is not right therefore to welcome the plague into our midst. We must not ignore what Albee represents and portends, either for our theatre or for our society. The lie of his work is the lie of our theatre and the lie of America. The lie of decadence must be fought. It is no accident that the other side of the coin – the lie of painless goodness – also had a fine run on Broadway as it was portrayed in Robert Bolt's comforting paean to nostalgia, A Man for All Seasons. We must fight both lies. But Albee's is more dangerous – for it is a lie in current usage these days, and one which is likely to have an infective and corrosive influence on our theatre.* (Richard Schechner, "Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?" 10)

In his first editorial after taking control of *The Tulane Drama Review* in 1962, Richard Schechner proposed a new direction for the journal and for the American theatre. He suggested the journal's editorial section would provide leadership, and work to transform the theatre from "the call girl of money and ambition" by restoring "virginity to the theatre" (8).[2]

Schechner's revirginization project would begin to clarify in the following issue's editorial. Titled "Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?," Schechner's commentary holds Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* up to ridicule, and in the process seems to

proffer it as an example of the theatrical prostitution referenced in the previous issue. Schechner replaces sexual metaphors with metaphors of contagion as a means to differentiate good theatre from bad. Albee's play is not just a poor example of theatrical practice, its performance puts the entire body of American theatre and society in peril. Schechner describes *Virginia Woolf* as a "disease," as "infective," as "corrosive," and most strikingly, as a "plague." Comparing theatre to the plague – especially when such a characterization occurs in the drama journal's editorial – recalls Antonin Artaud's formulation of theTheatre of Cruelty, in which "[t]he theatre like the plague is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure" (31).

Artaud's plague is also a sign of theatrical revitalization. By exteriorizing " all the perverse possibilities of the mind," the plague will transfigure the world: "the action of theater, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world" (31). Rather than a thing apart, the Theatre of Cruelty is part of the world, transforming things for the better by revealing truth. Schechner is sympathetic with such an ideal. Schechner's editorial marks an early step in his search for an authentic theatre that would culminate with his anthropological vision of performance studies, and the transformation of *TDR* from a drama journal to a journal of performance studies.

If, as Schechner suggests, *Virginia Woolf* is symptomatic of the plague, then Schechner's plague is the bane of the modern theatre, not its salvation. The plague never achieves the effect Artaud promises. Far from establishing the interconnection between theatre, the world, and truth, the American theatre and its representative carrier reinforce

what is plaguing the theatre: theatre's artifice which Schechner understands as the seemingly insurmountable distance between the world and theatre:

> Albee's characters, like the playwright himself, suffer from arrested development. They play the game of decadence, just as he plays the game of creativity. There is no real, hard bedrock of suffering in *Virginia Woolf* – it is all illusory, depending upon a "child" who was never born: a gimmick, a trick, a trap. And there is no solid creative suffering in the writer who meanders through a scene stopping here and there for the sake of a joke or an easy allusion that *almost* fits. (8)

Albee's characters may be playing the game of decadence, and their author may be playing the game of creativity, but what games are Artaud and Schechner playing? Artaud asserts: "If confusion is the sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representations" (7). Beginning with this assumption, Artaud suggests that his Theatre of Cruelty can overcome the fundamental rupture between culture and life which modern civilization perpetuates. Theatre purifies by revealing the authentic beneath the artificial, thereby suturing the rupture between things and words, ideas, and signs.

Schechner implies that if there is a Theatre of Cruelty, it is vastly different than the cleansing plague envisioned by Artaud. As plague symptom, *Virginia Woolf* fails to purify. Albee's play embraces the theatricality of the mask, instead of allowing the mask to fall and reveal what was previously obscured. Rather than a means to transcend the rupture between things and ideas, Albee's play plagues Schechner with the possibility that theatre can be an end in itself. If the plague is a futile means to overcome rupture,

Schechner must find some other means to reconnect theatre to life because the plague that is *Virginia Woolf* reinforces the very same rupture between things and ideas that Artaud imagined ending in a death or cure.

Underpinning both Schechner and Artaud's understanding of a theatre that must reconnect with life is a conflict over the issue of context. Artaud embraces his Theatre of Cruelty as a mechanism for seeing beneath the world's metaphorical mask, and Schechner critiques Albee's imaginary child because it is a mask – a theatrical function - that reveals only absence underneath. In an essential irony, Classical Greek Drama is also founded on the use of the mask. In theatre the mask's obscuring function is inextricable from its revealing function. Artaud and Schechner's theatres of transformation - along with the theatrical visions of many other modern theorists including Brecht, Meyerhold and Grotowski – try to transform the theatre by rejecting the mask. Artaud and Schechner obscure the still-present obscuring function of the work that is intrinsic to drama.

Confusing the mask with the object it hides underneath, or the object that the reader wants to be hidden underneath, ignores the rupture essential to theatre, between representation and the object being represented. Artaud and Schechner both exhibit a compulsion to contextualize this rupture by equating theatrical meaning with objects that are seen and which have a physical presence. In essence, Artaud and Schechner contextualize thereby enabling them to read dramatic signifiers as synonymous with drama's meaning. Artaud and Schechner's ideas thus both are symptoms of the compulsion to contextualize, and hence resolve dramatic rupture in Modern and Contemporary Drama. Tracing this conflict from Ibsen to the present, this dissertation

explores the inherent rupture occurring in theatre between objects and their corresponding ideas. It also examines Modern Drama's efforts to overcome this rupture in its every manifestation in drama, performance, dramatic theory, and dramatic criticism, materially and historically recuperating ruptures by contextualizing them.

Neither Artaud nor Schechner can accept the rupture between performance and meaning as an aspect of theatricality. Rupture, thus, must be evidence of a theatrical flaw, a shortcoming to be overcome. Artaud and Schechner, thus, ignore the character of *Virginia Woolf's* theatrical revelations. Despite all efforts to conceive of Albee's play as an aberrant example of bad drama, *Virginia Woolf* envisions the working of drama as the rift between things and ideas and the failure of dramatic transfiguration. Artaud and Schechner's idealization of real world effect, gloss over how it is difficult to demarcate theatre from any other representational system when theatre is envisioned as akin to the world at large. Only by focusing on the signifying system of Modern Drama and the way this system calls attention to itself does drama differentiate itself as a system of signification. One clear way to maintain such a focus is to perpetuate the very rupture between things and ideas Artaud and Schechner marginalize in their privileging of a mimetic theatre.

Primary among Schechner's problems with *Virginia Woolf* is the play's imaginary child. Schechner's anger at being tricked and trapped by a child who was never born is a peculiar critique. Not to be overly glib, but George, Martha, Nick, and Honey - like Macduff - were of woman never born. The fake child disrupts Schechner's understanding of theatrical signification. Where he expects to find a mimetic theatre, a play that embraces its own narrative constructs, and one in which signifier = signified, he

finds instead that signification is tenuous. The play reveals that signifiers that are taken for granted are empty of all phenomenological content.[3] Further, this process of signifying absence is inherently theatrical.

George and Martha are both aware that the imaginary child represents nothing so much as the gap between the sign and its anticipated referent. A metatheatrical constellation of performative enactment, the play is George and Martha's continuous performance. George and Martha model a non-mimetic theatre for Nick and Honey. In the second act, Nick and George could be almost engaged in a metatheatrical exchange questioning the structure of a non-mimetic theatre:

> Nick: I'll play the charades like you've got 'em set up . . . I'll play in your language . . . I'll be what you say I am.
>
> George: You are already . . . you just don't know it.
>
> Nick (*Shaking within*): No . . . no. Not really. But I'll *be* it mister . . . I'll show you something come to life you'll wish you hadn't set up.
>
> George: Go clean up the mess. (255-6)

Metatheatrically speaking, Nick glimpses the semiotic gap, but still believes in mimesis. Playing in George's language involves understanding theatrical performance as the play of signifiers unmoored from their anticipated signifieds. Perhaps most significantly, the non-mimetic theatre calls attention to a long standing phenomenon. Nick recognizes the non-mimetic theatre as a future endeavor and as something he will become. Nick needs to understand that as a character he has always been playing in such a performative field.

He has simply refused to see it. It is impossible to do anything other than play in George's language.

George and Martha also exploit and critique the way audiences read theatrical signs. Nick, Honey, Schechner, and the audience at large believe in transparent signification – that things are what they seem, that all signifiers have signifieds, and refuse to acknowledge a non-mimetic theatre. If George tells a story about a school friend who kills his mother and father, then such a story adds information about the narrative world of the play (217). Similarly, if Martha reveals that the school friend is really George himself, then such a disclosure gives access to George's past (244). If Martha refers to her child, mimetic logic assumes she must have a child. As the metatheatrical audience, both Nick and Honey presume that uttering a sign creates a mimetic bond – saying there is a baby means there is a baby. In such an economy, even if the object is obscured from view an audience still reads the narrative signifier as part of a successful chain of signification.

Signifiers can short circuit and never connect to the referent anticipated by an audience. Of course, this is the revelation *Virginia Woolf* prepares its audience for from Martha's citation of *Beyond the Forest* (1949) which begins the play. Martha knows who starred in the film, she can relate the plot, but the title remains frustratingly out of her grasp. Similarly, pronouns prove to be slippery things. When Nick refers to Honey, George thinks he is talking about Martha (213). Every utterance is a signifier that may have no exterior veracity, and no referent:

> Nick: Hell, I don't know when you people are lying, or what.
>
> Martha: You're damned right!

George: You're not supposed to.

Martha: Right! (283)

Albee's play, George and Martha's metatheatrical performance, Schechner's plague, and Artaud's rupture between things and ideas are all founded on the essential unbridgeable gap in theatrical signification. A theatrical performance contains the possibility of unmoored signifiers run amok.[4] Unlike Chekhov's famous assertion that a gun visible in Act One should go off by the end of the play, Albee's signifying gun never shoots to Schechner's satisfaction. Signs are always understood in a theatrical frame.[5]

At the moment the child is revealed as imaginary, the audience confronts the possibility of a non-mimetic theatre in its most pronounced form. A stand-in for the perceptions of the audience, Nick violently announces: "JESUS CHRIST I THINK I UNDERSTAND THIS!" (307). Nick's reaction comes on the heels of George's ritualized murder of the child and administering of last rites. Only after being presented with the representation of imaginary child as dead child can Nick see through the signifying web by which theatrical meanings accumulate. Far from the gimmick which Schechner dismisses it as, the dead child reveals Schechner's compulsion to contextualize and to believe in theatrical materiality.[6] Schechner is not alone. The non-image of the dead child which reveals a theatrical signifying absence becomes a repeating emblem in Modern and Contemporary Drama. Not only is there no there there – no object to receive the signifier – the dead child calls attention to this fundamental absence and announces that rupture is intrinsic to theatrical performance.

Schechner and Artaud's struggle for a theatre that transforms the world and makes it better is certainly a noble ideal. However, focusing solely on the mimetic workings of

theatrical representation obscures the plague infesting the modern and contemporary theatre. Believing in a mimetic theatre to the detriment of any other vision of theatre is to risk falling into the same traps as Nick and Honey. The modern and contemporary theatre is a complex interplay between signifiers and objects. Schechner's critique of *Virginia Woolf*, and Hugh Kenner's characterization of *Waiting for Godot* as "a quite realistic way of looking at" the French Resistance transforms theatrical working to theatrical meaning by reading divergence and mimetic failure as unification.

Even when dramatic theory and criticism knows better than to replicate the Nick and Honey technique of understanding signifiers as synonymous with signifieds, there seems to be a level of uncertainty over what to do with freely roaming signifiers, such as Andrew Sofer exhibits in his excellent phenomenological study *The Stage Life of Props*. In an early endnote, Sofer confesses: "I thus exclude from my definition of the prop all invisible, mimed and imaginary objects, since such borderline cases raise almost insurmountable verification problems" (208). Since the non-object cannot be verified, it must be excluded from Sofer's study.

The object not there is a symptom of the workings of modern drama, and Sofer's "[i]nsurmountable verification problems" are a sign of the compulsion to ignore the symptom. The object not there certainly complicates efforts to understand the prop. However, simply dismissing such theatrical effects from a dramatic study creates the illusion that insurmountable verification problems do not exist. Theatre is about the unseen as much as the seen. By only focusing on the visible, theatrical theories and criticism contextualize understanding by dismissing the indeterminate and embracing the material and the known.

In this dissertation, I focus on the indeterminacy that a mimetic theatre must read as a failure. I work to see the blind spots in dramatic texts that theatrical performances perpetuate. Certainly reliance on the non-object is not new to dramatic practice. From Laius's off-stage evocation in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* to the invisible objects that pervade the Early Modern Stage, the non-object proves to be more an aspect of theatricality than modern theatricality. However, from Ibsen to the present dramatic texts question the position and function of the non-object, instead of merely accepting it as a theatrical component. Beginning in the late-nineteenth century with the emergence of Ibsen on the international stage, drama and theatre not only evoke what escapes phenomenological presence, but dramatic texts interrogate the dramatic import of disentangling signifiers from objects.

Contemporaneous to dramatizing absence, the dead child emerges as a surprisingly frequent metatheatrical emblem. Similar to its effect on Nick and the audience of *Virginia Woolf*, the dead child in its various manifestations illuminates the conflict of contextualization proliferating in Modern and Contemporary Drama. The dead child both allows an audience to envision the indeterminacy that so many modern plays cultivate, and marks the seemingly overwhelming compulsion to bury the indeterminate sign in a system of materiality and causality.

The following six chapters are grouped into three parts. Much like the conflicts I outline, each part begins with an introductory section which highlights a different facet of rupture: metatheatrical, material, and temporal. However, while the majority of contemporary dramatic theory and criticism exhibits a substantiated effort to overcome theatrical rupture and the indeterminacy which accompanies it, my prefatory material

reinforces the ruptures intrinsic to dramatic form and postulates that these gaps are central to dramatic practice.

Encompassing this introduction and Chapter One, Part I frames a theatre of rupture as an alternative to an illusive, and perhaps illusory transfiguring theatre. Symbolist theatre, realist theatre, classical theatre, and performance art diverge widely in their understanding of theatrical presentation, but they all share a similar vision of a theatre that matters to the extent it can become a part of, and can transform the world. Signifiers may vary, but these diverse theatrical systems strive to achieve the same signified. In this context, mimesis is always a failure. To the degree that theatre represents the world instead of being part of the world theatre is insufficient. However, Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* conceives theatricality in radically different terms. The duck is an object that is perpetually referenced but never seen over the course of the play. There is no duck. Like Albee's child, the gap between the duck as signifier, and the duck as object creates a representational gap – a rupture between sign and referent. Ibsen's characters try and fail to conceptualize the duck as a component of various transfiguring theatres such as realism and symbolism. The play ultimately privileges the sign that has no object and cannot be transformed as part of a metatheatrical space. Such a process idealizes a theatre of rupture as a legitimate alternative to transfiguration.

Part II, continues the exploration of a theatre of rupture glimpsed in *The Wild Duck* through the lens of the dead child as a metatheatrical emblem of rupture's functions. In *Oedipus Rex* Western Drama embraces narrative causality over indeterminacy, and living child over the emblem of the dead child. However, Modern Drama exhibits an abiding interest in the dead child beginning with Ibsen's move toward

symbolism and continuing to the present. The dead child appears in plays seemingly regardless of country of origin, or dramatic style. At root paradoxical, the dead child is the dramatic ideal striven for, and never realized. In *Oedipus Rex,* because of the steps taken by Jocasta and Lauis, Oedipus should die as a child. However, fate dictates that he cannot. In order for the play to institute a causal frame, it must resist the dead child by improbably ignoring probability. Traversing the Oedipal path not taken, Modern Drama confronts this intuitive causality that can never come to pass. Frequently referenced, but seldom entering staged representation, the dead child perpetuates a conflict of contextualization as it disrupts causal structures and resists narrative and phenomenological foreclosure.

Chapter Two returns to the work of Ibsen and considers the dead child as metaphor in *Hedda Gabler.* As a character, Hedda Gabler wants to be free, but other characters work to contextualize and control her. Hedda resists such efforts to encapsulate her by dismembering historical and textual representational structures. Metaphorizing the historical text as a child, Hedda ritually murders it in the hope of achieving the liberation that has been denied her. This is only a temporary victory. The metaphorical dead child only offers a glimpse of the freedom intrinsic to theatrical rupture. Before long, the historical text - and by corollary the dramatic text – uncannily begins to reassemble itself, and entrap Hedda in its contextual wake.

Focusing on the dead child as a traumatic utterance, Chapter Three reduces the distance intrinsic to metaphor. In Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*, the dead child erupts as a metonymic bond representing the unrepresentable nature of dramatic rupture and indeterminacy. A sign of Rebecca's power as well as the power of dead child as

utterance, Rebecca's words cannot be located in a mimetic frame without deforming their import. Although as her would-be oppressor, both Devlin and critics of the play try to contextualize Rebecca's evocation of the dead baby by placing it in the recognizable historical context of Rebecca's past and World War II, such efforts highlight the failings of historical causality as an all-encompassing interpretive strategy. The vision of theatre evoked by the dead child utterance cannot be mimetically bound.

Chapter Four culminates the discussion of the dead child. In Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*, the dead child as narrative signifier connects to its phenomenological object. However, entering visual representation does not provide a means for the emblem to become determinate and overcome rupture. Kane and Shepard's dead children perpetuate theatrical rupture through an excess of representation. In *Buried Child*, the child moves from off-stage non-object to on-stage object only after Vince is himself introduced as a dead baby substitute. The play ends with Vince as the dead child who will not stay dead sharing the stage with the dead child. The dead child is only staged after it can be viewed as both alive and dead. In *Blasted*, the dead child is the ideal that remains inaccessible. Ian wants to become the dead child, but despite his best efforts, he cannot make the transformation. In both plays, the dead child as visual object cannot contain the fullness of dead child as sign. An indeterminate living double encapsulates the dead child's representational excess.

While parts I and II are primarily interested in a material rupture, Part III highlights temporal indeterminacy and contextualization. Chapter Five considers historical representation as a suturing force, and the compulsion to view drama and history as twin constructs. G. B. Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*, and

Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* envision a drama that tries to overcome rupture. History becomes a rigid construct which struggles to absorb an indeterminate present. However, unlike *Hedda Gabler* and *Ashes to Ashes*, efforts to contextualize *Saint Joan, Copenhagen,* and *The Emperor Jones* do not stop with the plays themselves. Elaborate paratexts attempt to contextualize the plays historically in the same way the plays struggle to contextualize their protagonists historically. Textual and performative paratexts work to contextualize indeterminate texts by placing the plays in determinate frames.

Chapter Six concludes this project by locating the future as a source of temporal indeterminacy. The antithesis of the history play's belief in dramatic causality, the theatrical future embraces the possibility intrinsic to rupture. Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, Jean Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine*, and Eugene Ionesco's *The Killer* evoke a future. By outlining a temporal moment that has yet to occur, all three plays create an idea of performance. This performative future is only an idea because once it is enacted future performance ceases to exist. Performance becomes present. This perpetually deferred future is a site of possibility and a paradoxical realization of the theatre of rupture.

Chapter One:

Ibsen, Suicide, and Secrets Gone A-Fowl: The Failure of Transfiguration and the Rupture of Cruelty in Modern Drama

> *Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions* (Aristotle 10).
>
> *Hedvig: No. The hens have got friends they used to be chicks with; but she's been separated from all her family. And there's so much that's strange about the wild duck. No one knows her. And no one knows where she came from* (Ibsen 72).
>
> *Besides theatre is not life, any more than a wheel is a leg* (Apollinaire 157).

I Mimetic Theatre and the Transfiguring Ideal

In Act Two of Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, Gregers, in a moment of condescension, offers to take Ekdal with him when he returns to the mill. Unlike the city in which Ekdal lives, the mill offers access to a thinned out but still viable forest. Gregers views Ekdal as a thing of nature who has been confined to a meaningless existence within a metropolitan prison. He cannot understand why Ekdal would consent to live in the attic turned studio which serves as the Ekdal home, knowing that the natural world is still out there: "But what about the cool, sweeping breezes, the free life in the forest, and up on the wide, open spaces among animals and birds? These things which have become a part of you?" (55). For Gregers, Ekdal's life in the loft has led to a essential loss of self as

well as a loss of freedom. Ekdal can only prosper as part of the natural world of the forest.

In reply to Gregers's magnanimous offer, Ekdal offers to open the eyes of Gregers, and the audience. In a moment of passion, Ekdal strikes the table and pronounces that Gregers "*shall* see it!" (56). Rather than debate the relative merits of the studio compared to the thinning forest around Hoydal, Ekdal will show Gregers the attic's benefits. As language fails to illuminate the interconnection between the loft and freedom, Ekdal turns to perception. If Gregers will just look, he will see a world he was not aware existed. Gregers will see a world in which a man of nature can be content in the city. Beyond the loft door he will see chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and, the crowning achievement of the loft, a wild duck.

The wild duck does not convert Gregers as easily as Ekdal may have hoped. Even upon seeing the wild duck, Gregers does not recognize the duck for what it is. He first classifies the pride of the Ekdal menagerie as a bird, and even after he revises his initial perception to the more specific duck, Gregers is unable to recognize the wildness when left to his own devices. Ekdal must tell Gregers that it is a wild duck and even after this telling, Gregers is unable to appreciate the duck in the same manner as Ekdal. Ekdal offers the duck as an explanation, but if it explains anything to Gregers it certainly does not reveal Ekdal's satisfaction with the studio.

The duck illuminates a gap between the Ekdals and Gregers's world view. In a decidedly Platonic turn, for Gregers an imitation must be an insubstantial shadow of the actual object. The actual forest is privileged over and above the loft which represents it. The mimetic milieu behind the loft door may offer more satisfaction than a loft without

any conception of a forest, but an imitation of a forest is a poor substitute for a "real" forest.[7] This emphasis on the "real" and the "authentic" as the ideal behind representation bears a distinct resemblance to the evolutionary progression toward reality offered by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Auerbach suggests that mimesis served "as a basis on which the world could be ordered, interpreted, and represented as a reality and as a whole" (231). In Auerbach's terms, mimetic success occurs as the representation approaches the object being represented.

Opposing this view, Ekdal baffles Gregers's Auerbach-like understanding of signification. The studio offers more satisfaction than the forest. The imitation or the representation is an end in and of itself. In Aristotelian terms, "we take delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them" (6). Seemingly, the pleasure Ekdal derives from experiencing the imitation as an imitation has little to do with the desire to access, understand and organize some traditional conception of authenticity. As imitation of the forest near Hoydal, the loft offers pleasure in the recognition that it is an imitation. In Ekdal's understanding, mimesis emerges as a representation of an action. After acting as the causal force by which an imitation emerges, the exterior action becomes irrelevant. Mimetic pleasure contains an awareness of the relationship between the imitation and some conception of an authentic action, but the pleasure does not derive from a metaphoric relationship between the two. Instead, pleasure derives from a sense of self-sufficiency. Pleasure emerges to the degree that the imitation transcends the authentic object, and the imitation becomes something unique and independent. The loft gives Ekdal pleasure through

itself, and not through its connection to the object it represents. As an imitation, the loft contains an attribute that the actual forest lacks. Paradoxically, the very recognition of the loft as an imitation forges its own independent authenticity.[8]

The Wild Duck's two opposing conceptions of the imitative loft space's utility envisage drama itself as a thing in flux. The metatheatrical nature of the loft and the play is outlined by Matthew Wilson Smith in "*The Wild Duck*: A Play of Play:"

> The Werle curtains mark off the music room as a play space for the bourgeoisie, a well-lit space with the air of genteel play about it: music and parlor games. The Ekdal curtain, on the other hand, marks the loft as a ramshackle, penny-pinch play space but one also more suggestive of the imagination. (13).[9]

For Smith, the metatheatrical nature of the loft space gives the Ekdals access to a child-like playfulness, and "the loft evokes Ibsen's own childhood fantasies" (12). In this argument, as the adult figure Gregers is "a personification of what Jonas Barish has termed the 'antitheatrical prejudice,' and exhibits a consistently negative attitude toward play throughout the drama" (16).

Ibsen's metatheatricality is not about the loss of play, but instead, it concerns the way to play. Gregers has not lost the ability to play as he has developmentally progressed beyond childhood. He has not yet learned how to view play with the modern sophistication of the Ekdals. Far from an anti-theatrical bias, Gregers is still rooted in a traditional conception of the theatre. Insisting on bringing all illusions to the surface, Gregers harkens back to the mimetic conception uttered by the Chorus in the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V*:

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:

Into a thousand parts divide one man,

And make imaginary puissance.

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,

Printing their proud hoofs i'th' receiving earth;

For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,

Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,

Turning th' accomplishment of many years

Into an hourglass – for the which supply,

Admit me Chorus to this history, (23-32)

The Chorus announces its mission as an attempt to represent historical events, but this is a task doomed to failure from the start because the representation cannot become the object represented. However, this failure is precisely the point. The Chorus does not envision theatrical representation as an idealized minimizing of the gap between theatrical signifiers and exterior signifieds. Such a distance is intrinsic to theatrical representation. An audience must imagine such a divide does not exist by purposefully misreading signifiers as signifieds.

Unlike this self-reflexive acknowledgement of the enduring separation between representation and what is being represented, Ekdal distinguishes a modern drama that is more performative than mimetic. Instead of merely representing something the Ekdal play space does something. It brings a version of satisfaction that cannot be equaled by the object which the loft supposedly represents. The performative metatheatrical space envisioned by Ekdal has nothing to do with illusion.

Gregers strives to make the Ekdals understand theatre as an illusory representation of the world instead of a space for exceeding representation.[10] By establishing illusion as a category which most be overcome, Gregers reconstitutes the mimetic relationship between theatre and the object represented. The real becomes a referential focal point by asserting that the loft is not the same as Hoydal, and that Gina and Hjalmar are not experiencing the joys of a true marriage,. The Ekdals have lost their way from the moment they stopped recognizing their space as the representation of the real, and, instead, perceived the loft on its own terms. The loft cannot be understood as authentic, but must be seen as an illusory representation of the authentic. In traditional mimetic conceptions ambiguity is resolved, and the world can again be understood in terms of representation without the confusion that seems to accompany the performative.

The Wild Duck raises the question of what else drama does besides represent, and asks why does this besides offer satisfaction? This dilemma exceeds the boundary of Ibsen's play and becomes a fundamental question for Modern Drama. As August Strindberg notes in his introduction to *Miss Julie*:

> Again in other countries people have believed in the possibility of creating a new drama by filling the old forms with new contents; but this approach has failed [. . .] partly because we have not found the new form for the new content, and the new wine has burst the old bottles. (56)

Strindberg's wine metaphor elucidates a rift between the ideals of Modern Drama and its enactment. Realism is the new style that manifests in the early prose dramas of Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekov. In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, Bert O. States defines realism as "an attempt to put the human drama into the visible real world of

everyday social interaction and to reveal, above all else, how that world was the primary causal factor in experience" (66).[11] Realism is more equipped at fulfilling a Gregers-like desire to shatter illusion than the melodrama and poetic epics which dominated the stage when Strindberg and Ibsen first began writing. Unlike the Chorus of *Henry V*, the creators of the new content seem to hold an intrinsic belief that there will be no need for the audience to "Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts." A drama which critiques the world as it really is, and a stage populated with real objects that present the world as it exists will break down the barrier between representation and the actions represented until such a distinction becomes meaningless.[12] In addition to representing the world outside of the theatre, the new content will bridge the gap of imitation and ideally become a functioning interactive part of the world.

The realist theatre marginalizes the difference between signifier and signified. Theatrical space can connect with exterior space by depicting things as they really are instead of presenting a metaphor or analogy of the exterior world. Theatrical speech should be indistinguishable from speech outside of the theatre. Settings need to engage current society instead of embracing a distant historical moment. If nothing is left to the imagination, if theatrical presentation contains all the details and nuance of actual experience, then such a representation will cease to be merely representational. Instead of being like the action represented, realism will be the object represented. It will be on par with the exterior world. In essence, realism strives to eliminate the difference between performative and exterior space. In this vision, mimesis becomes a pejorative term. Theatre that imitates is inferior. A superior form of theatre would be a theatre that actually becomes the real.[13]

Transcending mimesis by achieving some level of absolute correspondence with exterior action subverts the sustained rift between representation and referent intrinsic to theatrical space or language.[14] Ironically, the realist project is incapable of creating a theatrical space synonymous with the real. While realism creates a more accurate representation of exterior actions, the very placement of this representation in theatrical space precludes any bridging of the gap between theatrical space and exterior space. In a similar fashion to J. L. Austin's acknowledgement in *How to Do Things with Words* that the performative speech act cannot function theatrically due to the inherent artificiality of theatrical space, theatrical realism can never be authentic enough to escape metaphor and transform itself from signifier to signified. By acknowledging itself as imitation, the Chorus of *Henry V* presents a more self- aware vision of theatrical space that is closer to the goals of realism. In banishing transfiguration from theatrical space to an audience's imagination, the Chorus offers a realist view of the theatrical mechanism.[15]

In this context, Strindberg's embrace of symbolist drama after his return to the theatre in 1898 is the natural result of realism's inability to transcend metaphor. Strindberg's symbolist drama is not a movement toward the new form that he acknowledges has yet to be found; rather, it is the continuation of his effort "to modernize the form according to what I believe are the demands a contemporary audience would make of this art" (56). If realism is unable to escape metaphor, then the modernization of the form engages drama as metaphor. Rather than continuing a futile effort to escape a metaphorical relationship through greater efforts at verisimilitude, Strindberg's later drama understands the difference between theatrical and exterior space and exploits the symbol that is inherent in theatre as metaphor.

In its early development, Modern Drama contains two interrelated forces: the idealized hope that realism can transcend metaphor thereby interconnecting theatrical space with exterior space, and the symbolist cynical self-awareness that metaphorical relationships are the fundamental essence of theatre. This symbolist self-awareness appears to be a return to the Chorus of *Henry V*. However, like Ekdal's privileging of the loft space over exterior space, the signifier in symbolist drama does more than imitate the signified. In "Ibsen and the twentieth-century stage," Frederick J. Marker and Lisa-Lone Marker write of Ingmar Bergman's symbolist production of *Hedda Gabler*: "Bergman's various technical strategies were all means to a single end, which was the close-up exposure of the inner essence of Hedda's situation" (191). Whereas exterior space can only show what is apparent to ordinary vision, the metaphorical possibilities of theatrical space plumb the depths of interiority and offer a surface metaphorical representation of depth.[16]

While the world may only access psychology through individual speech and action, theatrical space does not accept any such limitations. The metaphorical possibilities of the stage represent psychology in symbol. There no longer has to be a hidden interior. Bergman moves Hedda's private room onto his symbolist stage, thereby transforming her suicide into the most public of acts. Symbolist drama revitalizes mimetic relationships by refiguring signification. Instead of the realist embrace of physical objects as a bridge between theatrical space and exterior space, symbolist drama conceives of exterior space and authentic objects as distraction. Mimesis is not the imitation of an object so much as the imitation of an interior, of an essence. Artaud notes that the plague is "the exteriorization of a depth of latent cruelty" (30).

The symbolist signified is an interior essence that can only be represented on stage through an exterior representation. If this representation is successful, an audience grasps the authentic interior essence. The valence of mimesis in symbolist drama relies on the transfiguring of known exterior space. Whereas realist theatrical space eliminates artificiality, symbolist drama needs the seemingly artificial convention of theatrical space to reveal the metaphysical resonance of an object and the world.

Ideally, the dramatic scene should allow an audience to see both the typical function of object as distraction, and the symbolic revelation. In the symbolist theatre all objects can be signifiers but no object can be a signified. Similar to the Theatre of Cruelty's exteriorization and bringing forth, theatrical signifiers allow an audience to engage in metaphysical communion with the unseen signified:

> It [theatrical language] ultimately breaks away from the intellectual subjugation of the language, by conveying the sense of a new and deeper intellectuality which hides itself beneath the gestures and signs, raised to the dignity of particular exorcisms. (Artaud 91)

The theatrical performance mimetically accesses the authentic which lies underneath the artificial surface. However, if the visible objects succeed in their function of representing the unseen, then mimesis has been exceeded by transfiguration. In the symbolist project the performance event should reveal a symbol rather than merely representing it. If a symbolist theatre is mimetic, if the theatre merely imitates, then the event has failed. The symbol has not been brought forth. Interior essence cannot be imitated, either it has been revealed or the symbol is unsuccessful.

Both symbolism and realism understand the quintessential theatre as more than mimetic. In realism, mimesis creates an artificial theatre in which a performance fails to illuminate the world as it exists in order to transform it. In symbolism, a mimetic theatrical event fails to communicate the metaphysical essence of symbols. A theatrical event that is exclusively mimetic is conceptualized as failure. A mimetic theatre is a theatre indicted for imitation when theatre needs to transfigure.

II *The Wild Duck*, and the Failure of Transfiguration

Far from initiating a dramatic modernism, symbolism and realism are essential components to Gregers's traditional theatre that work toward establishing illusion as a theatrical category in *The Wild Duck*. Gregers's project institutes a cornucopia of confusion masquerading as a coherent theory of the theatre. Due to the logic of realism Ekdal should reject the loft, because, after all, the loft is not Hoydal. In essence, Gregers asserts that the loft is functioning mimetically. Since Gregers is aware of the loft as imitation, the loft is an inferior imitation, and a theatrical failure.

In a similar fashion, the marriage of Hjalmar and Gina works mimetically and not symbolically. The marriage may imitate a true marriage, but the inner essence of marriage cannot be viewed through its physical representation. Gregers envisions a transcendent experience in which the marriage as ideal is laid bare before him. His language is even more symbolist than my hyperbolic description of it:

> I felt so sure, that when I walked through that door you would be standing there transfigured, and that my eyes would be dazzled by the light. And instead, I see nothing but this dull heaviness and misery – (96).

Again, Gregers envisions being able to overcome the new theatricality of the Ekdals with a transcendent theatre. He tries to see beyond the loft to its metaphysical essence, but like his foray into realism, this collapses into a mimetic action. Seemingly, each effort to escape the loft's mimetic configuration reinforces a purely mimetic theatre. The loft cannot connect to exterior space.

However, Gregers has one more theatrical trick up his sleeve. He uses symbolist strategies to evoke a classical model. Looking backward in time from the secularized theatre of the late-nineteenth and twentieth century to the classical theatre, the latter seems to offer a ritual of cleansing, reaffirming and reestablishing the virtues of an idealized community. In *The Idea of a Theater*, Francis Fergusson analyzes the ritual significance of *Oedipus Rex*:

> When one considers the ritual form of the whole play, it becomes evident that it presents the tragic but perennial, even normal, quest of the whole City for its well-being. (28)

Whether such a ritual renewal actually occurs, Gregers believes that classical theatre can transform mimetic space. He enlists the aid of Hedvig to banish Ekdal's mimetic theatre. Hedvig seems to fill the Oedipal archetype. Early in Act Two, Hjalmar confirms as much when he warns Gregers and the audience that she is going blind. Cast as Gregers's tragic hero, Hedvig is asked to sacrifice the duck.

Numerous critics have traced the fecund symbolic associations of the duck which culminates in Gregers's sacrificial demand. In "The Lacanian Imaginary in Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* and *The Wild Duck*," Oliver W. Gerland III emphasizes the multivalent nature of the duck as symbol:

> The sign 'the wild duck' is highly mobile with a wide range of referents, designating at various times various members of the Ekdal family and, of course, the actual duck nesting out of sight in the Ekdal's garret. The reader's attempt to pin down the meaning of the wild duck to any particular referent or concept is, therefore, doomed to misrepresentation and frustration. Given that 'the wild duck' is an unstable signifier, the narrative structure in which it appears is also unstable. (356)[17]

Conceptualizing the duck referred to in the dramatic text as a "highly mobile" sign is vastly different from recognizing that various characters view the duck as a mobile sign. Focusing on the latter for the moment, Gregers's understanding of the duck as sign is inseparable from his efforts to establish a classical theatre that will transfigure through ritual sacrifice. However, this is far from a unanimous view. The Ekdals are more inclined to interpret the duck as a physical animal. Gregers tries to transform the dialectic over how the duck signifies into a univocal interpretive schematic. He does not just want the Ekdals to see the duck as sign, he wants them to see the duck as a symbol for Hjalmar. Every time Gregers characterizes the duck as symbol, it is a symbol for Hjalmar.

Despite this very specific symbolic association, critics tend to read Hedvig's suicide as a result of her absorption within Gregers's symbolic language. In "'It was as if he meant something different from what he said – all the time'; Language, Metaphysics, and the Everyday in *The Wild Duck*," Toril Moi writes:

> By depriving Hedvig of criteria, Gregers leaves her with no way to tell the difference between metaphorical and literal ways of speaking. How will

> she now be able to tell whether a loft is a loft? Or whether a wild duck is a wild duck? If Gregers thinks he can become a dog, is it not possible that she could become a wild duck? In this fatal conversation Gregers shows Hedvig the way out of the ordinary, and so lays the foundation for her ultimate suicide. (671).

Such an analysis seems based on the assumption that Hedvig is victimized by metaphor's innate deforming power because she follows Gregers's instructions to the end.[18] However, viewing language as dangerous necessitates a rift between signifier and signified as well as a blurring between authentic and metaphorical language. Hedvig not only has to view the duck as symbol, she has to view the duck as possessing a different referent from the one proclaimed by Gregers. For Gregers is nothing if he is not consistent. In his evocation of symbolic language symbols always maintain the same referent: Gregers is always the dog, Hjalmar is always the duck, and the loft is always the deep blue sea.

Hedvig is initially shocked by Gregers' acceptance of her characterization of the loft as the deep blue sea. Once Hedvig reveals a symbolic association for the loft, Gregers recognizes the very same association. Symbolic language does not free the world from meaning. Metaphor merely establishes a second set of meanings. Anyone perceptive enough to bypass the world of everyday objects and confront the world of symbols must acknowledge the absolute symbol Hedvig has forged. Rather than a dangerous opening of meaning, Gregers's symbolic language forecloses meaning. If Hjalmar is the duck, than the symbolic meaning of the duck has been understood. There

is no reason to expect Hedvig to appropriate Gregers's symbolic world view while dismissing his specific interpretations.

Gregers's symbolic evocation of a classical theatre projects Hedvig into a role closer to Orestes then Oedipus. Gregers wants Hedvig to endorse an act of aggression couched in terms of sacrifice. He tells Hedvig that the only way to transform the attic into its proper form is for her to commit symbolic patricide. The Hjalmar who has grown comfortable in the attic must be destroyed in order for Gregers's idealized conception of Hjalmar to emerge.

Classical theatre will transform the loft space from a new mimetic drama into a more traditional symbolic drama by orchestrating the destruction of the symbol. Trying to eliminate the duck, however, exposes the explicit contradictions in Gregers's theatrical potpourri. While a theatre of transfiguration promises an escape from the new realist theatre's resistance to symbolic interpolations, Gregers cannot help characterizing the new theatre in older symbolic terms. He characterizes the loft space as unique because of the wild duck and the fashion in which the Ekdals view it. Although Gregers describes the murder of the duck in sacrificial terms, establishing a transfiguring drama is more coup than sacrifice. As the symbolic root of the trouble in the loft, the death of the duck should be celebrated, not mourned.

Gregers orchestrates a multi-layered theatrical event. The performance functions sacrificially for the Ekdals who lose something of value, yet it is a symbolic purging for its single audience member / director. Because the Ekdals seem unable to embrace a transfiguring symbolic theatre, it will only remain in symbolic form. Such a doubling ultimately deforms the ideals of Gregers's symbolist theatre. Gregers imagines the

symbol as a means of obscuring instead of revealing. He tries to represent a Dionysian act as explicitly Apollonian.

Despite Gregers's careful direction, Hedvig refuses to perform her part in the symbolic / classical theatrical amalgamation. Rather than sacrifice the duck, Hedvig commits suicide. By turning away from the symbolic / classical conception of Gregers, Hedivg evokes the Oedipal model of tragedy which she seems destined to fulfill. Faced with a community that has broken down, Hedvig turns away from symbolic sacrifice and toward some sense of "authentic" sacrifice. Naturally, Hedvig is a victim of circumstance, but that does not necessarily equate to being victimized by metaphorical language. Her suicide defiantly rejects Gregers's symbolist theatre. Hedvig forces Gregers to confront an actual sacrifice, thereby revealing the impotence of symbolist theatre. Hedvig is a realist who believes an interconnected theatre of transfiguration is achieved by offering a body for scarring in order to heal the community. An authentic foundation is necessary for symbolic resonance.

In classical terms, Hedvig's material sacrifice is every bit as impotent as Gregers's elaborate symbolism. Verna A. Foster assets that Hedvig's suicide is not tragic because it

> takes place off stage, there is a delay before it is discovered and what the audience is primarily called upon to respond to is not the death itself but the reaction of the other characters to it, and especially Hjalmars" (291).[19]

Foster's rationale for viewing Hedvig's death untragically is curious because her anti-tragedy resembles a laundry list of classical tragedy's tendencies. A classical death always takes place off-stage. If the death transfigures, if it serves as a ritualized purging

for the entire community as Fergusson suggests, the reactions of the other characters are essential to transform the sacrifice from an individual act into a larger context. Foster goes on to write that "what we are left with is something harsher than tragedy because there is no justification of a moral order, no resolution, no closure" (291).

Tragedy without closure seems to be the basis for Foster's assertion that *The Wild Duck* inaugurates a modern theatre in which tragedy is impossible and tragi-comedy becomes the dominant dramatic form. For in Hedvig's suicide, *The Wild Duck* dramatizes tragedy without catharsis. Hedvig follows all of the rules, but her suicide is a ritual emptied of all significance. Hedvig's body is dragged upon the stage as a visual demonstration that the only thing the ritual has transfigured is life. Living child has been transformed into dead child. Without catharsis - without a demonstration of a connection between the tragic act and the world which contains it - drama fulfills an anti-ritual function.

Instead of demonstrating a cause /effect structure to the world, Hedvig's suicide illuminates a fundamental disconnect between an abstract world of rules and the individuals who inhabit it. Instead of an act of penance her suicide simply has the resonance of the actual act committed. Hedvig's death serves as another demonstration of the play's vision of a new mimetic drama. Meaning can never exceed the act. It is a futile to attempt to locate a signified beyond a signifier. In a sense, the tragedy of Ibsen's drama is the impossibility for a tragic act to be viewed tragically. The new drama transforms sacrifice from a ritual conducted by a person with complete understanding of the necessity of the sacrifice into a child performing the futility of dramatic ritual.

III The Theatre of Rupture and Critical Contextualization

At *The Wild Duck's* conclusion, this new drama which locates theatricality in the distance between signifier and signified is the only vision of drama left on the stage. Systematically, the play enacts Strindberg's wine metaphor: old forms cannot contain the new content. The bottles of realism, symbolism, and classical theatre attempt to contain Ibsen's new theatre, and in each case, the bottle explodes from the inside. Ibsen's efforts to unhinge traditional mimetic structures radically breaks from the seemingly more formally experimental Strindberg.

Strindberg's metaphor characterizes the relationship between new dramatic content and old dramatic form as violent, but ultimately sterile. The violence is an act perpetuated against an innocuous carrier, and no new container remains to take the place of what has become insufficient. Strindberg's linguistic form replicates this inability to find a new dramatic structure. For while Strindberg declares the necessity of creating a new configuration of form and content, he does so through the use of metaphor. The traditional mimetic structure of metaphor reinforces the idea that a new form cannot be conceived, and therefore a new content is insufficient. The hope for the new can only be expressed in a traditional framework.

In a September 2, 1884 letter to Frederik Hegel, Ibsen refuses to be bound by linguistic structure in describing *The Wild Duck:*

> In some ways this new play occupies a position by itself among my dramatic works, its plan and method differing in several respects from my former ones. I shall say no more on this subject at present. I hope that my critics will discover the points alluded to. At any rate, they will find

> several things to squabble about and several things to interpret.[20] I also think that *The Wild Duck* may perhaps entice some of our young dramatists into new paths, which I think is desirable. (237)

Ibsen conceives of the play as new for him, and as a forerunner for a new dramatic movement. Reliance on the idea of newness: new plans, new methods, and new paths, suggests that unlike Strindberg, Ibsen believes a new drama has been founded.

Where Strindberg's metaphor replicates the structure that would become the defining feature of his symbolist theatre, Ibsen's description of *The Wild Duck* as the vanguard for the new drama formally represents the very technique of this new theatre. Ibsen not only declares the uniqueness of the play among his work, he overtly refuses to outline this new plan and method. By deferring all explanation, the referent is pushed out of view. Like the loft space itself, the evocation of newness in the play and the new drama are effective and become something new precisely to the extent they are encapsulated. The new drama must move away from representing the exterior world even if this means creating a gap in comprehension.

The Wild Duck dramatizes the nature and limits of dramatic performance. Like the characters it depicts, the dramatic text never resolves whether the duck should be classified within a symbolist or a realist rubric. The duck is an indecipherable symbol, or, perhaps, a symbol with too many meanings. The futility of knowing what the duck is corresponds with a desire to classify the uncontextualizable sign. A survey of the critical output surrounding the play reveals that Gregers's need to establish an absolute meaning for the duck is shared by readers of Ibsen's dramatic text. After outlining various critics who have despaired over the inability to attribute meaning to the duck, Toril Moi asserts:

> The most important question in *The Wild Duck* is not at all what the eponymous wild duck means (and certainly not what it 'means' in a *deep* sense), but whether it is possible to hang onto meaning at all in world full of cynics, skeptics, and narcissists, who all do their best to empty words of meaning. (657)

Rather than dealing with what the duck means as a sign, Moi explores what a sign which perpetually escapes foreclosure signifies about the tenuous nature of meaning.

However, in Ibsen's text words cannot be emptied of meaning, or, at the very least, words cannot empty themselves of meaning. Critics and characters alike believe that the duck can be defined because language has an intrinsic power. Gregers theorizes mimesis as a reframing of the world within the representational and metaphoric logic of language. He can change the way the duck is viewed by linguistically forging new representational connections. Language bonds various divergent objects and ideas. A formless connector, words transparently illuminate.

In the very act of textual signification, a representation achieves presence. To evoke a character or an object produces and evokes the representation of the character or object. The dramatic text represents the duck as similar to Hedvig, or any of the other characters because characters look at the duck and interact with it. However, in performance the duck loses all presence. Unlike the characters who appear on stage, interaction with the duck always occurs off-stage. Like many non-performative conceptions of language, Ibsen's dramatic text represents through metaphor. There is always a distance between signifier and signified. A mimetic evaporation of signifying distance, performance imitates by presenting the object. The characters who appear on

stage represent as fully in performance as in the dramatic text. The duck becomes superfluous in performance, transforming from the animal in the other room to something unnecessary for the play's performance.

Ibsen's play rejects a unitary conception of mimesis as the duck shifts from a typical textual representation to a sign that performs its own absence. A continuum from text to performance reveals the disparate logics underlying the mimesis of language and the mimesis of performance. The mimesis of performance is at the root of Ibsen's metatheatricality and continues to cause so much frustration from audience members, some of whom, "showed their displeasure by quacking like ducks" at the play's Paris premiere (Meyer 9). The audience's participation supplies what the play lacks.

Audience members still do the same thing. Gerland is just one of numerous critics who reference "the actual duck nesting out of sight in the Ekdal's garret" (356). While a fairly innocuous comment, and an idea which I have expressed in some variation several times, Gerland's reference to "the actual duck" is symptomatic of the compulsion to translate the mimesis of performance into the much more familiar mimesis of language. A quacking audience as well as a critic who refers to an actual duck attempt to suture a performative rupture within the play. Gerland, the Paris audience, and anyone else who refers to the duck as a physical entity continue Gregers's project. However, while Gregers fails to colonize the duck, critics have succeeded. Critics have reconnected signifier to signified by charting the dialectic between the idealized authentic and the dangers inherent in the theatrical / metaphorical. The new drama has been translated into the mimetic language of traditional theatricality.

So long as the metaphorical connection between signifier and signified remain intact there appears to be no difference between representation in language and performance. Considered solely in its own terms, language offers a seemingly infinite continuum for representation in which anything that is written, represents. Performance restricts such a field by replacing language with vision and space. If an object is not seen, if an object does not occupy space, than the object does not exist within the performance. By repeatedly referencing a non-existent object, a dramatic text's enactment calls attention to the short circuiting of textual signification.

An overlapping of mimetic frames, the duck is a textual signifier that never appears onstage, so never connects to its performative signified. In *Between Theater and Anthropology,* Richard Schechner recognizes converging fields of signification in the deer dance of the Arizona Yaqui:

> The kitchen pot is analogous to the dancer and the singers: the pot does not stop being itself even as it serves to evoke the flower world of the deer songs. Both pot and performers are 'not themselves' and 'not not themselves.' Pot and performers link two realms of experience, the only two realms performance ever deals with: the world of contingent existence as ordinary objects and persons and the world of transcendent existence as magical implements, gods, demons, characters. It isn't that a performer stops being himself or herself when he or she becomes another – multiple selves coexist in an unresolved dialectical tension. (6)

Whether conceptualized in terms of contingent and transcendent existence, phenomenological objects and semiotics, or the mimesis of performance and language,

Schechner's dialectic abounds in theories of the theatre. The world of contingent existence expands performance beyond a transparent genre for content.

Performance and language both contain a transcendent existence, but unlike performance, language is indivisible from the transcendent. In Schechner's example, the words "flower world," always represent the idea of a flower world, and never represent anything other than the flower world. However, in performance, the cooking pot is both the transcendent flower world and the contingent cooking pot which represents a part of the flower world. Outside the context of the deer dance it is simply a cooking pot. It ceases to have a transcendent existence. In language, the words "flower world" are the medium which allow representation to take place. These words cannot be severed from their representative (transcendent) function. Words possess a contingent function, but this contingency is inseparable from transcendence. The word can never cease representing.

Schechner imagines an irresolvable dialectic between the continuous identity of the object and the temporary transcendent identity the object assumes while in a performance space. Such a model illuminates the commingling of the mimesis of performance and language. The pot is not a pot due to its semiotic function. At the same time, the pot is not not a pot because the signified never obscures the presence of the phenomenological signifier.

Schechner emphasizes a one to one correspondence between the person or object in the performance space, and what is being performed. Theatrical meaning is understood as the mutual dependence between semiotic sign and the phenomenological object. By confronting the object's presence, Schechner offers a more complex theatrical

model than *The Wild Duck's* critics who remain captivated by the sign. However, Schechner's dialectic is only irresolvable so long as the mimesis of language and the mimesis of performance are viewed within the same continuum. Language cannot signify outside the visual field.[21]

The Wild Duck explores the dissidence between textual and performative representation. Ibsen's play identifies performance as loss. Starting with the title, *The Wild Duck* focuses an audience or reader's attention on the signifier that loses its signified by transitioning from dramatic text to theatrical event. Gregers's evocation of a traditional theatre which relies on the mimesis of language is an effort to believe in the all-consuming power of words. If he can just utter the correct words, signifier will reconnect to signified. Gregers will be able to prove once and for all that theatricality is based on an analogous model to the mimesis of language. A performance of Ibsen's play reconceptualizes Schechner's dialectic by showing that Schechner overstated matters in asserting that contingency and transcendence are "the only two realms performance ever deals with." There is also absence. If a pot is both a pot and the thing which the pot represents, than a duck that is not there is both the duck that is uttered and the empty space that is narrativized. Just because something is narrativized in language does not mean the object has to be performed.

IV A Chip Off the Old Block: The Return of Transfiguration and the Dead Child as Signifying Rupture

Schechner's dialectic takes the ideal of a harmonious performance for granted. Performance and language work together in creating a mimetic experience. This

confluence of vision and metaphor makes doubling, or liminality, intrinsic to the theatrical. While Schechner envisions a unifying dialectic, he recognizes that performance and text do not always work in such a fashion: "there really is a difference between 'literariness' and 'theatricality.' They can serve each other or hinder; relate or pull in opposite directions" (284).[22] Schechner is referring to texts and the manner in which some less literary texts lend themselves to effective performances, and some more literary texts can fail in the performative transition. A successful performance is defined in terms of synthesis. Unification between text and performance, and amalgamation between actor and text create liminality and flow. When theatrical elements pull in opposite directions the performance fails to be successful, and no flow is achieved. Schechner recognizes the potential dissonance in language and performance, but such aberrance must be overcome in his idea of a good performance.

At numerous points in *Between Theater and Anthropology,* Schechner asserts that the world performances he analyzes are far removed from realist performances. Perhaps Schechner's performances are not realist per se, but they fit alongside realism in adhering to a mimesis of language, and delineating theatre as a site for transfiguration. Schechner describes performance in a univocal and decidedly Stanislavskian vein of absorption by fixating on flow, unity, and liminality. Absorption is reconfigured from a method of performance to the working of performance.

Schechner can have the best of both worlds by locating realism as a western phenomena, and delineating the Stanislavskian method as one performer playing one role. The world rituals he studies, and the absorption he privileges, are both a necessary element of a good performance, and, as something different, they can be the solution to a

non-transfiguring western theatre. The emergence of performance studies in general - and the emergence of the Schechner / Turner anthropological school in particular - appears related to the failure of a theatre of transfiguration.

The majority of twentieth-century western theatre is based on a mimetic and non –transformative realism. Instead of moving beyond a metaphoric connection, theatre merely offers a photographic representation of the world. These practitioners institutionalize the formal limitations of a metaphoric theatre and reject all hope for a transfiguring theatre. As a result, the majority of drama is uncritically accepted as nothing more than photographic representation. Drama which shows critical self awareness of its own form falls into the mold of Ibsen's theatre of disruption. Performance studies institutionalizes the lost hope for transfiguration, unification, and absorption, and offers an escape from the modern theatre's uncritical failure and overly formal self-awareness.[23]

In renaming the terms of inquiry from theatre to performance and from realism to ritual, the ideals of Stanislavskian absorption are insulated from the corruption of rupture. Nowhere is this clearer than in Schechner's analysis of the Noh:

> A great work, when it occurs, is what happens when all training drops away in an unrevised meeting of artist and medium. [. . .] Hana [the root metaphor of Noh] exists between performers and spectators; when it is there both performers and spectators are transported. (143-4)

While Schechner pays lip service to the similarity between Brechtian theory and various rituals, it is difficult to conceive a less Brechtian analysis of the Noh. Unlike the Verfremdungseffekt Brecht saw in his adaptation of *Taniko*, Schechner's Noh is "an

unrevised meeting of artist and medium," and has the effect of transportation. A theatrical inspiration for alienation transforms into a performance of absorption. The disruption between audience and performer, actor and role, and between scenes that is necessary to create a gestus is absent in Schechner's retelling.

Couched in terms of ritual, Schechner offers a return to the ideals of realism. Schechner's extra-theatrical hyper-realism envisions performance to be a real world event with real world consequences. Finally, a form of realism can be envisioned that will transfigure. Ritual becomes the ultimate form of realism as audiences are transformed, even if the change is only temporary.

The transfiguring potential of performance becomes undeniable in the masochistic body art performances of Chris Burden and the plastic surgery performances of Beth Orlan. When Burden is shot on stage, or when Orlan videotapes her elective procedures, both change as a result of performance. Karen Finley's reading of her father's suicide note on stage similarly engages an ultimate form of realism which overcomes the artificiality of the theatrical event. According to Finley, "I was trying to express the absurdity of the idea that the theater can truly represent emotional pain, that it can cause the audience to experience emotions that are 'real.' It was my response to the concept of method acting" (61). However, Finley's performance and her description also question any performative authenticity. From a performer's perspective, reading a suicide note, getting shot, or being operated on transcends imitation. On the other hand, such "authentic" performances raise some of the same questions as their theatrical forbearers. Namely, can the ideal of performative authenticity represent beyond the individual who

performs, or is seeing Burden shot ultimately not very different from seeing Hamlet stabbed?

These performance artists try to suture Ibsen's theatrical rupture while critiquing the artificiality of theatrical realism. The mimesis of language and performance are again depicted as one. What is represented in language is contemporaneous to what the visual field represents spatially. This correspondence is further solidified by minimizing the distance between signifier and signified. Not only are the individual acts (the acts of shooting, reading the suicide note, and getting plastic surgery) real acts, but the actions are committed by individuals, and not characters, or the individual is the site where the action manifests.[24] Real acts are committed by real individuals who choose to commit such acts on a stage.

Far from the critiques of Schechner and Finley, the opposition between literariness and theatricality is not a detriment to a performance of *The Wild Duck*. The play depends on such an opposition. In *The Theatre and its Double*, Antonin Artaud writes: "If confusion is a sign of the times, I see at the root of this confusion a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs of their representation" (7). Yet, while Artaud offers his Theatre of Cruelty as a solution to this rupture, Ibsen's play performs it.

Returning to Ekdal's attempt to explain the new drama to Gregers with which I began, Ekdal's pronouncement that Gregers "*shall* see it!" takes on new implications. Gregers shall see the same thing that Ekdal has seen, and which the theatrical audience is in the process of seeing. The new drama's performance is based on a rupture between things and ideas. This is further emphasized in the final moments of the play. After

briefly viewing Hedvig's corpse, Ekdal retreats off-stage to once again experience the rupture. In doing so, *The Wild Duck* prefigures Vladimir and Estragon's wait for Godot, Ben and Gus's give and take with the upper level in Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*, and the invisible objects which pervade the stage in the drama of Eugene Ionesco. Drama exposes the working of the system of theatrical performance by focusing on the non-object that never becomes an object

Gregers has a vested interest in conceptualizing drama as the connection between physical objects and physical ideas. He is determined not to see what Ekdal and a performance of the play demand of him. Ibsen's new drama is not only self-referential, but severs the very idea of exteriority. If Gregers sees the theatre of rupture on Ekdal's terms, he will see that absence can be as fascinating as transfiguration. Ibsen's characters are neither able to understand the rupture nor their fascination with it. Yet, the attraction between rupture and character is indisputable. Either in lieu of a linear narrative - or in the case of *The Wild Duck* - despite the pulls of a linear narrative, characters compulsively rotate around the rupture perpetually signifying what is not there. They move closer and farther away, never able to stay away for long, until the performance concludes. [25]

Hedvig's suicide gives the sterile, neutral metaphor of the new dramatic content bursting the old form's bottles a human resonance. Gregers's determination to transform Hedvig into a ritual figure of transfiguration is an impossible task. Gregers's mission can only be accomplished when the mimesis of performance and language are identical. Her failure accentuates the difference between text and performance.

Hedvig becomes an emblem for the new drama. In *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Poggioli defines an emblem as a modern metaphor: "The modern metaphor tends to divorce the idea and the figure, to annul in the last-mentioned any reference to a reality other than its own self" (197). Hedvig's suicide liberates the play from linear temporality's interpretive constrictions. The present can be evaluated independently, rather than through the lens of history or future. Hedvig's body marks a dramatic present as a thing apart, and diverges from a long dramatic tradition. From *Oedipus Rex* to *A Doll's House* history and memory prove necessary to apprehend the present's complete import. Oedipus must discover his past to heal the plague currently ravaging Thebes. In *A Doll's House*, Nora's past actions must be brought to light for her to appraise the environment in which she lives. Hjalmar appears to be replicating Oedipus and Nora's trajectory.

Previous to Hedvig's suicide, Hjalmar has interpreted the present through the past, thereby transforming the present. Based on his new historical insight, Hjalmar believes Hedvig to be illegitimate. Such an reevaluation of the present is not made possible by the past alone. The present is part of a continuum which culminates with a determinate future. The present shifts into something new after Hjalmar learns of a future in which Hedvig will receive a future annuity from Werle, and Hedvig and Werle are both going blind.

Hedvig's suicide divorces the present from the determinate future and its revelations. The suicide institutionalizes the present as more than the culmination of its temporal antecedents. The issues surrounding Hedvig's legitimacy become irrelevant once her corpse is carried onto the stage. In death, Hedvig no longer belongs to Werle.

Instead, she is Hjalmar's daughter once more. The death returns the loft as closely as possible to the near ahistorical nature which it possessed previous to Gregers's intrusion in Act Two.

Hedvig's body underscores the rupture in mimetic language as well as the escape from a temporal continuum. After Gregers's attempts at linguistic reconnection are unsuccessful, he sends Hedvig to suture the rupture sacrificially. However, the rupture between things and ideas cannot be remedied in such a manner. Hedvig's death demonstrates that drama does not have to be about constructing history and creating seamless interconnections. The Drama of Rupture elucidates a rupture intrinsic to performance. Spatial rupture cannot be revealed in text, but performance can call attention to mimetic language's gaps. Hedvig's corpse enacts a spatial and temporal rupture and is an emblem that transcends Ibsen's play. The dead child becomes a dominant emblem in Modern Drama appearing again and again in plays from the late-nineteenth century to the present. Although these plays seem to have little in common aside from the presence of the dead child in each case, in its breadth, the emblem of the dead child dramatizes the futile effort to overcome the rupture between things and ideas as central to theatricality. Part II, continues a discussion of the Theatre of Rupture and its seemingly intrinsic interconnection with Modern Drama's dead children.

Part Two:

From Ibsen to Kane: Baby Steps Toward a Theory of Modern Drama as a Theatre of Rupture

Prelude: Modern Drama's Dead Children

> *Tupolski: Ariel's getting a bit aggrieved because 'We can draw our own conclusions' is sort of, our job. (Pause.) And the first conclusion we are drawing is exactly how many stories have you got 'a little girl is treated badly', or 'a little boy is treated badly'?*
> *Katurian: A few. A few.*
> *Ariel: 'A few.' I'll say a fucking few. The first fucking twenty we picked up was 'a little girl is fucked over in this way, or a little boy is fucked over in this way . . . '!*
> *Katurian: But that isn't saying anything, I'm not trying to say anything . . .*
> *Ariel: You're not what?*
> *Katurian: What?*
> *Ariel: Not What?*
> *Katurian: What, are you trying to say that I'm trying to say that the children represent something?* (McDonagh 11-12)

At the conclusion of the previous chapter, I sounded much like Ariel from Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* in suggesting that with Hedvig's suicide, *The Wild Duck* emblematizes the dead child as a dominant trope for Modern Drama. I cannot help but notice that when added up, drama's dead children amount to more than a few. However, whereas Tupolski and Ariel believe in a mimetic bond connecting Katurian's proliferation of dead children stories to their real world manifestations, I am less interested in what dead children represent than in how they represent.

The dead child is the focal point in a representational conflict. Tupolski and Ariel are policemen investigating the murders of children. Katurian has written stories which bear an uncanny resemblance to the crimes. Tupolski and Ariel's

conclusion that text is linked to real world action seems like the correct interpretation. Despite the obvious reasons for reading the stories mimetically, Katurian's questioning whether the dead children "represent something" rejects an Ariel-like interpretation. More than a transparent representation and explanation of real world events, Katurian's surprise suggests that he understands the dead child as textual signifier apart from its signified. Over the next three chapters, Katurian will be the model for analyzing dead child signifiers that do not "represent something." If anything, the dead child represents the very limits of representation.

A metatheatrical emblem, the dead child dramatizes the workings of mimesis by illustrating the failure of transfiguration. The dead child confronts the theatrical systems of textuality, historicity, and materiality and finds such visions inadequate. Efforts to contextualize the emblem in a determinate theatrical frame prove to be unsuccessful and reveal the gaps in transfiguring systems. Attempts to colonize the import of the dead child by establishing its meaning have the inverse effect. Rather than a sign illustrating a circumscribed referent, the dead child self-reflexively calls attention to itself as a sign, and discloses the indeterminacy intrinsic to theatrical systems.

The crux of traditional dramatic narrative often involves the compulsion of various characters to place present events in a determinate historical context. The protagonists of *Oedipus*, Moliere's *The Miser*, *Hamlet*, and Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* all try to understand how past events influence their present. These representative examples suggest that dramatic resolution involves a present

reinterpretation of the past. Summarizing the dramatic theory of Jackson Barry, Marvin Carlson notes:

> All dramatic structure reflects tension between two basic patterns of time: the improvisational, or Heraclitean, which sees time as a specious present moving constantly "step by step into an unknown future," and the retrospective, which sees a completed portion of time with a definite shape. (*Theories of the Theatre* 485)

Barry's dialectic might very well be characterized as Oedipal temporality. Retrospective time absorbs or destroys an inferior improvisational time by transforming a shapeless present into part of a temporal continuum.[26] The dead child resists this historicization and suggests that improvisational time is not necessarily specious. Dead child dramas rupture the linear continuum, and replace retrospective time with a more fragmentary and less comprehensible dramatic form.

Oedipal temporality involves past events coming to light.[27] These events transform the way the present is understood, and bring about an Aristotelian recognition and reversal which concludes the play. In Freudian terms, this reversal and recognition can be characterized as uncanny:

> Taking another class of things, it is easy to see that here too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of 'chance' only. (390)

Oedipus Rex dramatizes the attempt to escape the future, as Oedipus leaves his parents, and Jocasta and Laius abandon their child to die. However, the future shows itself "fateful and unescapable." All steps taken to resist the dictates of fate uncannily ensure repetition. No matter how far Oedipus travels, his flight merely ensures his return home.

Oedipus Rex's recognition and reversal originates with the baby who was supposed to die but improbably survives. Oedipus must learn that it is too late for him to escape his future. And, of course, he can only recognize this by learning about the past. Freud suggests that infantile factors account for many feelings of uncanniness, and such an understanding interconnects the uncanny and retrospective time in Sophocles's play (385). Oedipal drama emerges from a baby who will not die, and who, through living, validates the return of the repressed as the privileged form of dramatic narrative. *Oedipus Rex* rejects the dead baby who is never actualized, and the potential dead baby who is never realized. The almost dead child becomes the foundation for a cause / effect narrative system which privileges retrospective time.

A counterpart to the Oedipal dramatic narrative, Aeschylus's *The Oresteia* mythologizes the founding of law. *The Oresteia* is performed over the corpse of a dead child. The trilogy begins with Agememnon's return home from the Trojan War. His involvement in the war was made possible by his sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigeneia. Agememnon's sacrifice inaugurates a cycle of revenge that only ends with the founding of law and order at the trilogy's conclusion. Revenge becomes an endless signifying chain traveling from Iphigeneia to Agememnon to Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus to Orestes. Rather than a one-to-one correspondence from cause to effect, effects inevitably spill over transforming into the next cause. The founding of law binds the signifying

chain inaugurated by the dead child. Drama finds a determinate ending by overcoming the entropy of Iphigeneia's unseen corpse.[28]

The dramatic innovation of Aeschylus and Sophocles cannot be overstated. Aeschylus is widely credited with bringing a second actor onto the stage thereby making dialogue possible. Sophocles brings a third actor on the stage, and exponentially increases the number of potential stage actions. Coextensive with drama becoming a medium based on dialogue, the genre rejects the emblem of the dead child. Instead of the dead baby, dramatic form will privilege the return of the repressed and determinate endings made possible by the causality of law.[29]

In a modern reimagining of classical determinism, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) transforms the Oedipal narrative of the almost dead baby from tragic to comic archetype. The return of an impossibly surviving baby forces characters to face retrospective time. Jack must read the present import of his past survival. Wilde's living child is closer to farce than the uncanny. Prism places the infantile Jack in her handbag because in her absentmindedness, she confuses him and "the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usual revolting sentimentality" (427). Unlike Jocasta's abandoning of Oedipus to escape a preordained future, the infant Jack is misplaced. Prism creates a metonymic understanding of text as baby by carelessly placing her novel in the perambulator.

In confessing that she lost the baby, Prism makes retrospective time possible. Text and baby align creating rigid dramatic determinacy. The baby / text identificatory chain lets Jack assume the role of Algy's older brother. Textual representation becomes

fundamental to actualizing retrospective time. Jack must consult the army list to discover that his birth name is Earnest.

The congruence of baby and text systematically banishes attempts to narrate death. In the first act, Jack announces his intention to kill Earnest. Earnest is a persona Jack created for his city visits. As an imaginary construction, Jack should be able to kill Earnest simply by uttering his death. However, Algy takes on the persona of Earnest before Jack can commit linguistic homicide. Jack's speech act fails because it contains a verifiable content that is clearly in error. Earnest cannot be dead because Algy / Earnest has a physical presence. By adopting the persona of Earnest, Algy transforms Jack's performative speech into representational speech. Jack can no longer kill by simply uttering the words. Words must have independent veracity.

Wilde's play adds a healthy dose of skepticism to the Oedipal archetype. In *Oedipus Rex* a vocal utterance brings about retrospective time's victory. Speech contains an intrinsic truth function. Despite Oedipus's protests, Teiresias's narration of the baby that impossibly survives inevitably leads to historical recognition. The voice contains a transformative power that cannot be resisted.

The Importance of Being Earnest domesticates the voice. Where Teiresias's voice saves Thebes from the perils of indeterminacy which plague it, Jack needs an army list and the memory of Prism's novel to achieve an analogous result. Jack utters two felicitous acts which he thinks are divorced from truth: his name is Earnest, and he has a brother. As text, the army list transforms these utterances from simply felicitous to truthful and felicitous. Jack cannot commit suicide by killing Earnest, but the text can demonstrate Earnest is living, thereby establishing retrospective time.

Unlike Jack's speech acts that fail without textual support and historical verification, Algy successfully mines the performative utterance's potential. Algy's imaginary and often ill friend Bunbury remains an imaginary construction. The imaginary Bunbury suffers the same death sentence by speech act that Jack was incapable of imposing on Earnest. The contrast between Jack and Algy, Earnest and Bunbury, and written text and speech act underscores two competing dramatic systems. There is a compulsion to make drama as material and determinate as possible, yet like Bunbury, the dead child can never be completely contained in the signifying net of determinacy.

Apparently, *Earnest's* critics do not relish the thought of Bunbury escaping the text / baby / history contextualizing network. Many critics have attempted to find a historical antecedent for Algy's sick friend. If successful, such a project would transform Bunbury from imaginary construct to a mimetic representation of a material reality. In "Oscar Wilde and the Bunburys," William Green suggests that Henry Shirley Bunbury is a primary model for Wilde's Bunbury and Edward Herbert Bunbury is a secondary model. Arguing against Bunbury as homage to a Cheshire village bearing the same name, or Bunbury as amalgamation of Henry Shirley and Edward Herbert, in "Bunbury Pure and Simple," W. Craven Mackie posits that Bunbury emerges as a result of the three Bunburys who appeared in the *Morning Post* obituaries between July 23, 1894 and July 31, 1894.

More important for my analysis than which Bunbury Wilde may have based his imaginative construct on, is why transform a non-character into a historical reality? Green acknowledges the pointlessness of such a project for all but Wilde biographers in his confession that "[in] the long run, identification of Bunbury neither enhances nor

detracts from the charm and wit that have made *The Importance of Being Earnest* the masterpiece it is" (75). The historicizing project of realizing Bunbury is an extension of an analogous movement in Wilde's play. Despite the apparent victory of Oedipal determinism, the death of the imaginary Bunbury is an indeterminate remainder performing the signifying chain's failure to find textual, historical and material completion.

Green and Mackie overcome Wilde's indeterminate excess by historicizing Bunbury. They transform the imaginative felicitous utterance from a sign of dramatic rupture to a mimetic signifier that neatly bonds to an historical signified. Like Ibsen's duck or Albee's child, Wilde's Bunbury is a focal point dramatizing a theatrical rupture between material objects and semiotic signs. Green and Mackie attempt to impose historical recognition on Wilde's non-object. The critical compulsion to institute Oedipal structure on all which eludes historical recognition is not an isolated anomaly, but, on the contrary, often appears in criticism of late nineteenth and twentieth-century drama and performance.

Like Bunbury, the dead baby emblematizes a rupture in signification. However, the critical canon surrounding these dead baby plays contextualizes the loose threads of performative signification by imposing a determinate and material structure on a dramatic signifier that seems to escape such a configuration. The desire to envision Bunbury within a theatrical matrix where dramatic signification always finds completion culminates with Tom Jacobson's *Bunbury: A Serious Play for Trivial People.* Performed July 12-16, 2006 at the Skirball Cultural Center, *Bunbury* features a materialized Bunbury as well as a materialized Rosalind from *Romeo and Juliet.* The two former non-

characters team up to invade other dramatic works (Hernandez). Jacobson's materialization of the character who never existed works alongside the criticism that tries to suture the rupture of dramatic form so important to understanding the emblem of the dead baby. [30]

Bunbury, and the dead children are verbal utterances divorced from a material presence. The utterance works analogously to the Austinian performative speech act where saying equates to doing. Vocalizing a dead baby performs a rupture in dramatic signification. Rather than a true or false representation, the dead baby is a representation of the failure of semiotics and phenomenology to encapsulate the entirety of dramatic performance. Unitary conceptions of theatrical performance which equate semiotics with material objects marginalize the gap between the two systems. The dead child acknowledges the rupture by emblematizing what escapes representation.

Contemporaneous with Ibsen's turn to prose, Ibsen and drama become consumed with the image of the dead child. In "Kindermord and Will in *Little Eyolf*" James E. Kerans suggests:

> *Kindermord* is vaguely discernible in Ibsen's early work, but beginning with *Brand* (1865) it unmistakably finds its place in the larger imaginative order of the play, and in every subsequent play it is fundamental to the dramatic action (192).

Perhaps Kerans overstates matters in suggesting that the dead child is fundamental to all post-*Brand* Ibsen drama. The potential for a dead child affects the action of *Pillars of Society* and *Ghosts*; however, both plays fall short of the image's realization. In the former, Olaf is a stowaway on an unseaworthy ship that never departs, and the latter play

concludes before Mrs. Alving fulfills her son's request to kill him. These are the clearest examples of child death in the early plays of Ibsen's prose cycle. In *A Doll's House* and *Enemy of the People* child death is further removed from the action. Only with *The Wild Duck* does child death become a dominant trope in Ibsen's work. Starting with Hedvig's suicide, four out of Ibsen's next five plays involve dead children.

Ibsen is merely the starting point for the dead child in modern drama. The frequency of the (non-) image is Modern Drama's own version of the return of the repressed. The dead child returns drama to its beginnings and illuminates the dramatic import of the form not taken. Three years before Ibsen turns to prose, Nietzsche metaphorizes tragedy as a child who has died in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).

American drama has also proved a fertile breeding ground for images of dead children. In *Agitated States: Performance in the American Theater of Cruelty,* Anthony Kubiak suggests that the dead child illuminates American subjectivity:

> [T]he imaginary child – the literal concept of reproduction – operates as a fulcrum in the struggle for apprehension. This struggle ends, in each case, in the death / disappearance of the infant, as in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and with the grim resurrection of the repressed in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child.* The *enfants terrible* represent, in each case, a space of theatrical terror – the terror of contingencies, certainly, but also the terror of *huit clos*[31], no escape from the demands of selfhood into the safe confinement of a "subject position" (134-5*).*[32]

Kubiak privileges semiotics over phenomenology. The struggle to apprehend Albee and O'Neill's dead children as material objects is doomed from the beginning. These dead children can never disappear because there is nothing to disappear - they never enter the realm of visual representation. Kubiak privileges the signified at the expense of the object /sign. By focusing on what the dead baby signifies, Kubiak shows a lack of interest in how the dead baby who does the signifying is represented.

Kubiak's focus on the dead child as a representation of American subjectivity minimizes the importance of drama as representational site. I wish to take a more macroscopic view on the phenomenon of the dead child in Modern Drama. The dead child is a metatheatrical image, appearing in Ibsen, American drama, and beyond. From Ibsen forward, the modern stage is littered with the signs of dead children if not their actual representations. As a signifier, the dead child is a functioning component in a dramatic representational economy.

A cursory and by no means all-inclusive listing of dead children drama is suggestive for its lack of suggestiveness. While well represented, American Drama does not show more proclivity for dead children than British Drama. Representations of dead children are common in multiple dramatic styles: from realism to symbolism, and from Absurdism, to the so-called Theatre of Extremes. Modern Drama keeps returning to the emblem of the dead child, and the dead child continues to elicit both critical and audience furor.

Ibsen's dead children include Hedvig's suicide in *The Wild Duck* (1884), the death of Ellida and Wangel's son, a son who possessed the same eyes as those of the Stranger in *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), Hedda's burning of Eilert Løvborg's

metaphoric child in *Hedda Gabler* (1890), the death of Solness and Aline's children due to the illness that Aline passed on to the children while nursing in *The Master Builder* (1892), and Eyolf's drowning in *Little Eyolf* (1894). In other late nineteenth and early twentieth-century drama, Jean smothers her physically deformed child in Elizabeth Robins and Florence Bell's *Alan's Wife* (1893), a drowning concludes Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), and Abbie suffocates her baby in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1924). Post World War II examples include Estelle's remembrance of the murder of her baby in Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* (1956), the death of baby Eugene in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956), the miscarriage which facilitates the reunion of Jimmy and Alison in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), and the revelation that it was a dead child that delayed the train in Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall* (1957). Dead children in dramas from the 1960s and 1970s include the ritualistic murder of the child who never existed in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*(1961-2), the murder and return of the bumble in Albee's *The American Dream* (1961), the stoning of the baby in Edward Bond's *Saved* (1965), the baby which dies in the fire at the conclusion of Caryl Churchill's *Owners* (1972), and the exhuming of the baby who was murdered years earlier in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978, revised in 1995). Contemporary examples of dead children in drama include Pope Joan's narration of her murder and the murder of her newly born baby in Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982), the murder of Nicky at the hands of politically motivated torturers in Harold Pinter's *One for the Road* (1984), the burying, exhuming and eating of the dead baby in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995), Rebecca's remembrance of giving the bundle up to be killed in Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* (1996), the death of the baby and the burning of the

corpse with cigarettes in Mark Ravenhill's Oscar Wilde homage, *Handbag* (1998), and the child murder stories and their real world manifestations in Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman* (2003).[33]

In these plays, dramatic performance becomes a network of signifying systems that can never completely converge. Such a vision of performative multiplicity recalls Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. For Artaud, a bad theatre focuses on linguistic representation, while a good theatre creates a network of interpretive possibilities:

> To cause spoken language or expression by words to dominate on the stage the objective expression of gestures and of everything which affects the mind by sensuous and spatial means is to turn one's back on the physical necessity of the stage and to rebel against its possibilities (71).

Artaud does not so much dismiss language as reduce language to its proper sphere. Language is just one among many theatrical signifying systems. Other systems include: non-linguistic sounds such as screams, other sounds, light, darkness, and gesture. "[E]verything which affects the mind by sensuous and spatial means," Artaud's network is a corrective of Ibsenism and its theatrical descendents who conceptualize the dramatic text as the root of theatrical innovation.[34]

Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and dead baby dramas both react against the dominance of realism and language in drama. Language and realism cannot offer a complete theatrical experience. However, Artaud suggests that transfiguration is possible by replacing a unitary theatrical experience with the Theatre of Cruelty's multifaceted stage: "[t]o break through language in order to touch life is to create or recreate the theater" (13). Theatre has ceased to be valuable because theatre has been reduced to the

artificiality of language. Such a process has taken the essence out of the theatre - the theatre cannot connect with life.

Like Artaud's plethora of signifying systems, the dead child critiques a unitary vision of dramatic representation. However, the dead child does not offer an alternative transfiguring system. The emblem underscores the intrinsic theatricality of transfiguring failure, and reveals mimesis as a site for representing and not for representation. Some things cannot be understood, some signification is doomed to failure, and determinate disruption is a normative dramatic function.

Modern Drama's dead children undercut retrospective time, the fecundity of signification, and the long literary tradition which equates texts to children.[35] A child is a sign of successful proliferation, and evidence of genes living beyond a single generation. A child creates a temporal bridge connecting the past to the future. The dead child becomes a prime illustration of signifying failure. Once dead, the sign has transitioned from subject to object, thereby eliminating infinite possibilities including the potential for language. Never quite a dramatic subject, the dead child signifies the lost potential for dramatic subjectivity. It will never get to speak, and become anything more than object. In the discussion that follows, the children are enmeshed in their own objecthood. Language fails as a dramatic signifying system.

Ibsen's dead children are both historically and structurally significant to the development of Modern Drama. Ibsen is considered a forerunner of twentieth-century dramatic innovation primarily due to his realism. However, such an assessment fails to acknowledge that only the early plays in Ibsen's prose cycle are unproblematically

realist. In *Hedda Gabler*: Revisiting Style and Substance," Rhonda Blair understands *Hedda Gabler* as the beginning of a new phase in Ibsen's dramaturgy:

> *Hedda Gabler* written in 1889, occupies a transitional position. Though it has elements of earlier, more conventionally realistic domestic plays such as *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1881), it marks a move toward the mystical and symbolist plays of Ibsen's final phase, embodied in works such as *The Master Builder* (1892) and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) (144).

Dead children dramas attempt to resolve the tension of signification. The drama either reasserts a traditional structure, a new dramatic structure asserts itself, or dramatic rupture emerges. In the case of dramatic rupture, the old structure dissipates with no coherent organizing principle left to replace it. *Hedda Gabler's* metaphorical dead baby signals the transition from realism to symbolism. Child murder in Ibsen's middle prose plays emblematize the desire to see beyond realism as a unitary signifying system.[36] Before realism can be abandoned and symbolism accessed, realism must be burned in effigy.

Hedda Gabler's metaphorical dead child represents Ibsen's greatest challenge to realism while working within the system. After *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen moves on to the overt symbolism which would be the defining feature of his final plays. Hedda believes a metaphorical dead child can disrupt the signifying potential of language. Hedda's efforts are ultimately thwarted in the play; however, this desire would point the way for other dramatic dead children to disrupt other signifying systems. In "Hedda's Children: Simon Gray's Anti-Heroes," Katherine H. Burkman suggests:

> Paradoxically, the fecundity of Hedda as a character, who aborts both her own life and that of her child, lies in the proliferation of characters created by other modern playwrights who have been deeply influenced in their drawing by Ibsen's heroine, by other characters in the play, and by Ibsen's point of view (107).

Burkman's title suggests not only the fecundity of Modern Drama as Hedda's children, but also, the proliferation of Hedda's children in Modern Drama. The fecundity of Hedda's children is the paradoxical proliferation of the dead, in which the iterating sign of the dead child evokes competing mimetic visions.

Chapter Two:

Socializing Texts, Scandalous Words and Burning Babies in *Hedda Gabler*

In *Ibsen and the Actress*, Elizabeth Robins, the first English actress to play Hedda Gabler, a translator of Ibsen, and co-author of *Alan's Wife,* her own dead baby play, relates an anecdote that would often be repeated in contemporary criticism of the play. According to Robins, "[o]ne lady of our acquaintance, married and not noticeable unhappy, said laughing, 'Hedda is all of us'" (18). In a similar vein of identification, in his introduction to the play Michael Meyer suggests that "[t]he play might, indeed, be subtitled *Portrait of the Dramatist as a Young Woman* (135).[37] Despite these noteworthy examples of realist signification, Hedda as a comprehensible representation for all women in the former, and Hedda as a cross dressing Ibsen in the latter, the opposite reaction is a more typical response to the play. As Joan Templeton has noted, "the word that appears most often in the early reviews of *Hedda Gabler* is 'incomprehensible'" (204).[38]

The critique of the play as incomprehensible extends well beyond early reviews to current critical examinations of Ibsen. *Hedda Gabler* is often deemed incomprehensible as a result of the social contexts in which the play is situated. Robins blames the perceived incomprehensible nature of the play as an offshoot of gender relationships: "how should men understand Hedda on the stage when they didn't understand her in the persons of their wives, their daughters, their woman friends" (18). For Michael Connolly, the incomprehensibility is an historical phenomena. In "Mapping Desire: Couching Hedda and Eilert's Conversation in Act II of *Hedda Gabler*," Connolly wonders, "[a]re [Ibsen's] plays encoded in a manner peculiar to Victorian culture and can

no dint of translation, short of adaptation, render Ibsen's vocabulary compelling for us?" (163). In "Negotiating Between Then and Now: Directing Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*," John Staniunas adds the confusion of national context. Staniunas takes a trip to Oslo because the influence of nationality must be understood before he can mount a production of *Hedda Gabler*: "I searched everywhere for the characters in the play . . . in the faces of the people, in their mannerisms, way of behaving, in the beauty of the land and the history of the time" (158). Staniunas' time in Oslo does not seem to help in clarifying the play, a discussion following an open rehearsal: "erupted into a passionate yet polite shouting match about how Hedda should be played" (157).

In each of the above characterizations of the play, an exegetic solution of signification is proposed as a means to remove the incomprehensible nature of the play. In essence, the play is incomprehensible for men because men cannot understand women, the play is incomprehensible for modern audiences because they cannot understand Victorian codes of conduct and repression, the play is incomprehensible for Americans because people outside of Norway are unfamiliar with the Norwegian heritage of Ibsen.

All these efforts to eliminate incomprehensibility in the drama center on the character of Hedda. The incomprehensibility of the character becomes synonymous with the incomprehensibility of the play. Criticism from the play's initial performance forward implicitly suggests that all other characters within the drama are understandable. Only Hedda cannot be understood. The inability to understand social contexts obscure an understanding of the protagonist. If these large mystery-making structures can be demystified, the character will become comprehensible and the play will be understandable.

In a sense, critics of the play validate the assertion of Elizabeth Robins' acquaintance that Hedda is all of us. For when critics attempt to illuminate the social contexts which encompass Hedda to understand her, the oppressive social structure is replicated in a critical context. Hedda wants freedom from social structures but is unable to achieve it other than through futile incomprehensible actions. Like Hedda's oppression within the social structures of the play, the critical tradition seems oppressed by the manner in which cultural and social differentiation make Hedda and the play incomprehensible. If these structures can be clearly outlined, incomprehensibility will transform into the comprehensible. However, like Hedda's inability to escape the oppressive social structures, the critical tradition is unable to find that comprehensibility which will offer liberation from the confusion which binds all efforts at understanding the character and the play. The assertion of Hedda being all of us does not necessarily contradict the incomprehensible nature of the play. We are like Hedda when we approach the play. Despite all efforts to escape the cultural forces which make the character and the play incomprehensible, these efforts ultimately fail to offer the glimmer of clarity. Like Hedda, critics are forced to confront a structure they cannot hope to overcome.

In their efforts to overcome a structure as noted above, the critical canon tends to equate structure with realist structure. This overlooks that as a play, *Hedda Gabler* intervenes in numerous dramatic discourses in addition to realism. The play also engages in symbolic ritual, and the metatheatrical emblem of proliferation personified in the image of the dead baby. In "Mythic Structure in *Hedda Gabler*: The Mask Behind the

Face" Elinor Fuchs suggests that the inability to deal with incomprehensibility in the play is related to the mistake of viewing the play through a realist lens:

> At the end of Act III, Hedda Gabler performs two shocking actions: she hands Løvborg a pistol to use as a suicide weapon, and she burns his manuscript. The play-things and figures of speech of Act I have taken over the action of the play. No matter how sympathetic the imaginative leap we make, we cannot 'justify' these actions in the motivational terms of realistic drama. Ibsen deliberately frustrated such an effort by destroying bridges between wish and action. (210)[39]

Fuchs goes on to offer a theory of the play in which Hedda's acts must be understood as part of a Dionysian ritual. As the above citation makes apparent, such an interpretation reads the end of the third act as center in that the end of the third act disrupts all efforts to view the play within a realist schematic. By burning the manuscript without a justifiable motivation, Hedda's actions gesture towards a dramatic enterprise distanced from psychological realism. Viewing the burning of the manuscript as a ritual instead of an act in itself, viewing the burning as a symbolic signifier instead of a realist signified offers an opening to conceptualize the act as a rupture of a realist causal dynamic. Rather than a culminating act of logical coherence, the ritual burning of the manuscript violates the precepts of logical coherence.

When it is viewed as ritual, the burning struggles against the precepts of realism and the progression of the play, rather than simply offering a continuation of the realist structure. The burning is meant to be an act of transfiguration, an act that connects to something beyond its own significance. Yet, when critics suggest that Hedda burns the

manuscript out of jealousy, when Hedda tells Tesman she burned the manuscript for his sake, or even when the manuscript is considered solely as a manuscript, the realist frame reasserts its dominance obscuring the ritualistic resonance of the act.

Hedda is a character who understands and tries to perform ritual acts. Despite these efforts, Hedda is trapped in a realist structure. As center for a ritualized view of structure within the play, burning the manuscript offers a means to understand the discordant elements earlier in the play which escape realist interpretations. Hedda's visions of a returning Løvborg "with vine leaves in his hair," and her threats to burn Thea's hair are typically met with reactions ranging from mystification to scorn from theatre goers and critics alike because there is no room for understanding Hedda's ritualistic speech acts within the play's realist frame.[40]

The manuscript Hedda burns is Løvborg's academic discourse on the forces shaping civilization and the direction civilization may develop (197). Evert Sprinchorn suggests that in the act of writing about the future, Løvborg's "work on the history of social and cultural forces and what they portend sounds very much like Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, which has the subtitle 'Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future'" (362). As a corollary to this interpretation, Sprinchorn reads the burning of the manuscript as motivated "out of resentment, the most un-Nietzschean and un-Dionysian of sentiments" (364).

However, rather than "un-Nietzschean and un-Dionysian," the burning of the metaphorical child is very Nietzschean. It is simply derived from the earliest vision of Nietzschean thought. The content of Løvborg's manuscript may evoke the future motivated conceptions contained within *Beyond Good and Evil*, but the obsessive way

the manuscript is conceived of as a child evokes *The Birth of Tragedy*.[41] Nietzsche's first book compulsively metaphorizes tragedy in images of birth and sexual procreation. Trying to illuminate the way the Apollonian and the Dionysian combine to from tragedy, Nietzsche suggests that the process operates "just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations" (33). Similarly, he writes that the two forces "continually incite each other to new and more powerful births" (33). In just one more early example from Nietzsche's text, he argues that the two forces reach "consummation in this child [tragedy]" (47).

Despite the title of Nietzsche's text and the numerous examples which metaphorize the emergence of the child called tragedy, the text only offers the birth of tragedy as a prelude to its death:

> Greek tragedy met an end different from that of her older sister-arts: she died by suicide: in consequence of an irreconcilable conflict; she died tragically, while all the others passed away calmly and beautifully. (76)

Meta-tragedy serves a distinct rhetorical function in Nietzsche's analysis, as the suicide of tragedy represents the last tragic act. Tragedy is about birth; it is the fecundity of Apollonian and Dionysian copulation. In its last act, tragedy pulls the structure down around it. Attempts to reach the tragic are left with the child corpse who was tragedy. This corpse has its own message to tell: "But when Greek tragedy died, there rose everywhere the deep sense of an immense void" (76). In this phrase, as it reaches for the tragic, Modern Drama is left with only the remains of the tragic, the dead child.

It is worth repeating that Nietzsche's reproductive metaphor of tragedy's birth was originally published in 1872, three years before Ibsen's transition to prose drama

with *Pillars of Society*. The historical congruence between Nietzsche's illumination of the dead child of tragedy and Ibsen's emergence on the international stage, which, as stated above, is commonly referred to as the beginning of Modern Drama, are undeniable. As Modern Drama begins, Nietzsche recognizes the dead child, which leaves in its wake "the deep sense of an immense void." This "immense void" - this rupture - accompanies Modern Drama to the present through the metaphor of the dead child, working in the same way Nietzsche envisioned the dead child of tragedy. In each instance this metatheatrical emblem points to the void that is left in the wake of the destruction of the Dionysian force.

Writing at the cusp of what can only be described as a proliferation of dramatic dead children, Nietzsche refuses to acknowledge the modern essence of the tragic corpse. The dead child is only temporary, tragedy can be resurrected:

> Yes, my friends, believe with me in Dionysian life and the rebirth of tragedy. The age of the Socratic man is over; put on wreaths of ivy, put the thyrsus into your hand, and do not be surprised when tigers and panthers lie down, fawning, at your feet (124).

In extolling the possibility of the tragic child coming back to life, Nietzsche presents the same image that Hedda imagines in a returning Løvborg. Nietzsche's "wreaths of ivy" have been generalized to the less specific vine leaves of Hedda's vision, but the image is the same. Like Hedda's conception of Løvborg with vine leaves in his hair, Nietzsche uses the image of a wreath of ivy to suggest that the void can be overcome, that the Dionysian can again become an essential force, that drama can transfigure.

This optimism surrounding the resurrection of the child and the overcoming of the void is ultimately considered a rash and immature act. As Walter Kaufmann notes in the translators preface:

> Unfortunately, *The Birth of Tragedy* does not end with Section 15, as an early draft did and as the book clearly ought to. Another ten sections follow that weaken the whole book immeasurably. (13)

Kaufmann's critique of the text coincides with Nietzsche's movement from concluding his discussion of the death of tragedy in Section 15 to the beginnings of his attempts to resurrect tragedy in Section 16. If only Nietzsche would have ended the book at its strongest point he would have ended it with the death of the child called tragedy.

Kaufmann's regret with the text that went on too long - the text that wasn't content with the image of a dead child but had to try to resurrect the dead child - is only a repetition of Nietzsche's own view of his first book. In 1886, a new edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* was issued which included Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism." Among the objects the older Nietzsche deems worthy of critique is the realization:

> I *spoiled* the grandiose *Greek problem*, as it had arisen before my eyes, by introducing the most modern problems! That I appended hopes where there was no ground for hope, where everything pointed all to plainly to an end! (24)

Both Nietzsche and Kaufmann assert that Nietzsche should have left the dead child where it was lying.[42] The child of tragedy has no business in the modern world. Attempts to place tragedy in the context of the modern, damages the text and sidetracks the author's

vision. Instead of embracing the metaphor of the dead child as a means of staring into the void, Nietzsche's view is distracted.

While a young Nietzsche can only look at the void momentarily before he must look away, Hedda has no qualms about taking a deeper and longer look into the void:

> Hedda *throwing one of the pages into the stove and whispers to herself.* I'm burning your child, Thea! You, with your beautiful wavy hair!
>
> *She throws a few more pages into the stove.*
>
> The child Eliert Løvborg gave you.
>
> *Throws the rest of the manuscript in.*
>
> I'm burning it! I'm burning your child! (229).

Hedda's burning of the metaphorical child carries the vocal utterance to completion. In the aftermath of Løvborg's night out with Tesman and Judge Brack, a night out in which Løvborg has lost his manuscript, Hedda convinces Tesman to let her hang on to the book. Løvborg, not knowing what has happened to the book, tells Thea he has "torn it up" (226). Following in the wake of Thea's reaction to the imaginative utterance of the book's destruction, in a ritualized act of signification, Løvborg and Hedda inaugurate the metaphor of manuscript as dead child:

> Mrs. Elvsted. Do you know, Eilert, - this book – all my life I shall feel as though you'd killed a little child?
>
> Løvborg. You're right. It was like killing a child.
>
> Mrs. Elvsted. But how could you? It was my child too!
>
> Hedda (*almost inaudibly*). Oh - the child – (227).

Unlike Nietzsche's metaphorizing tragedy as a child, and the typical manner in which texts are characterized as children to emphasize their proliferation, Løvborg's manuscript never is seen as a living child. The manuscript only becomes a child in its death. Of course, this is an imaginative death. Hedda has the manuscript in her writing desk. Løvborg only kills the written manuscript by speaking its death so he will not have to admit to Thea that he lost it. Particularly striking is the manner in which Løvborg and Hedda latch on to the metaphor, even though both characters know that Lovborg has not destroyed the manuscript.[43] As one character after the other acknowledges the imaginatively destroyed manuscript as dead child the metaphor is transformed from Thea's melodramatic act of fancy to a firm connotative link. Destroyed manuscript as dead child takes on a resonance that cannot be denied.

At the same time that the play remains focused on the metaphor of the dead child, it only does this by envisioning the dead child as metaphor. This functions as a sort of distancing mechanism. The dead child as a metatheatrical emblem is not evoked directly. The metaphor of book as child is established more directly than in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Wilde's play creates a metonymic link between baby and text, but it is a link the characters try to deny. It is a mistake that Prism mixed up book and child, and such an error in judgment should not be made. In contradistinction, *Hedda Gabler* uses ritual to forge the very link Wilde presents as ridiculous. In addition, while Wilde's play leaves the connection as an unspoken metonymic link, Ibsen's play verbalizes the link. The verbalization may make the link between text and baby more explicit but at the same time the play pronounces it as an artificial link. According to Thea, in destroying the text it is "as though" Løvborg killed a child. The ritualized verbal repetition works to

transcend the artificiality of the verbal metaphor. It works to traverse Thea's utterance of "as though" and eliminate the distance between destroyed text and uttered dead child.

The ritualized utterance of the dead child tries to overcome the understanding that as a metaphor, the description of the book is twice removed from the signification of the dead child. Theatrical representation always bears a metaphorical connection to the object it is signifying.[44] Keir Elam economically summarizes such a view when he suggests that "[t]he very fact of their appearance on stage suppresses the practical function of phenomena in favour of a symbolic or signifying role, allowing them to participate in dramatic representation" (6).

In the context of this discussion of Modern Drama's dead children, the dead child is always a metaphor. By characterizing the book as a dead child, *Hedda Gabler* is offering a metaphor of a metaphor. This metaphoric doubling contains and displaces the complete resonance of the dead child onto Løvborg's text. Such a displacement echoes the relationship between dramatic text and ideal performance event elaborated within *The Wild Duck.* Similar to the manner that the earlier play contains the disruption of its own textual signification within each potential performance, in *Hedda Gabler* the modern dramatic metaphor of the dead child and the view it offers of the void as a replacement for tragedy emerges with the idea of the destruction of the text. The dead child as a metatheatrical emblem presents itself and the void which it illuminates as an anti-textual representation. The dead child emerges from a performance rupture contained within the text thereby suggesting that each dramatic text contains the performative seeds of its own signifying death.

In *Hedda Gabler* the dead child is evoked through a sort of performative speech act. The ritualized utterances which interconnect the vision of dead child and the destroyed manuscript demonstrate the power of spoken language within the play. For in telling Thea that he has destroyed the manuscript, Løvborg uses the power of the spoken word against the written word. In doing so, Løvborg explicitly calls attention to two functions of language. While the spoken word contains the potential for transgression, the written word is used as a means of domestication and socialization, or, to put it in terms analogous to those used above, the written word is an essential component of the oppressive structure of realism.

The domesticating and socializing function of the written word is explicit in the play in the manner the written word is connected with linear temporality. In marrying Tesman, Hedda demonstrates her willingness to submit to the written word. She explains to Judge Brack that she married Tesman because "there's nothing exactly ridiculous about him" and "I felt my time was up" (187). As an aspiring academic researching the history of civilization, Tesman emerges as a particularly revealing means for Hedda to achieve social respectability. For when Hedda feels her time is up, she refers to an individualized sense of time that appears very different from Tesman's historical time. While Tesman's historical judgments about civilization require him to analyze time through archival research, Hedda's individual time of freedom comes to an end based on nothing more than a feeling. Hedda finds respectability by marrying someone who professionalizes the linear progression of time. Respectability, as well as the unfortunate side effect of boredom, is achieved by connecting herself to the project of written temporal causality.

Hedda's absorption into a social frame, based on a model of temporal causality seems to be the overarching mechanism suppressing Hedda's unfeminine impulses. While Hedda wants to be outside the frame, this is an impulse that is unattainable because Hedda, like the victim of the Panoptican's gaze is imprisoned by the values of the society in which she lives. Although she may threaten to shoot Eliert Løvborg, she will not follow through on such a threat because she is afraid of the scandal (204). According to Hedda, it is this fear of scandal which prevents her from having an affair with either Brack or Løvborg. Yet, both Brack and Løvborg view Hedda's reluctance as a manifestation of social norms. Instead of seeing Hedda as she sees herself, that is, as someone who wants to transgress but is afraid, both men try to conceive of Hedda as a vehicle of conformity. In their initial interpretations of Hedda's refusal, they think she will not have an affair because she loves Tesman. Similarly, Løvborg wants to view Hedvig as a figure of social conformity who previously wanted to hear his stories of debauchery because she loves him. In Løvborg's eyes, Hedda listens because of her desire to reform the sinner. Hedda needs to correct his perception of their relationship. She does not love him, she wants to be him. His stories are a way for Hedda to recognize that escape is possible. Løvborg's narratives are a way for Hedda to imaginatively elevate herself to the level of Brack. She can view freedom while not exposing herself to the horror of public scandal. Løvborg's confessions to Hedda open up a social space in which Hedda can transgress while remaining safe from the punishment associated with transgressing social mores.

As the play opens, Hedda and Tesman have just returned from their honeymoon. Having returned to a city with no Eilert Løvborg and his stories of freedom, Hedda must

resort to what has been characterized as her hysterical behavior.[45] In her moments of seemingly irrational aggression such as when she ridicules Aunt Julie's new hat, and when she fires one of General Gabler's pistols over Judge Brack's head, Hedda disrupts the logic of the system. In firing her father's pistol, Hedda demonstrates a frustration with her choices. She is neither the dutiful wife content with her role in society nor is she willing to submit to the possibility of a scandalous relationship with Judge Brack. Both options place Hedda in the passive role. Rather than acting, these choices only provide the opportunity to react.

Random acts of aggression allow Hedda to become primary actor. She can set her own agenda, and the agenda that she sets cannot be understood within the intelligible social realms of propriety or scandal. It seems only natural that Hedda's aggressive acts should manifest against both groups since there is not necessarily a difference between the two. The only difference between Judge Brack and Eilert Løvborg is that Brack knows how to play the game. He recognizes that there is an invisible eye always watching. Actually, in many cases, he *is* the not so invisible eye watching.

This understanding that Brack and Løvborg commit the same acts, but that Brack is the representative for justice while Løvborg is punished for his sins suggests that scandal is only scandal if it is carried out openly and defiantly. Scandal only becomes scandal if secret behavior is revealed. In this context, the appeal of Løvborg's confessions of his illicit acts have nothing to do with the acts themselves. The appeal of the confession is that the confession is the scandal rather than the crime. For in the act of confessing, Løvborg demonstrates that the regulating eye of social propriety has no control over him. Hedda's attraction to Løvborg and his narrative of illicit acts is

fundamentally interconnected to the scandalous process of language. In *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, Shoshana Felman writes:

> Just as seductive discourse exploits the capacity of language to reflect itself, by means of the self-referentiality of performative verbs, it also exploits in parallel fashion the self-referentiality of the interlocutor's narcissistic desire, and his (or her) capacity to produce in turn a reflexive, specular illusion: the seducer holds out to women the narcissistic mirror of their own desire of themselves. (17)

The scandal contained in Løvborg's seductive confession of transgression works in almost complete opposition to Felman's characterization of Don Juan's performative speech acts. Listening to Løvborg, Hedda enacts a sort of performative listening act. She fulfills her desire for the scandal of a verbal confession while at the same time remaining hidden. When she hears Løvborg's confession she proffers Løvborg "the narcissistic mirror of [his] own desire of [himself]." Hedda luxuriates in the illicit actualization of scandalous verbal discourse while Løvborg creates his narcissistic vision of Hedda as the paragon of society who wants to reform the fallen sinner. As listener, Hedda can see beyond the normative while keeping Løvborg's vision of her as normative intact.

Like Hedda's futile attempts to access Nietzsche's Dionysian, the opening moments of the play offer a social structure with no points of access for scandalous verbal discourse. Both the Dionysian and scandalous verbal discourse are relegated to historical status, sentimental indicators of a better time. Even the structure of the play

emphasizes this loss, as Ibsen's play cannot perform the same scandal as Løvborg's confessions to Hedda. Løvborg tells Hedda:

> I regarded you as a kind of confessor. Told you things about myself which no else knew about – then. Those days and nights of drinking and – Oh, Hedda, what power did you have to make me confess such things? (203)

The actual narrative of Løvborg's scandal as an act has been exorcised from the text by performing the illicit behavior as a gap in the text. Whatever confessing power Hedda once possessed now seems to be gone. According to Michael Connolly "the hyphen, and the pauses and changes of motion inherent in them, signal that characters are in the process of revealing their hidden selves, their, in this case sexual selves" (168). While sex may have been part of the unutterable sin, sex in and of itself does not encompass textual rupture. Scandal exceeds textual representation as it can only be represented by a hyphen. In Løvborg's acknowledgment of his previous confession, the scandal language previously possessed becomes explicit. Løvborg's previous behavior is no longer secret and society seems to have forgiven him as he has published a book and he is in position to compete with Tesman for a job at the university. Despite the transgression being public knowledge, Løvborg does not repeat the already known scandal. He will not re-utter the scandal, he will not reinstate Hedda as confessor, and, most significantly, he will not re-inscribe language as disruption.

Instead, scandal will be regulated to the gaps in language, to the hyphens, to the representations which cannot be contained in the regulating structures of speech. Language has become a regulating mechanism for Løvborg. His new book on the history

of civilization is the means by which he is able to recuperate his reputation and become a functioning member of society. The words on the page which have "created a tremendous stir" demonstrate Løvborg's new understanding of language. Where he previously used language to transgress the mores of society through private confession, he now reaffirms these norms by using language to enter into a public discourse. While he may be a more creative and intelligent scholar than Tesman, the difference between the two men is one of degree and not of type. Both men are historians who use language to construct narratives of the past. The loss of the transgressive potential and the loss of Løvborg as Hedda's confidant become synonymous as Løvborg expresses a desire to share his work with Tesman. Løvborg has already written the sequel to his recently published book. According to Løvborg, "this is my real book. The one in which I have spoken with my own voice" (197). The first book is only the primer to get Løvborg the legitimacy he needs to announce his real message to the world. He tells Tesman that he wants "to defeat you in the eyes of the world" (199).

Whereas Løvborg's first book relates the history of civilization up to the present, the sequel is about the future. Løvborg casts himself as the ultimate rebel whose role is to transform society, or at least show society its shortcomings. His new book on the future is broken up into two parts: the first part, "deals with the forces that will shape our civilization," and the second part, "indicates the direction in which that civilization may develop" (197). He seems to believe that this new book allows him to regain his role as scandal creator, but in the process of writing, scandal will be directed in a more fruitful direction. The scandal of the new book will be the manner in which it opens new possibilities for language.

Løvborg sees his future speculations as the antithesis of Tesman's. Like Løvborg's own first book which he writes in a voice not his own, Tesman's work fails to take present society into account and in the process, present society becomes the absolute. Tesman writes with the hope of furthering his position in the present by receiving an appointment for an academic post. Tesman's writing is intimately connected with his marriage to Hedda. His research into the past is designed to give him the means of establishing himself in the present. Through writing about history, he will develop a reputation and be able to start a family. Writing about history gives Tesman the hope of being absorbed within the status quo of the present.

In contrast, while Løvborg's initial book puts him in a position to compete with Tesman for the university appointment, Løvborg announces that he has no intention to compete for such an appointment. Unlike Tesman, Løvborg has no interest in using language to further his present position. Instead, the present becomes a means for historicization just like the past. In transforming the object of academic language from the past to the present, the present opens itself to critique. Løvborg's focus on the future creates a satisfying outlet for language and his own voice. He can use his new text to attack present society by using language in a way condoned by society.

While Løvborg sees this work as the antithesis of Tesman, as far as Hedda is concerned they have become the same man. In writing history, Løvborg has forged a compromise with society. Løvborg may characterize the book on the future as a vocal utterance in an effort to envision himself as the rebel he used to be, but both men embrace the domesticating function of language. The difference between them is a matter of focus. Tesman may focus on the past and Løvborg the future but both men wish to

illuminate the processes of civilization. Whereas Løvborg's previous reliance on confession presented the potential for language to emerge as an antithesis to the functioning of society, his new speculation on the future of society allies him with society as a concept. It is this idea of Løvborg, a Løvborg who uses language as an aid to civilization and as a means of understanding civilization instead of as a means of disrupting society which dismays Hedda.

Hedda looks for a means to return to the freedom of the scandal. Since her primary scandal maker is incapable of producing scandal through language, Hedda must find a means to experience the gap in language, the hyphen where Løvborg has regulated scandal. In the process of looking for the freedom of scandal, Hedda takes on language as a regulating mechanism. By attacking language directly, Hedda hopes to find the gap in language, in representation, where scandal exists. Hedda does this by separating Løvborg from his book and, together, Thea, Løvborg, and Hedda demonstrate that Løvborg could not have written the book in his own voice. Reformed by Thea, Løvborg wants to believe in an interconnective system in which his own voice, the written text, and history all combine in an effort to transform society to the better. Voice and text become the same thing.

The ritual utterance in which text is metaphorized as dead child demonstrates that once voice is used to its optimal potential, the voice is the antithesis of the written word. However, the scandal of the voice is not the same as Hedda's nostalgic reminiscences. Rather than a pocket of confession - a pocket of resistance to the written word of historical socialization - the dead child vocalized offers a means to oppose the written word, destroy its hold, and demonstrate the shortcomings of written signification. In such

a context, the actual burning of the manuscript is anti-climatic. Once Thea, Løvborg, and Hedda ritualize the performative utterance which transforms hidden manuscript to dead child, the signifying power of the written word is overcome. Løvborg has been separated from the text and if his future does not enact the rebirth of the Dionysian in the modern world, at least it opposes the vision of Løvborg as Socratic man.

At least it opposes the vision of Løvborg as Socratic man for a time. The rupture of signification and the triumph of transforming the written text into a dead child is only temporary. As Templeton suggests, Thea will not let the book Løvborg wrote in his own voice remain a dead child: "The hyper-motherly secretary miraculously gives birth to a new child out of her pockets as she produces Løvborg's notes" (227). Unlike Nietzsche who turns away from the void of the dead child to embrace the idea of a living child called tragedy, Hedda is willing to continue staring into the void but the child will not stay dead for her. She is forced to watch the beginning moments of its resurrection, as Thea and Tesman begin the reconstruction of the text. History will not stay fragmented. The logic of a temporal continuum will be extended as the written text of the future is reborn.

The miraculous resurrection of the text from dead child that will not stay dead, offers a counterpoint to the impossibly surviving Oedipus and Jack Worthing. Yet, instead of embracing the child that is in the process of being resurrected, Hedda raises the stakes in her attempts to destabilize the Oedipal structure by moving from the book as emblem of a dead child to a stage representation of a dead child. Hedda's suicide attempts to transcend the metaphorization of a metatheatrical metaphor. Because the book as dead baby will not stay dead, Hedda attempts to come closer to the void by

replacing the metaphorized text as dead baby with a dead baby. In response to the book of the future that is being reassembled before her eyes a pregnant Hedda will kill the baby of the future by taking her own life.

However, the historical text is too potent a means of signification. The suicide of the pregnant Hedda is relegated to an off-stage occurrence and the actual pregnancy is never overtly confirmed in the play. Similar to attempts to destroy the text by uttering its destruction and physically burning Løvborg's book, it seems likely that Hedda's suicide only has the power to halt the reassembly of the text temporarily. The play ends with the inevitability of the written text as historical event overcoming the performative utterance and the performance event. While *Hedda Gabler* ends with the temporal determinism of history marginalizing the rupture intrinsic in the emblem of the dead baby, Ibsen's play is not the last word. In Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*, the imaginary dead baby becomes a means of disrupting the temporal causality of history.

Chapter Three:

A Dead Baby and the Sound of Traumatic Fantasy in *Ashes to Ashes*

The logic of the dead child as theatrical sign leads from the late nineteenth-century metaphor of a metaphor evoked by *Hedda Gabler* to the traumatic narrative Rebbeca relates to Devlin in Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* (1996). Pinter's play is separated in time from Ibsen's by over a century, but it follows Ibsen as it moves a step closer to a staged representation of the dead baby. By metaphorizing Løvborg's book as a dead child, Hedda is able to glimpse the rupture of dramatic signification, but such a glimpse is only temporary.

Hedda's view of the rupture is made possible because she fastens an artificial façade on the book. Imagining the book as something that it is not allows Hedda access to the void. In the play, the process of metaphor is analogous to the emergence of the dead child. Overlaying the metaphor of the dead child on the book becomes the means of accessing the rupture. Metaphorization is merely a form of fantasy.[46] In his letter to Wilhelm Fliess from May 25, 1897; Freud included a description of fantasy as part of Draft M:

> Phantasies are constructed by a process of amalgamation and distortion analogous to the decomposition of a chemical body which is compounded with another one. For the first sort of distortion consists of a falsification of memory by a process of fragmentation in which chronological relations in particular are neglected. (Chronological corrections seem precisely to depend on the activity of the system of conciousness.) A fragment of the

> visual scene is then joined up with a fragment of the auditory one and made into the phantasy, while the fragment left over is linked up with something else. In this way it is made impossible to trace an earlier connection. (252)

In a very Freudian manner, the ritualized utterance of Thea, Løvborg and Hedda merges with Løvborg's text to combine the auditory and the visual into fantasy. Fantasy, because the book has not been lost or destroyed but is simply hidden in Hedda's desk. The very essence of this fantasy is to enact "a fragmentation in which chronological relations in particular are neglected." The fantasy of destroying the book is literally a fantasy of destroying the causal connections that the book forges between present and future.

The victory of fantasy metaphorized in the dead child seems a temporary victory, as before long, Thea and Tesman work toward reconstructing the metaphorized child, and suturing the dramatic gap. Yet, the resurrection of the metaphorized dead child equates with Hedda's unwillingness to imagine the dead child as fantasy. It is not enough to acknowledge the dead child imaginatively, the manuscript must be ritually burned. Connecting the fantasy to a material act allows the suturing of the void. While Hedda's material performing of the ritual utterance of the dead child transforms fantasy to materiality, this very lapsing into materiality sutures the performative rupture. Hedda has complete control over the dead child of fantasy, but she must submit to the independent veracity of the material representation. Just as the metaphor can be burned, it can be resurrected through an act which gives Hedda no control.

In *Ashes to Ashes,* the metaphorized child is reconfigured, as the performative utterance is divorced from any material link. Where Nietzsche momentarily glimpsed the

dramatic rupture evoked by the dead child, and where Hedda, entranced by the lure of materiality, was forced to turn away by the attempts of others to resurrect the child, Rebecca is able to maintain her focus on the rupture. Like Tesman and Thea in *Hedda Gabler*, Devlin serves as a suturing force in *Ashes to Ashes*. His goal is to pull Rebecca away from the gap by replacing indeterminacy with historical and material context. This process can be understood as suturing in that it tries to thread connections between Rebecca's dangling signifiers, and material and historical signifieds. Devlin works to reestablish a cause and effect narrative, thereby denying the possibility of indeterminacy. Yet where Tesman and Thea appear to succeed in covering over the rupture, Devlin fails.

Much in the way that the primary conflict in an Ibsen play or Freudian psychoanalysis is resolved by understanding the impact of history or of memory on the present, the character of Devlin in Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* struggles to understand how Rebecca's narrative, seemingly involving her past, relates to his present. The play opens with a seated Rebecca apparently answering Devlin's questions about her personal history with an abusive former lover. However, rather than provide any answers about the present and about his relationship with Rebecca, the questions merely whet Devlin's desire for knowledge that can never be satiated:

> Devlin: You understand why I'm asking you these questions. Don't you? Put yourself in my place. I'm compelled to ask you questions. There are so many things I don't know. I know nothing . . . about any of this. Nothing. I'm in the dark. I need light. Or do you think my questions are illegitimate? (11)

In the process of Rebecca's maintaining contact with the rupture evoked by the narrative of the baby, Pinter's drama represents as a decontextualized permanent rupture the fairly ambiguous rupture enacted in *Hedda Gabler* and suggested by Nietzsche. Devlin's frustration evokes an incapacity to understand the very concept of fantasy. According to Freud, through the fragmentation of fantasy "it is made impossible to trace an earlier connection." Yet, this connection is precisely what Devlin strives for.

The struggle of *Ashes to Ashes* can be characterized by Devlin's effort to contain Rebecca's fantasy in an Oedipal narrative. This proves to be no easy task. In an Oedipal frame, an utterance like Rebecca's that represents itself as a memory of the past, should be able to be incorporated into the present, as a way to transform it. Rebecca's fantasy opposes an Oedipal narrative. Her utterance comes to resemble trauma in both content and form. No matter how many times Rebecca narrates violent acts, repetition never leads to mastery. Repetition never gives Devlin an understanding of the man in Rebecca's vision. Whereas *Oedipus* presents the scarred body for view, in service of the narrative causality of a healed social body, the violence of Rebecca's utterance offers no such linear binding.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud defines as traumatic, "any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield" (33). *Ashes to Ashes* presents the Oedipal narrative as a protective shield. Devlin tries to verify the validity of the Oedipal narrative by placing Rebecca's utterance in a historical contextual frame of reference. Rebecca's narrative is traumatic to Devlin and to the structure of the play, because it does not make Oedipal sense.

Despite Devlin's belief in Oedipal narrative, his efforts to incorporate Rebecca's utterances into a chronological structure fail. Devlin embraces repetition as a means to gain control over the traumatic utterance. Yet, the utterance proves itself to be traumatic, it proves itself fantasy precisely in the manner that the utterance resists Devlin's efforts at mastery. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth writes that "[w]hat causes, trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (61).[47]

Devlin believes that if he can just ask the right questions, the relationship between Rebecca and the man will become comprehensible. If he can just ask the right questions, he will be able to contextualize the historical relationship between Rebecca and the man. For Devlin not knowing anything "about any of this" equates to not knowing the "when" of Rebecca's narrative. Understanding the when is tantamount to understanding how the relationship between Rebecca and the man relates to him.

Critics of the play tend to answer Devlin's questioning of his own legitimacy by suggesting that his questions are indeed illegitimate. Devlin's illegitimacy is established by equating his project for knowledge with the systematic oppression and abuse of Rebecca. In "'You Brought it Upon Yourself': Subjectivity and Culpability in *Ashes to Ashes*," Jessica Prinz writes that "It becomes very clear that Devlin's questioning of Rebecca is another form of violence in the play" (101). Similarly, in "Shaping Ambiguity: The Chemistry Between Silence, Ghosting, and Framing Devices within a Production of Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*," Christy Stanlake equates Devlin with "outsider oppression" (144).

Clearly, it is tempting to read Devlin's physical violence toward Rebecca as a continuation of the opening line of the play in which Rebecca is seemingly answering a question of Devlin's by describing a past relationship of physical violence. Numerous critics have suggested that, at the end of the play, Devlin attempts to enact the role of the man in Rebecca's memory. By committing the same acts as the man, Devlin will realize Rebecca's memory. The event that has been relegated into the past, the traumatic utterance, will become an act performed in the present. Yet, is Devlin's questioning of Rebecca in general, and his questioning of Rebecca about her relationship with the man of her memory in particular, only "violent," and only an act of "oppression," to use the language of Prinz and Stanlake, if it is looked from Devlin's culminating act of putting his hand around Rebecca's throat? If Devlin's interrogation of Rebecca performs an act of violence in and of itself, then we must indict Prinz and Stanlake as oppressors and perpetuators of violence along with Devlin.

Devlin's questioning of Rebecca is violent in that it is an effort to exert control and contextualize Rebecca's memory. Devlin wants to take control of the memory in order to make it historically and personally contextualizable. By connecting the memory to specifics, including time and place, Devlin tries to commit the violent act of transforming something that belongs exclusively to Rebecca into something that belongs to him. Devlin wants to gain possession by transforming the inaccessible utterance into the comprehensible realm that contains explicit context. He will own the memory by connecting it to other events within his realm of experience.

Understanding Devlin's questions as violent, illuminates Prinz and Stanlake's project as analogous to Devlin's. At the same time these critics demonstrate a reluctance

to support Devlin's project of historical appropriation on political grounds of empathy for Rebecca and victimization in general, the same critics work to complete the project. [48] For Prinz, "[c]learly, the first subject-position that Rebecca occupies is as the lover of a Nazi" (99). Connecting Rebecca's lover to a specific point in history and a specific region of the world offers a fairly specific answer to the ambiguous position of the lover that Devlin is unable to resolve. Prinz complicates this by acknowledging that Rebecca could not even have been born during World War II because the play is set "now," the play first was performed in 1996, and Rebecca is described as being in her 40's. This temporal incongruity leads to Prinz's concession: "Of course, the ambiguous nature of Pinter's play suggests that he is talking about all kinds of atrocities, not just the Holocaust" (100). Despite this acknowledgement, the Holocaust still remains the privileged temporal marker in Prinz's analysis. Rather than destabilizing the specific atrocity of the Holocaust to the more general plethora of possible atrocities, the specific Holocaust remains an identificatory marker of contextual reference. Rebecca's memory has been given a historical marker despite the lack of any specific reference to World War II anywhere in the play.

Reflecting upon playing the role of Rebecca, Stanlake describes a process by which this Devlinization of the play is taken to further extremes. According to Stanlake, one of the efforts of her production was to "prepare the audience to grasp the production's interpretation" (148).[49] This effort at guiding interpretation included conscious manipulation of audience expectations before they enter the theatre through photographs and publicity materials and holding the production at Hillel, The Ohio State University's Jewish student center. In this way, the production attempted to transform

the audience into a crowd of Devlins before they even entered the theatre. From Rebecca's opening utterance relating how the man clenched his fist, the audience had been trained exactly where and when to historicize the memory. [50] Despite the content of her fantasy, since she cannot be a World War II survivor, Rebecca is neither witness nor victim. Underlying the very attempt to connect Rebecca's utterance to a historical atrocity involves the ignoring of the impossibility and the fragmentary nature of her utterance.

Ashes to Ashes cannot be historicized in any fashion. It might evoke the Holocaust but this is a nonsensical connection. The play refuses to provide any answers. As Pinter asserted in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech:

> *Ashes to Ashes*, on the other hand, seems to me to be taking place under water. A drowning woman, her hand reaching up through the waves, dropping down out of sight, reaching for others, but finding nobody there, either above or under the water, finding only shadows, reflections, floating; the woman, a lost figure in a drowning landscape, a woman unable to escape the doom that seemed to belong only to others.

Characterizing *Ashes to Ashes* as a Holocaust play is tantamount to replacing the insubstantiality of Pinter's waves, shadows, and reflections with solid ground underneath Rebecca's feet. The temporal setting of the play as occurring "now" is a small indicator of the importance of these waves. The play must be conceptualized as fluid. The "now" of the setting is the only historical context which the play provides. This "now" gives the play a current social relevance whenever the play is performed. Through its temporal setting, the play demonstrates its social significance as the same in 2006 as in 1996.

The dialogue between Devlin and Rebecca is always occurring now, but the memory Rebecca talks about can never be contextualized. To try to contextualize as Devlin does and as critics who evoke the Holocaust do is to commit violence, while to explore Rebecca's memory devoid of such context is to diffuse Devlin's questioning. Like critics taking up Gregers's efforts to pin down the meaning of the wild duck as characterized in Chapter One, the problem here is that critics are better oppressors than Devlin. Where Devlin only experiences failure in his attempt to contextualize Rebecca, critics succeed. In their efforts to validate the significance of her memory, they transform her utterance beyond recognition.

While critics and audience members may commit the violence of historical context against Rebecca, they can hardly be blamed for such a reaction as to some extent it is encouraged by the play. In "The *Unheimlich* Maneuver: *Ashes to Ashes* and the Structure of Repression," Craig N. Owens recognizes this compulsion toward historical contextualization as a facet of the play's dramatic affect and an audience's desire to connect the play to what they know about the world and dramatic narrative:

> Like Devlin, we become invested in understanding Rebecca's personal history, in the hope that the events of her past will shed light on the present situation. In other words, in identifying with a character who appears to be the protagonist, we become the usual playgoers and the usual critics making sense of the dramatic surface by trying to piece together an exposition that will explain the reality beneath that surface. (80)

Owens goes on to suggest that *Ashes to Ashes* evokes the expectations of a surface / depth model to subvert the expectations associated with such a model. In his evocation of "usual," Owens places *Ashes to Ashes* within an established dramatic tradition. Critics and playgoers engage in the project of Devlin because the structure of the play to some extent encourages them to do so.

This project embraces the positive correlation between dramatic realism and psychoanalysis that has been suggested by Elin Diamond. In *Unmaking Mimesis*, Diamond asserts that

> Realism and psychoanalysis celebrate precisely what melodrama and farce, and uterine-theory physicians had ignored; motivation arising from the complications of an 'individual' shaped by inherent traits, social contexts, and forgotten traumas. (15)

Ashes to Ashes encourages the audience and critics to contextualize it, to treat it as a realist endeavor by means of the question and answer format that provides the structure for the play. The opening moment of the play presents Devlin as an analyst in search of a secret that will demonstrate his mastery and heal his patient. Realist convention suggests that this will form the conflict of the play. Devlin must bring the secret to light either to heal Rebecca or the social body itself. The setting of the play also encourages the audience to read the drama in the long tradition of a surface / depth model. The armchairs of a ground floor room evoke the archetypal living rooms of Ibsen and the problem play where memories of the past always come back to influence the present.

In a similar vein, the manner by which the play evokes the efforts of Devlin and the audience to colonize Rebecca's memory can be read as a metaphor for the

relationship between the text and the act of performance. One of the distinctive features of Pinter's play is the lack of stage directions. After the opening stage direction of "*Devlin standing with drink. Rebecca sitting*" there are only the few isolated stage directions of "*Rebecca smiling*" (11), and instructions for Rebecca to stare and look at Devlin (55), until the climatic act of Devlin attempting to reenact Rebecca's memory by putting his hand around her throat.[51] By means of the scarcity of direction the dialogue is to large degree decontextualized as the spatial relationship between the bodies, and the tone of speech is inaccessible within the text. A performance of the play works to inscribe the utterances of Devlin and Rebecca within space, time, and tone. Or, to put it in terms of Devlin's efforts to understand Rebecca's memories, a performance works to realize the dramatic text.

Devlin's efforts at violence cannot be conceptualized as an isolated exterior violence. Instead, this desire perpetuates as a function of the play, through acts of interpretation, institutionalized dramatic structures, and the very act of performance. Interpretation, dramatic structure, and performance all allude to a unitary form and content that is rigid, stable, and intelligible. This effort at contextualization involves the attempt to grasp the knowledge of Rebecca's traumatic address while refusing to understand the core performative nature of the utterance. The compulsion to rip the content of her address away from the confusion of her utterance is a fundamental compulsion that is encouraged by the structure of the play itself.

While this compulsion to deform Rebecca's utterance by knowing it is part of the drama's structure, the structure of the play also places Rebecca in a role of dominance through the very form of her utterance. The power of Rebecca's speech is interconnected

with the very nature of her traumatic utterance. In her analysis of Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour*, Caruth asserts:

> What we see and hear in *Hiroshima mon amour*; resonates beyond what we can know and understand; but it is in the event of this incomprehension and in our departure from sense and understanding that our own witnessing may indeed begin to take place. (56)

For Caruth, trauma is not just an abnormal disruption of an individual or a historical narrative but trauma to some extent provides an opportunity for communicating the sheer incomprehensibility of events. Knowing the event is to some extent to lose its essence and magnitude. Paradoxically, to understand the event is to not understand its true power and essence, while to depart from sense and understanding is, in some sense, to really know the impact of the event.

The event of incomprehension is precisely what is uttered by Rebecca. While seemingly in a position of subservience in everything from her bodily position - Rebecca is always seated while Devlin stands - to her passive role of answering the questions that are asked of her, to her narratives of victimization; these modes of subservience actually establish Rebecca's dominance. Every effort Devlin makes to contextualize Rebecca's memory, and by this contextualization inscribe his own power, fails. In trying to know the events that Rebecca owns by decontextualization, Devlin demonstrates his own outsider status. He continues to emphasize the impossibility of his own understanding and his need to understand:

> Devlin: I want a concrete image of him, you see . . . an image I can carry about with me. I mean, all you can talk of are his hands, one hand over

> your face, the other on the back of your neck, then the first one on your throat. There must be more to him than hands. What about eyes? Did he have any eyes? (13)

In Devlin's elaboration of his own desire he enacts the worst stereotypical elements of Freudian psychoanalysis. Similar to Freud's complaint that when Dora broke off her analysis it "[d]eprived me of satisfaction," Devlin characterizes his questions about the man as more voyeuristic than therapeutic (112). The questions are revealed as being about what Devlin needs. He needs to be able to form something visual from Rebecca's answers and this vision is a reconstruction. In a striking evocation of Tesman and Thea's attempt to reconstruct Løvborg's dead baby / book from its constituent parts and thereby suture the void in the final scene of *Hedda Gabler*, Devlin needs to escape the void he is seemingly confronted with but cannot access by putting the man back together, when he has been given nothing more than a pair of hands to work with.

In her analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Caruth explicitly characterizes vision, history and the composite body as opposed to dismemberment, sightlessness and trauma. In another similarity between Pinter's play and Caruth's interpretation of Duras and Resnais's text, Caruth emphasizes the role of the hands in the trauma experienced by the woman in the film:

> Her refusal is thus carried out in the body's fragmentation, in the separation of her hands from the rest of her corporeal self and in the communion with her lover's death through the sucking of her own blood. It is thus utterly deprived of sight and understanding, and only as a

> fragment, that the body can become, for the woman, the faithful monument to a death. (31)

For both Caruth and Devlin dismembered hands emblematize the process of decontextualization. Rather than an illumination of materiality, the hands demonstrate the failure of materiality. The hands serve as an indicator of fragmentation overcoming all efforts of imaginative wholeness.

At this point in her analysis, Caruth focuses on the way the woman describes her own trauma, instead of on the manner the film visually represents the trauma through the use of analepsis. Caruth must retreat from the temporal structure of Duras and Resnais's film to the perspective of a character, in effect offering a decontextualization of the woman's utterance as a means of advancing her conception of trauma. In her own way, in the very act of elaborating the power of the traumatic, Caruth engages in her own project of Devlinization.

Caruth begins her analysis of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* focusing on the visual image, focusing on the "two alternating shots we do not fully comprehend" (25). Caruth focuses on the narrative as a film. The form of representation takes opening stage in her analysis over the narrative content. Caruth emphasizes the opening shots of the film as a representation of the escape from full comprehension. In so doing, she tries to demonstrate how the opening shots fully represent a Freudian conception of trauma. The film begins with the literal representation of the unrepresentable. The film uses its medium to demonstrate the essence of trauma to its audience by presenting to its audience something that, at least for a moment, escapes comprehension.

In contrast to Caruth's introduction into the film which offers a reading of the visuality of the film, in her analysis of the origins of the woman's trauma Caruth shifts from a mimesis of performance to a textual mimesis. The analysis shifts from the way the film represents to the narrative provided by the woman. The character of the woman offers a narrative of sightlessness, as sightlessness and fragmentation are represented in the dialogue. However, the film offers a more complex vision of trauma then that provided by the character. Through the use of analepsis, the film offers a vision of trauma. In essence, the film engages with trauma differently then the literal manner with which Caruth suggests in her opening analysis. As such, Caruth retreats from the visual, from engaging with the film as film, and decontextualizes the utterance of the woman apart from the visual images provided by the film.

In the effort to read the dialogue of the woman independent of the images of the film, the woman's utterance is ripped out of the context of the visual representation the film provides. The woman becomes a Rebecca in that the only access to her trauma is through the utterance. In addition to the manner with which such a shift enacts the very struggle between Rebecca and Devlin in the formation of a trauma theory, the retreat to the character's psychology demonstrates a desire to read the film as possessing the very structure of *Ashes to Ashes*. Both Caruth's theoretical retreat and Pinter's play locate a power within trauma that is explicitly contained in the traumatic utterance. The traumatic utterance demonstrates the potential for words to transcend an exclusively representational function. The utterance fragments the very body which it opens to discourse.

Faced with the fragmentary hands of the man, a dismembered vision that evokes the essence of trauma, Devlin's relationship to Rebecca's trauma and the relationship between trauma and historical contextualization in Pinter's play emerges. While Rebecca owns the memory, and by owning it exists in a sort of traumatic void, Devlin exists in a liminal space that is neither traumatic nor historical. Or, at least, his relationship to the memory neither places him permanently on the solid ground of historical contextualization, nor the waves of trauma. Devlin suggests as much when he tells Rebecca that "I'm in the dark. I need light." While the act of questioning tends to be viewed as an act of empowerment, so many of Devlin's questions reveal his insufficiency. The compulsion to satiate his own desire dominates his questions throughout the play. In addition to the frequency of the words "want," "need," and "compelled," the failure of the questions to reach a satisfying resolution characterizes Rebecca's decontextualized fantasy as an empowered utterance through her sheer ability to withhold what Devlin needs.

In this sense, Devlin's relationship to Rebecca's traumatic utterance is not very different from the position maintained by Rebecca. Like Rebecca, Devlin faces a decontextualized event. Needing to establish the verifiable temporal context of the event to satiate his own desire, Devlin is seduced by the traumatic utterance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the opening moments of the play during Rebecca's initial description of the man putting his hand around her throat:

> Rebecca: Well . . . for example . . . he would stand over me and clench his fist. And then he'd put his other hand on my neck and grip it and bring

my head towards him. His fist . . . grazed my mouth. And he'd say, 'Kiss my fist.'

Devlin: And did you?

Rebecca: Oh yes. I kissed his fist. The knuckles. And then he'd open his hand and give me the palm of his hand . . . to kiss . . . which I kissed.

Pause

And then I would speak.

Devlin: What did you say? You said what? What did you say?

Pause.

Rebecca: I said, 'Put your hand round my throat.' I murmured it through his hand, as I was kissing it, but he heard my voice, he heard it through his hand, he felt my voice in his hand, he heard it there.

Silence.

Devlin: And did he? Did he put his hand round your throat?

Rebecca: Oh yes. He did. He did. And he held it there, very gently, very gently, so gently. He adored me, you see.

Devlin: He adored you?

Pause.

What do you mean he adored you? What do you mean?

Pause.

Are you saying he put no pressure on your throat? Is that what you're saying?

Rebecca: No.

Devlin: What then? What are you saying? (3-5)

Rebecca's dominance in the question and answer session is suggested from the opening moment of the play. As the play begins, Rebecca has the first line, and this first line leads to Devlin's first question. Devlin's question "And did you?" forms as a result of Rebecca's narrative of the man asking her to kiss his fist. Devlin's initial questions emerge as a result of Rebecca's utterances until she tells him that the man put pressure on her throat causing her head to go back (7).

At this point, Devlin's questions gain some measure of independence from Rebecca's lead. Led by his own desire, his own fantasy over the strict content of her utterance, Devlin wants to know what her body was doing when her head "started to go back:"

Devlin: And your body? Where did your body go?

Rebecca: My body went back, slowly but truly.

Devlin: So your legs were opening?

Rebecca: Yes.

Pause.

Devlin: Your legs were opening?

Rebecca: Yes.

Silence. (7)

In addition to the manner with which Devlin takes his questions explicitly from the content of Rebecca's utterances, Devlin's desire manifests from the opening of the play through the repetition of his questions. With the exception of Devlin's opening question, all of his questions are repeated two or three times before Rebecca answers them. As

Devlin takes the initiative by extending his questions beyond Rebecca's utterance to question Rebecca about the movement of her body, this repetition takes a more pronounced form. Rather than asking a question multiple times before Rebecca can answer it, here, Devlin luxuriates in the answer she gives. He asks a question about Rebecca's legs opening which Rebecca answers but rather than moving on to another question, he asks the same question again, thereby giving himself the maximum amount of time to focus on the utterance of Rebecca's body.

Devlin explicitly connects his questions and his attempt to understand the traumatic memory to his voyeuristic desire. Almost an acknowledgement of the position of weakness and dependence his lack of knowledge and his desire connotes, Devlin tries to ignore the evidence of the makeshift therapy session by equating his questioning with empowerment. Immediately following this repetition of Rebecca's legs opening, Devlin tries to assert some illusion of dominance over Rebecca by rejecting the manner in which her traumatic narrative has absorbed him. Devlin suggests that she is the captivated one:

Devlin: Do you feel you're being hypnotized?

Rebbeca: When?

Devlin: Now.

Rebecca: No.

Devlin: Really?

Rebecca: No.

Devlin: Why not?

Rebecca: Who by?

Devlin: By me.

Rebecca: You?

Devlin: What do you think?

Rebecca: I think you're a fuckpig. (7-9)

Fantasy proves to be contagious as Devlin is led by the implications of Rebecca's answers to his imaginative constructions of erotics and power. It is tempting to read Devlin's question of "[d]o you feel you're being hypnotized" as "[d]o you feel you're being hypnotized the same way I feel I'm being hypnotized?" Devlin's question both serves as an attempt to demonstrate he is empowered and Rebecca is passive, and a plea or a hope that Rebecca is as enthralled by his questions as he is by her answers.

Even previous to her denouncing Devlin as a fuckpig, Devlin's desire for Rebecca to confirm his dominance is demonstrated as illusory in his difficulty in explaining to Rebecca his frame of reference. Devlin takes for granted that he is the one asking the questions and that "now" is the when the question are being asked. However, for Rebecca, the man and the ambiguous setting of her traumatic memory provide as clear a frame of reference as the "now" of the telling. In essence, Rebecca demonstrates her control over Devlin by emphasizing his irrelevance. Like Devlin, she is captivated (and perhaps hypnotized) by her own fantasy and not by his questioning in the here and the now.

The dominance of Rebecca's traumatic fantasy, and Devlin's vain attempts to control it make critical characterizations of Devlin so intriguing. In "Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*: Rebecca and Devlin as Albert Speer," Katherine H. Burkman suggests that "[a]s Devlin becomes increasingly like the fascist lover Rebecca recalls, she, despite her final denial of what she considers her crime, has faced and faced down the monsters

who had held her in thrall" (93). Similarly, in "History as a Single Act; Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*," Francis Gillen analyzes the culminating act of Devlin putting his hands around Rebecca's throat as the ultimate act of identification: "And Devlin too, is both himself and the killer of children. Making a fist, he demands she kiss it. No longer simply victim, though, Rebecca refuses" (95). Both Burkman and Gillen suggest a transformation in power relations as the play progresses. Devlin's personifying of the man within the memory allows Rebecca to achieve an empowerment within the present that she is unable to achieve in her traumatic utterance.

Burkman and Gillen's attempt to demonstrate an empowered Rebecca inscribes a victimized Rebecca. In order to read the end of the play as a liberating assertion of power, Rebecca must be understood as beginning the play under the domination of Devlin. In addition to reversing the initial conception the play presents of Devlin as a man unable to satisfy his desires, both readings of the play equate a freeing of Rebecca with the freeing of the traumatic utterance. The utterance is freed from the decontextualized utterance of Rebecca's memory and placed in the now by means of equating Devlin with the man. Analogizing Devlin to the man supplants fantasy with reality, and such an identificatory practice also constructs the inaccessible "when" of Rebecca's vision within the intelligible "now." Such an identification confuses Devlin's desire with his action. Devlin wants to know the man, he wants to be the man, he wants to hypnotize Rebecca, but from the opening moment of the play he is caught in a frustrated loop in which his desire can never be satiated. Rather than conceptualizing Devlin as the actualization of the imposing figure from her memory, Rebecca perceives Devlin, when her attention can be drawn to the now, as nothing more than a fuckpig.

Interpretations that equate Devlin with the man from the memory dismantle Rebecca's power based on fantasy by giving in to Devlin's desire. Rebecca's power is intimately connected with the understanding that as fantasy, the origin of the traumatic utterance is inaccessible. Attempts to "realize" the fantasy merely perpetuate the essence of fantasy in a different form. The very nature of the traumatic utterance derives from the manner in which fantasy whets a desire in Devlin that can never be satisfied, thereby establishing a power dynamic that places Devlin as subservient. Ironically, it is the traumatic narrative of the man who holds Rebecca in thrall that allows her to hold Devlin in thrall.

Rebecca uses Devlin's desire to pull a sort of metonymic bait and switch. The first third of the play deals exclusively with the questions and answers regarding the man, which never seem to get Devlin any closer to understanding either the man or Rebecca. In the process of describing him, Rebecca offers a description which destabilizes the entire format of their question and answer session:

> Rebecca: He did work for a travel agency. He was a guide. He used to go to the local railway station and walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers. (27)

At this moment, Rebecca's utterance shifts from the decontextualized personal memory of her relationship with the man to the large cultural resonance of the man's actions, as the screaming mothers become part of the narrative. The image of babies being ripped from their mother's arms disrupts the personal narrative and the decontextualized narrative of Rebecca and the man.

The image of the babies functions as a sort of rupture. Up to this point, Devlin has been working to reassemble the memory of the man, to transform the hands into a comprehensible whole, and to connect knowledge to the idea of vision by embracing light over darkness. Rebecca's traumatic utterance has served the dual purpose of initiating Devlin's desire and frustrating its satisfaction, keeping him in a sort of limbo. The metonymic turn from the man to the larger social actions of the man's ripping the babies from their mothers distances Devlin from the very man he is trying so unsuccessfully to reassemble. In turning from the man to this particular action, Rebecca's narrative shifts from a fantasy of personal abuse to larger cultural catastrophe. In the process, she ceases to narrate about the man in any substantive fashion for the rest of the play.

The struggle between Rebecca and Devlin shifts from conflicts over the possession of the memory of the man and over whether the memory is a traumatic or historical utterance into a conflict over whether the essence of the memory is man or baby. So long as Rebecca's utterance takes the form of describing the man, it exhibits the construction of a trauma that can be contained through historical contextualization. The connotation of sex and violence in the traumatic utterance of the man presents a form of trauma that contains the potential possibility for Devlin's ownership.

The metonymic move from the man to the baby shifts the conception of trauma from an erotic trauma to a maternal trauma. The trauma enacted on Rebecca's body by the man could be understood because it mapped on a body Devlin can see before him, it is a body he knows, a body which has a recognizable historical span. In opening up a catastrophic occurrence with no explicit historical referent, the baby has no connection to the present, nothing Devlin can latch on to. Devlin's only recourse is to try to return

Rebecca's utterance to the man, or when this fails, to at least try to distract or bully her from evoking the baby and the larger inaccessible culture resonances.[52] In Rebecca's utterance of the baby, Devlin loses all hope for historical connection.

Despite Devlin's best efforts, the decontextualizable maternal trauma of the baby dominates the final section of the play as he is unable to guide the conversation back to the potential knowability of the man. Paradoxically, Rebecca possesses the very uncontextualizable trauma of the baby, as the ripping of the babies from the arms of the mothers evolves from a memory of witnessing to something personally experienced:

> Rebecca: She stood still. She kissed her baby. The baby was a girl.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> She kissed her.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> She listened to the baby's heartbeat. The baby's heart was beating.
>
> *The light in the room has darkened the lamps are very bright.*
>
> *Rebecca sits very still.*
>
> The baby was breathing.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> I held her to me. She was breathing. Her heart was beating. (73)

As the "she" who was holding the baby becomes an "I", the baby becomes the focal point of the utterance. Previously, the man was the connective thread between Rebecca and the baby. She had the personal relationship with the man, and she saw the man tear the babies from the arms of their mothers. In this reconception, the baby is the connective thread. Rebecca is trying to hide the baby and the baby's cry forces her to hand the baby

to the man. The baby becomes a unit of exchange between Rebecca and the man. In taking the baby, the final image of the man no longer offers a point of access for Devlin's fantasy. Devlin is left listening to a traumatic utterance which offers no hope of access. The trauma evoked by the narrative of the baby is a trauma which Devlin has no possibility of molding.

Rebecca's transformation of the "she" who is holding a baby to an "I" forces Devlin to recognize that since the utterance cannot be controlled to fulfill his voyeuristic desire - because he cannot contextualize language - he must transcend language in a final effort to reassemble the man. Devlin must use more than language as he attempts to connect language and action to reenact the actions of the man whom Rebecca describes at the play's beginning:

> *Devlin goes to her. He stands over her and looks down at her.*
>
> *He clenches his fist and holds it in front of her face. He puts his left hand behind her neck and grips it. He brings her head toward his fist. His fist touches her mouth.*
>
> Devlin: Kiss my fist.
>
> *She does not move.*
>
> *He opens his hand and places the palm of his hand on her mouth.*
>
> Devlin: Speak. Say it. Say 'Put your hand round my throat.'
>
> *She does not speak.*
>
> Ask me to put my hand round your throat.
>
> *She does not speak or move.*
>
> *He puts his hand on her throat. He presses gently. Her head goes back.*

They are still.

She speaks. There is an echo. His grip loosens.

Rebecca: They took us to the trains.

Echo: the trains.

He takes his hand from her throat.

As the baby has dominated the traumatic utterance, and, as the traumatic utterance has marginalized the man, Devlin is unable to rely on speech as an effective mechanism to satiate his desire. By replacing speech with performance he will attempt to move the narrative of the man from the margins back to center stage. Forced to confront the failure of his own speech to colonize the traumatic utterance, Devlin embraces the power of repetition intrinsic in performance. In playing the role of the man, Devlin will know what the man looks like for he is the man. In playing the man, Devlin will know when it happened, for it happens now.

Despite his best efforts, this effort for repetitious performative mastery produces Devlin's ultimate failure and the failure of a conception of performance based on action and sight. For in Devlin's final effort to own the traumatic utterance, he discovers that the baby is more powerful than the man, that the utterance will not be contextualized. Performance offers no such conception as repetition, everything is iteration. In Devlin's efforts to reassemble the man, to illuminate the man in a form Devlin can know, Devlin completes the project of dismemberment. By trying to realize the fantasy, he sees the fantasy fall apart in front of his very eyes. Present performance is unable to materialize the utterance.

The performance must fall short of the utterance, because to try to place the utterance in the realm of history, action, knowledge, and sight is to deform it by conceiving of performance where it cannot belong. This othering of visual performance in the baby utterance is demonstrated by the stage directions. Rebecca's lack of speech and movement are also emphasized in the stage directions. In the context of the play, this apparent passivity manifests as an empowering gesture. While Devlin is trying to control the utterance and place it in the present, Rebecca's silence and lack of movement become a means of resistance. Silence thwarts the efforts at repetition, the efforts to return the play to where it began.

The performative power of silence to dismember a performance of vision should come as no surprise, as the end of vision is established previous to Devlin enacting the violence of the man. Immediately preceding Rebecca's owning of the baby utterance through transforming the she to an I, the lights in the room darken and the lamplight intensifies. The lamplight is not supposed to illuminate the room. This lack of illumination performs the failure of Devlin's metaphorical plea early in the play that he needs light. He will not get the light he needs. The actualization of this failure, the performing of the failure to see, or to put it in slightly different terms, the ability of the audience to see the failure of seeing, introduces Rebecca's owning of the baby utterance. The "she" becomes an "I" in the aftermath of the failure to see. Devlin's performance of violence, and Devlin's performance of seeing is an effort to stop the baby utterance, to resist the failure of sight and, in the process, affirm a traditional conception of performance in which Devlin needs to play off of Rebecca.

As Rebecca starts to speak again, her utterance resists all of these conceptions. The power of her speech has captivated Devlin from the beginning of the play. Devlin tries to enact the fantasy by telling Rebecca to speak, by putting her voice in the service of his. This is a deformation of the fantasy, for according to Rebecca's utterance, Rebecca's voice contains power. She instructs the man what to do, and her voice contains an irresistible intelligibility. The murmurings of the voice are understood and obeyed by the man, even with a hand covering her mouth.

Starting to speak in the aftermath of Devlin's performative failure, her question and answer exchange with Devlin is replaced by an echo which repeats the last couple of words in each of her lines. The echo resembles the filmic voiceover in that both echo and voiceover establish a voice disembodied from pronouncement. In *The Acoustic Mirror*, Kaja Silverman asserts that in classic cinema "the voice over is privileged to the degree that *it transcends the body*" (49). In a radically different context, Pinter's play also shows the power of the disembodied voice. The disembodied voice as echo acts as marker, performing the dominance of Rebecca's fantasy over that elucidated by Devlin. Taking his hand away from her throat, Devlin simultaneously acknowledges that he cannot perform the role of the man, and he cannot silence the dead baby utterance, as, by its echo, the utterance resonates beyond Rebecca's body.

The stage direction before the first line accompanied by the echo instructs Devlin to loosen his grip on Rebecca, while the stage direction after the initial sound of the echo has his hand being taken away from Rebecca's throat. The dismemberment begun by her silence is completed with the echo. In addition to the way the utterance with echo completes the defeat of sight and action begun by the darkening of the lights, and the

transformation of the she to an I, Devlin does not speak for the rest of the play. In contradistinction to Rebecca's performative empowering silence which dismisses the narrative of the man, Devlin's silence inaugurates the free reign of a drama of the voice which is also the utterance of the baby over a performance of sight.

The drama of Rebecca's voice - her drama of sound - emerges as the natural form for her fantasies. By emphasizing the aural resonance of fantasy and drama, *Ashes to Ashes* continues in a Freudian vein despite Devlin's marginalization. In his May 2, 1897 letter to Fliess, Freud included Draft L in which he suggests that fantasies "are made up from things that are *heard*, and made use of *subsequently*; thus they combine things that have been experienced and things that have been heard" (248). Understanding fantasies as things heard suggests the manner in which the dead baby as traumatic utterance inaugurates a doing which transcends a more representative function. The opposite of atypical, the verbal spreading of the fantasy from Rebecca to Devlin demonstrates the manner in which fantasy functions. Devlin is seemingly unable to merely carry and spread the fantasy. Like Hedda, he needs to materialize the fantasy which is tantamount to losing it. Rebecca's monologue which closes the play, suggests further spreading of the fantasy in the act of performance. As something heard, the fantasy of the dead baby has the possibility of creating an endless proliferation of future fantasies and future ruptures of contextualization.

The connotation of the utterance of a vocal drama which transcends sight with the emergence of the echo is explicit in the play. Not only does the baby utterance dominate the final moments of the play, but the word baby dominates the echo:

Rebecca: And she said what happened to your baby

Echo: your baby

Rebecca: Where is your baby

Echo: your baby

Rebecca: And I said what baby

Echo: what baby

Rebecca: I don't have a baby

Echo: a baby

Rebecca: I don't know of any baby

Echo: of any baby

Pause.

Rebecca: I don't know of any baby

Long silence.

BLACKOUT

The last five echoes all repeat the word baby from Rebecca's previous line. So, in a very "real" sense, the play ends with the echoing of babies and this echoing inaugurates the mastery through repetition which has eluded Devlin. Rebecca's concluding lines serve as a denial of her handing the baby over to the man at the trains as she denies even having or knowing of any baby. The echo transforms denial into ambivalence as the play ends with the word "baby" returning back to Rebecca, Devlin, and the audience.

The ambivalent vocalization of the baby through its denial and its affirmation in the echo demonstrates the impact of the image of the dead child for dramatic form. To transcend the dramatic valence of the dead child for a moment, the dead child is an emblematic figure for trauma. Caruth dedicates the final chapter of *Unclaimed*

Experience to an exploration of Freud's analysis of a father who has fallen asleep after the death of his son. While he is sleeping, a candle has overturned starting to burn the corpse of the child. Rather than immediately wake up, the father dreams of the child. In the dream, the child asks him, "*Father, don't you see I'm burning*?" (*Interpretation of Dreams* 547-8).

By privileging this dream, Caruth echoes the importance placed on the dream by Freud himself:

> Among the dreams which have been reported to me by other people, there is one which has special claims upon our attention at this point. It was told to me by a woman patient who had herself heard it in a lecture on dreams: the actual source is still unknown to me. Its content made an impression on the lady, however, and she proceeded to 're-dream' it, that is, to repeat some of its elements in a dream of her own (547).

At the point in which Freud's attention shifts from the functions of dreams, to the manner dreams illuminate the functioning of the psychological processes, Freud places particular importance on the resurrection of the dead child. Whereas Nietzsche's metaphorization of tragedy as a dead baby irresistibly resurrected in *The Birth of Tragedy* prefaces Ibsen's proliferation of dead children, Freud's burning child serves as the last chapter. Originally published in 1900, *The Interpretation of Dreams* comes out year after *When We Dead Awaken*, Ibsen's final play, is first performed. Instead of an irresistible resurrection, Freud characterizes resurrection as wish-fulfillment. Eventually the inevitability of the dead child will return and with it the danger that incompleteness may overwhelm all efforts to construct an interconnected system of psychical knowledge.

Corresponding to the dream of child resurrection, the final chapter of Freud's text expands the import of the dream project. If interpreted correctly and closely, dreams hold a triple representational function. Individual dreams contain the representation of the last twenty-four hours, they contain representations of the unconscious, and when held up to a macroscopic view, dreams offer a representation of the entire psychical processes. The resurrection dream seems to usher in the triumph of determinacy and comprehension. Like Devlin and the *Ashes to Ashes* critics, interpretation becomes the process of tracing obscure signifiers to clearly marked signifieds. Interpretation is understood as the ability to contextualize what appears to be uncontextualizable.

Despite the process of wish-fulfillments in dreams, the burning child is only resurrected temporarily. The dream of the burning child dramatizes a representation that is closer to Pinter's play than either Ibsen or Nietzsche. Whereas Ibsen and Nietzsche accept the resurrection of the dead child, in Freud's telling the dreamer awakens and death overcomes all desire for resurrection. In a structure which *Ashes to Ashes* would duplicate, Freud's narrative of the dream begins with a divorce from origins. Any historical contextualization is deferred as the dream comes to Freud from a woman who heard it in a lecture. Freud confesses that "the actual source [of the dream] is still unknown to me."

Functioning analogous to the proliferation of dead children in late nineteenth-century drama, Freud's child is not a single dream but carries the possibility of further multiplications. Through the process of hearing the dream from a lecturer, the woman re-dreams it. Working as a sort of psychical dead child contagion, the very incompleteness evoked by the burning child dream threatens to spiral outward and out of control, as the

woman who hears the dream replicates it. As in the case of Oedipus and Devlin, the cure for the contagious emblem of the dead child which opens the path to incomplete understanding and uncertain origins is knowledge and contextualization.

The lack of origins for the dream introduces a moment of indeterminacy into the entire project that resembles the impact of dramatic dead children. Freud cautions against the tenuousness of contextualization in warning that "[e]ven if we make no false inferences and take all the logical possibilities into account, the probable incompleteness of our premises threatens to bring our calculation to an complete miscarriage" (549). Like Devlin, Freud equates light with knowledge at the very moment indeterminacy threatens to overcome the project of comprehension:

> Hitherto, unless I am greatly mistaken, all the paths along which we have travelled have led us toward the light – towards elucidation and fuller understanding. But as soon as we endeavor to penetrate more deeply into the mental process involved in dreaming, every path will end in darkness. (549)

The dead child who will not stay resurrected, and whose origin must remain decontextualized, illuminates the potential peril that dream interpretation, which has led to the contextualization of fragmentary information, may only lead into darkness after all.

In her examination of the traumatic resonance of the dream, Caruth emphasizes the importance vision plays in Freud's analysis:

> To awaken is thus to bear the imperative to survive: to survive no longer simply as the father of a child, but as the one who must tell *what it means*

> *not to see,* which is also what it means to hear the unthinkable words of the dying child. (105)

The figure of the dead child becomes a representative figure in the analysis of trauma and an emblem of rupture in drama. Like Caruth's interpretation of the dream, *Ashes to Ashes* is about the telling of what it means not to see. However, it is not simply as some stand-in for the mother of the child that Rebecca demonstrates this failure. Silverman suggests that "[t]he sounds the voice makes always exceed signification to some degree both before the entry into language and after" (44).

Ashes to Ashes performs this excess inaugurated by the emblem of the dead baby. As her final denial of the baby which concludes the play is heard alongside the five time affirmation of the baby in the echo, Rebecca's denial transcends denial as it becomes part of a dramatic chorus. The cohesion of Rebecca's lines accompanied by the echo is emphasized by the linguistic structure of the final movement of the play. The combination of Rebecca's lines and the echo make an open- ended utterance as there are no periods even as the play concludes. This chorus places its importance on the declamation which performs what it means not to see and what it means not to know as a function of dramatic narrative.

Presenting a dead baby drama that is based on the self-referentiality of a performative utterance, Pinter's play introduces a drama of trauma. Rather than thinking of trauma solely in terms of characters also results in the possibility for the trauma of dramatic form. *Ashes to Ashes* performs a formalized trauma by uncovering the dramatic wound and emblematizes the wound as the utterance of a dead baby. In the efforts of Devlin, the play presents this wound as something that cannot be healed.

Instead, the wound is a matter of dramatic possibility, offering a model for proliferating fantasy and sound, both of which emanate from the traumatic utterance. In the next chapter I will explore what results from visualizing a wound that, as expressed in *Ashes to Ashes,* cannot be visualized. What happens when this failure of dramatic materiality leading to dramatic possibility is represented on stage?

Chapter Four:

"DO YOU SEE ME?": Digesting Representations of Dead Babies in Kane and Shepard

What I'm trying to get at here is that the real quest of the writer is to penetrate into another world. A world behind the form. The contradiction is that as soon as that world opens up, I tend to run the other way. It's scary because I can't answer to it from what I know. – Sam Shepard

All good art is subversive in form or content. And the best art is subversive in form and content. And often, the element that most outrages those who seek to impose censorship is form . . . I suspect that if Blasted had been a piece of social realism it wouldn't have been so harshly received. – Sarah Kane[53]

The critical furor over the debut of Sarah Kane's *Blasted* is by now well- worn ground. Jack Tinker's review for the *Daily Mail* proves a representative example of reviewer hostility. More than a sensational summation of reviewer reaction, Tinker's proliferation by way of citation in nearly all *Blasted* criticism seems to irreducibly connect it to the play. Tinker moved from his evaluation that "[a]s a piece of drama, it is entirely without merit" to his personal attack on Kane in which he suggests that rather than being given a grant for the play "[s]ome will undoubtedly say the money might have been better spent on a course of remedial therapy" (5).[54] Kane's suspicion that dramatic form and not content is the root of such critical hostility seems surprising in a play that contains graphic representations of sex, rape, dismemberment, suicide and cannibalism. Just as it is a reductive form of analysis to analyze content apart from form, the inverse should also be understood. Addressing the form of *Blasted* apart from the content whether it is performed by a critic or the playwright herself is an act of sanitizing or colonizing the

play. The extreme content of *Blasted* in general, and its representation of the dead baby in particular, is interconnected with the play's formal experimentation. In Kane's *Blasted* and Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* the emblem of the dead baby dramatizes the limits of dramatic form in the staging of dramatic content.

Hedda Gabler dramatizes the dead child as the metaphorization of a performative void emerging upon the ashes of the literary text, which thereby becomes the textual other. *Ashes to Ashes* depicts the dead baby as the traumatic utterance that displaces sight and context as a locus for dramatic possibility in the breakdown of signification. Both plays evoke the dead child as the image that cannot be reached, and as the meaning that cannot be understood. In so doing, Pinter and Ibsen's dramas envision the very limits of dramatic form. The emblem of the dead baby provides a marker where drama cannot go. Embracing its own failure and acknowledging its own limits, dramatic performance paradoxically finds drama in the very understanding that there are some limits to what can be performed.

Enacting the limits of dramatic form to some extent involves never letting the dead child enter visual representation. The content of the dead child fails in that the image might be better described as a non-image. The dead child tends to be uttered but not seen. Even when it is seen, the dead child's position as image critiques its own representational import. The dead child marks the limits of dramatic form by becoming the other of staged representation. As other, the dead child gestures toward and becomes the void and the rupture in theatrical representation. In *Hedda Gabler* the dead baby gestures toward rupture but remains distant as the dead child is only visualized as metaphorized manuscript. In *Ashes to Ashes* the dead child manifests as a

decontextualized narrative utterance. Edward Bond's *Saved* and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* kill the baby on stage but it is killed in such a manner that the actual violence done to the child's body is obscured. Even in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* the child's death is displaced through the emphasis on the child as character.

The limits of dramatic form evoked by means of an absent dead child - a dead child which the audience never sees - is transcended in Edward Albee's *The American Dream.* The materialization of the child in Albee demonstrates the final stage of the emblem's metatheatrical critique. *Oedipus Rex* is a drama based on the power of speech. Speech acts as uncanny analepsis. The utterance of the dead baby who impossibly survives illuminates the reversal and recognition of the historical contextualization of the present. *The Importance of Being Earnest* enacts a drama in which speech has broken away from historical causality. Utterance does not contextualize the present. The power of recognition and reversal which have been reconceptualized as more farcical than uncanny resides in the written text. Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* envisions a more radical transformation for speech. Instead of an act that has lost its power but sill achieves a Wildean resonance through connection to the written word, speech in *Hedda Gabler* is the antithesis of the written word. The written word is conceptualized as containing all of the power of historical contextualization. An example of what I am dubbing "fracturing speech," the dead child offers access to a drama of decontextualization. Yet, the drama of the decontextualized utterance easily gets absorbed into the determinate text. The utterance only offers a glimpse of indeterminacy for the text will not stay dead but uncannily resurrects itself by the very power of its materiality. Only with Pinter's *Ashes*

to Ashes is a dead baby as fracturing speech envisioned through the shifting of focus away from vision. Rebecca's fracturing speech enacts a drama of indeterminacy, which escapes historical contextualization.

The American Dream follows the pattern established by *Hedda Gabler* in transforming the Oedipal model of the impossibly surviving child to an impossibly resurrected child. However, unlike the dead child as metaphorized book or the dead baby as fantasy, in presenting the American Dream as a material figure, Albee's play seems to perform the triumph of determinate representation over the dead baby as fracturing speech. The impossible doubling appears to overcome dismemberment and indeterminacy in *The American Dream,* as Grandma offers to give Mrs. Barker a hint of why Mommy and Daddy "asked us to come" (96).

Grandma's hint is a story about a man very much like Daddy and a woman very much like Mommy, who visit a woman very much like Mrs. Barker in order to buy "a bumble of joy." They buy the bumble, take it home but are disappointed by its behavior. They dismember the bumble by gouging out its eyes, cutting off its you-know-what, cutting off its hands at the wrists, and cutting out its tongue. The bumble gets bigger and eventually dies. They call up the lady who sold them the bumble and ask her to come over. The hint proves to be too obscure for Mrs. Barker to draw any firm conclusions as "while I can remember Mommy and Daddy coming to see me, oh, about twenty years ago, about buying a bumble I can't quite remember anyone very much *like* Mommy and Daddy coming to see me about buying a bumble" (105).

Grandma's utterance is a parody of indeterminacy as "very much like" is interpreted as an overdetermined signifier. "[V]ery much like" functions similar to

conceptions of mimesis as elaborated in Chapter One which emphasized the distance between theatrical signifiers and exterior signifieds as a shortcoming that the theatre needs to overcome. In the process of connoting similitude, "very much like" calls attention to a gap between signifier and signified which prevents the fullness and certainty of historical contextualization. Despite Grandma's best efforts, Mrs. Barker can only focus on the difference inherent to similarity. In a gesture that is reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's analysis of the performative speech act in *Limited Inc.*, Mrs. Barker is incapable of conceiving of the most explicit similarity as anything but a demonstration of decontextualization.

Grandma's utterance interconnects sparagmos to the indeterminate utterance, just as the act of dismemberment takes the place of the more commonplace child deaths outlined above. Characterizing dismemberment as an act in *The American Dream* is deceptive because dismemberment does not exist apart from vocal utterance. Dismemberment occurs in the form as well as the content of Grandma's speech. The inability of Mrs. Barker to give the fracturing speech an explicit material context is also an act of dismemberment. While the dismemberment's content is described as more convenience than ritual (The bumble's eyes were gouged out because it only had eyes for Daddy), the utterance takes on the role of ritual much like the utterance of the book as baby in *Hedda Gabler*. Mrs. Barker repeatedly acknowledges her approval to Grandma's narrative as she notes "[h]ow fascinating!," "[h]ow enthralling!," "[h]ow spellbinding!," "[h]ow engrossing!," and "how gripping!" the utterance is (96-98). In Mrs. Barker's exclamations *The American Dream,* like *Hedda Gabler,* demonstrates that a modern dramatic ritual exists in the telling over the doing. Modern dramatic ritual manifests as

speech narrates the interconnection of sparagmos and indeterminacy. Grandma's utterance is engrossing in the very efforts to portray it as indeterminate, not in spite of the indeterminacy.

The material manifestation of the American Dream physically represents the ritualized utterance of Grandma. A double for the bumble of joy, the American Dream tells Grandma his own narrative. He and his twin were torn apart when he was young. His narrative is one of extreme identification as over the years he has "suffered losses . . . that I can't explain" (114). The dismemberment of the bumble has, piece by piece, corresponded to a emotive loss on the part of the American Dream:

> How can I put it to you? All right; like this: Once . . . it was as if all at once my heart . . . became numb . . .almost as though I . . . almost as though . . . just like that. . . it had been wrenched from my body . . . and from that time . . . I have been unable to love. Once . . . I was asleep at the time . . . I awoke, and my eyes were burning. And since that time I have been unable to see anything, *anything*, with pity, with affection . . . with anything but. . . cool disinterest. And my groin . . . even there . . . since one time . . . one specific agony . . . since then I have not been able to *love* anyone with my body. And even my hands . . . I cannot touch another person and feel love. And there is more . . . there are more losses, but it all comes down to this: I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions. I have been drained, torn asunder . . . disembowled. I have, now, only my person . . . my body, my face. (114-5)

The materialized double of the narrative utterance appears to align itself with the written text in banishing the dead baby as indeterminate speech in favor of Oedipal narrative. Even more so than the book, the visually represented body offers a promise of recognition. More than historical contextualization, the American Dream as twin offers a material contextualization. The very physicality of the body and the location of the body as a site of pain and loss maps Grandma's ritualized utterance as a place in addition to giving the utterance historical veracity. The material marking offers the hope that the "very much like" of Grandma's utterance can be traversed offering a determinate vision of dramatic performance.

While the presence of the material body and the recognition of body as double for fracturing speech may offer the hope of traversing the gap between similitude and determinacy, in the very process of forging a connection with fracturing speech, the American Dream moves the materialized double closer to indeterminacy rather than the inverse. The American Dream's narrative of loss can be understood as the failure of materiality. He still has a complete body and face, but his body cannot represent his loss. The body is an incomplete means to measure such things. Instead, the dismemberment of the bumble moves from the visually representable dismemberment of the body to the invisible dismemberment of emotions and feelings. As the physical dismemberment of the bumble is narrated, physical and emotional dismemberment escapes vision.

The American Dream takes the indeterminacy of his fracturing speech to further extremes when he suggests that even his elaboration of the failure of the material body to encompass representation must be looked at skeptically. He tells Grandma, "Be careful; be very careful. What I have told you may not be true" (115). The American Dream's

utterance may be true, in which case fracturing speech illuminates the failure of a theatre of materiality. Or he may be wrong, suggesting that his representation is more important than his utterance. In questioning the legitimacy of his own utterance, The American Dream frames his entire narrative with indeterminacy. The relationship between the material double of the dead baby and the dead baby as fracturing speech remains ambiguously unresolved.

Unlike *Hedda Gabler*, which through the resurrected text demonstrates the victory of historical contextualizaton, *The American Dream's* materialized resurrection proves to be futile. In his very materiality, the American Dream evokes an image of dramatic form consumed with materiality, historical contextualization, and textualization that despite all this determinism is still impossibly incomplete, and shows the unreliability of language and meaning. *Blasted* and *Buried Child* attempt to finish the process of materialization. Rather than relegate materiality to a double, both plays offer a material stage representation of the dead baby. Ian exhumes and eats the baby's corpse in Kane's play, and Shepard's play concludes with Tilden's entrance from the backyard with the exhumed baby in his arms.

Despite the visually represented dead baby, both *Blasted* and *Buried Child* contain a materialized double for the dead baby. The resurrected double in Kane and Shepard fits well within the dead baby tradition from *Hedda Gabler* to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* to *The American Dream*. Whereas in older dead children dramas the resurrection is clearly about the effort to move away from the rupture of signification, why is there a compulsion for such a material double in drama where the dead baby is

already materialized? Kane and Shepard's dead babies emblematize the struggle to overcome limits of dramatic signification and dramatic form.[55]

Kane acknowledges the limitless nature of dramatic signification in her description of the impact reading Edward Bond's *Saved* had on her:

> When I read *Saved*, I was shocked by the baby being stoned. But then I thought, there isn't anything you can't represent on stage. If you are saying you can't represent something, you are saying you can't talk about it, you are denying its existence, and that's an extraordinarily ignorant thing to do. (qtd in Saunders 24)

For Kane, Bond's play evokes the endless possibility of performative signification and explicitly connects this endless representative potential to the image of a baby being killed on stage.[56] However, in Bond's play, the dead baby is the one thing that escapes visual representation. Bond's baby remains in its pram throughout the hair pulling, pinching, punching and the ultimate throwing of rocks. This is emphasized as Pam returns to take the baby home. She pushes the pram home without looking directly into it (76-82). Kane lauds the representation of a dead baby that the stage directions keep unrepresented. Kane imaginatively fills in the gaps of the unrepresented and reads this as a validation of the limitless potential for visual stage representation.

The limitless stage representation deriving from a dead baby that remains unrepresented comes from the reading of a text, and not being an audience member at a performance. Visuality has nothing to do with Kane's shock at the stoning of the baby. Instead, she describes a feeling of shock arising from her reading of *Saved.* Kane finds the textual representation of a murdered baby shocking as it allows her to imagine further

possibilities of theatrical representation. Text shocks as it presents the performative potential for the theatre to represent the same thing as Bond's printed text. Shock resides in the imaginative construction of the theatrical sight of a murdered baby. The potential for vision to fully represent a dead baby makes it possible to transcend the limits of dramatic form. Language becomes shocking in the very manner that it may contain a limitless potential for performance.

The horror of Kane's play and the horror of the dead baby as a dramatic emblem are to a large extent the contradictory forces of the realization of language and the understanding that performance can never realize language fully. Reflecting not only on the negative reaction but on the magnitude of the reaction to *Blasted*, Kane asserts that "[t]he thing that shocks me most is that the media seem to have been more upset by the representation of violence than by violence itself" (qtd in Sierz 97).[57] Shock is the same word Kane uses to describe her reaction to the media's interest in representations of violence over real violence and her reaction to reading the stoning of Pam's baby in *Saved.* Kane's shock in reading Bond's play is a shock contained in the potential for visual representation to become analogous to textual representation. For the critics who review *Blasted,* the visual representation of some actions must be condemned, and this effort to save the theatre from some textual representations is an effort to save theatre from the shocking.

In such a context, the reviews of *Blasted* differentiate themselves from the criticism of the other plays described above. The criticism of Wilde, Ibsen, and Pinter functioned alongside the play in forging a network of historical and material

contextualization. Where the play performs a rupture of signification, the criticism works to minimize such a void by solidifying any material connections that the play challenges.

This material contextualizing facet of dramatic and performance criticism takes what may be its most explicit form in Nicholas F. Radel's phenomenological analysis of *Buried Child.* In "[w]hat's the meaning of this corn Tilden! Mimesis in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child,*" Radel reads Tilden's entrance early in the play with an armful of corn as a problem of representation. This is a problem in that Tilden claims he has just picked it out back but both Dodge and Halie claim there is no corn there. According to Radel:

> In the theatre, an object can be distinguished as the thing itself, an object of the real world that does not participate in the illusion of the stage but that demonstrates instead how the theatre invades reality and makes it participate in the staged world (180).

Radel goes on to claim that "the vegetable suggests the importance of our own mythic understanding of America" (181).[58] While I will leave the exploration of vegetable mythology to Radel, his conception of the corn as phenomenological sign invites further exploration.

In essence, Radel's claim about the corn comes down to an understanding of the corn as a sign that is too real for the realist stage. The corn's "conscious staginess begs to be interpreted as a symbol of an idea external to the action, not passively accepted as a sign that represents an object within the fictional world" (180). Since the fictional signified cannot be agreed upon, the signifier must transcend the fiction to exist in its objectness. In a process that seems analogous to Brecht's alienation effect applied to an object, the reality of the object pierces efforts to represent the object as part of the

network of theatrical signification. However as such theatre semioticians as Keir Elam have pointed out, an object on stage is never merely an object. Just because the corn does not easily fit within a network of realist signification does not free the corn from the network.

Radel's phenomenological analysis evokes the repetitious reading of mimetic codes as a theatrical failure as described in Chapter One and Devlin's compulsion for contextualization as described in *Ashes to Ashes*. While there may be competing arguments for most of the play about where the corn comes from, it cannot be refuted that the corn (and later the carrots and the dead baby) enter visual representation. Yet, rather than leaving this as an object that does not connect to Oedipal narrative causality for most of the play, the corn must escape fictional realism to connect to the world outside the theatre. Instead of leaving the corn as a narrative emblem that works to destabilize realist signification within the narrative, Radel must find a signified - find a context outside the referential world of Shepard's dramatic narrative - for the corn.

Ultimately, Radel's analysis tries to recover the conception of theatre as meaning matrix that is encouraged by theorists as varied as Elam, Richard Schechner, and Richard Roach. Since the corn cannot be explained within a realist frame, the corn becomes symbolic, attaching itself to mythic connotations of corn in America. We find the corn's meaning in establishing these mythic connections. If the realist register will not provide meaning then the interpreter must seek out the symbolic register. Radel goes on to suggest that "[we] do not believe that corn appears magically overnight, and the play validates our skepticism" (179). However, there is no reason not to believe that the corn

has emerged overnight other than the desire to distance the corn from the narrative fiction and the compulsion to read the play as realist.

Over the course of Radel's analysis the symbolic becomes a means to restore realist cohesion with the play. Early in the second Act Vince and Shelly enter the narrative. Vince claims to be Tilden's son yet none of the characters recognize him. Shelley is the one outsider to the farmhouse and as standard realist convention would have it, it is through the outsider that the secret will be revealed. Shepard's play follows this convention loyally. Although the child buried in the backyard is referred to in the first act, Dodge's confession that he killed the product of Tilden and Halie's incest occurs after Shelly's arrival. No one knows where Dodge hid the "secret buried treasure" (48). The difficulty with understanding the dead baby in a realist dynamic involves the seeming inverse relationship between Vince and the dead baby, both fathered by Tilden. The dead baby is the secret everybody knows but nobody wants to talk about, while, for the majority of the play, no one knows Vince and wants to know who he is and what he is doing there.

Radel tries to solve the problem of the inverse double by giving Vince primacy. Radel reduces the dead baby to a symbol. Symbolizing the baby distances it from the narrative fiction, thereby saving the realist narrative from less intelligible elements. In such a conception, to be a symbol is in some sense to be less real:

> [Since] there is at least some question as to whether or not the child exists, we are forced to entertain the possibility that the child appears only as a symbol, one that bodies forth on stage what Vince himself has become in his decision to take over the farm: a dead baby. (185)

Puzzlingly, in such a conception, a symbolic image in the theatre seems to evince less authenticity than other elements of the narrative. Existence becomes coextensive with a realist narrative. Instead of being understood as what is represented on stage, existence is understood as what signifies within the narrative in an intelligible way. Instead of being an integrated part of the narrative, a symbol becomes an element which possesses the exclusive function of interpreting the narrative. This redefinition of symbol tries to deny that as something brought onto stage, the dead baby has every bit as much theatrical existence as Vince. So, in this sense, the dead baby is no more or no less of a symbol than Vince.

Radel's attempt to redefine the dead baby as symbol and in so doing conceptualize the dead baby as interpretive and not as narrative is symptomatic of the larger field of dead children drama. By privileging the living Vince over the dead baby, and relegating the dead baby to an artificial construct meant to help us understand Vince, Radel represses the materiality of the corpse. In so doing, the dead baby is relegated to an antithetical position to the corn and the carrots. Where the realness of the latter cause the vegetables to emerge as phenomenological signs, the dead baby is less real - less material - and is thereby diminished to a symbolic function. To see the dead baby as something that doesn't exist, and Vince as something that does, is to act like Nietzsche attempting to resurrect the corpse of tragedy. The privileging of Vince is tantamount to Tesman and Thea's reconstructing Løvborg's book in *Hedda Gabler*.

In contrast to the historical and material chains of signification forged by such criticism in an effort to minimize the import of the dead baby, the reviews of *Blasted* create an alternative model. Instead of a materialist network, reviews of Kane's play

impose limits on the materialist network. In so doing, the reviews of *Blasted* suggest that sometimes the emblem of the dead baby cannot be minimized, it simply has to be resisted.

Criticism serves the dual function of suturing the underdetermined theatrical rupture by contextualizing, and resisting the overdetermination of a theatrical event that is too material. The critic, as dead baby audience member, must confront the violence, the potential for obscenity incubating in all language. How can a critic write about the manner in which Kane's play performs the shock, her belief that anything can be represented, without transgressing representational mores in the same manner as *Blasted*? In the very process of printing a review for what they want to categorize as an offensive play, critics must use language to describe a performance they have witnessed. In so doing, the written word itself still seems to carry the residue of visually represented graphic violence. In the very act of describing, language still contains the residue of staged contamination.

Michael Coveney's review of *Cleansed*, Kane's follow-up to *Blasted*, illustrates the difficulty of distancing textual representation from the contamination of visual representation. While not a completely negative review, Coveney begins by warning his readers that "[those] of a nervous disposition should stop reading now" (7). Similarly, in his review of the 1995 production of *Blasted*, Michael Billington cautions that "[readers] of a sensitive nature are warned that the following review may concern words likely to disturb" (22). Billington describes the plot of the play; and after narrating Ian's eating of the dead baby, Billington reminds potential readers who may not have heeded his cautionary label that he did warn us. The shock of *Blasted* proliferates beyond its

audience. Even attempts to warn audience members away by performing the Good Samaritan function of describing the play must struggle with the culpability of the written word. The very words "devour a dead baby" as printed in Billington's review contain a textual horror that can only be resisted by refusing to utter, write or perform them.[59]

The attempt to represent the dead baby on stage is an effort to connect the mimesis of language to the mimesis of performance. To some extent, the manner in which language represents without offering the possibility of connoting to the visual is a loss in Kane's drama. Textually representing the dead baby serves as a reminder that too much is escaping performative representation. In the same manner reading *Saved* indicates that saying something cannot be represented on stage is tantamount to obscuring truth, *Blasted's* materialized dead baby brings theatrical truth to the surface. An authentic theatre embraces visual representation of the material object above all else. An artificial theatrical event submits to convention in submitting to the propriety of the lie of selective representation.

The utterance of the dead baby tends to threaten the safety of selective representation whether or not the baby appears on stage. Like Kane's material reading of Bond's baby, Elizabeth Robins and Florence Bell's *Alan's Wife* (1893) offers an example of the compulsion to read dead babies materially, even in cases of their theatrical absence. In "Staging Infanticide: The Ritual of Representation in Elizabeth Robins's *Alan's Wife*," Catherine Wiley emphasizes reviewer A. B. Walkley's ability to falsely remember material representations in *Alan's Wife*:

> Alan's bloody corpse borne on a stretcher and the murdered infant are indicated in the script, but neither was represented on stage. The action of

> the play must have 'aggravated' the critic into seeing what he could not have seen, what he considered artistically unrepresentable, what might be called today an excess of representation. (432)

Walkley's imagining of a material representation he never actually sees and the hostility and the obsession of the media toward Kane's represented violence, both evidence a repulsion for theatrical materiality. There should be a difference between text and stage. Some representations should not enter the realm of vision. The utterance of a dead baby, not to mention the material representation of the same, threatens selective representation.

Blasted's critical reviews continue the same shock of reading Bond's play in that they seem to relish narrating Kane's content. The very vehemence in which the reviews conceptualize themselves as protectors for the London theatre scene enacts a shock model between performance and review. Kane uses the term shock to describe both the glorification of, and the extreme reaction against violent representations on stage. This double evocation of shock provides the very idea of shock as a model for understanding the relationship between textual representation and extreme visual representations. Or, to put it in slightly different terms, Kane's reviewers perform the very nature of representational shock and its after effects, and in so doing, illuminate a traumatic model and show the manner traumatic performance proliferates beyond a given narrative.

The double evocation of shock resonates with Freud's definition of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

> We define as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. [. . .] It will be seen, then, that preparedness for anxiety and the hypercathexis of the receptive

> systems constitute the last line of defense of the shield against stimuli. In the case of quite a number of traumas, the difference between systems that are unprepared and systems that are well prepared through being hypercathected may be a decisive factor in determining the outcome (33, 36).

For Kane, reading *Saved* provides a shock; that is to say, it is a traumatic dramatic text not just because it offers the potential for limitless performative signification but because this limitless performative signification is surprising.[60] *Saved* is traumatic because it imaginatively fills in the performative gap by revealing a gap the reader may not have known even existed. In place of the rupture of signification provided by dead babies who are visually unrepresented, *Saved* provides access to an imaginative construction of a completely visualized performance. In Kane's reading of Bond's play, imaginative projection of a potential performance becomes traumatic because it offers the surprise of vision occurring where the reader expects to find a blind spot. In the logic of representation, the dead baby in Kane's play works as a traumatic performance in much the same way that Bond's play works as a traumatic dramatic text. Yet, whereas Kane sees the traumatic surprise that accompanies imaginatively filling in the blind spot as an infinite opening of representative possibility, critics reviewing *Blasted* literally see the traumatic theatrical representation of a dead baby and read it as an attack on the theatre.

Kane may be shocked by the attention focused on the visual representation of violence over real violence but perhaps she shouldn't be. She offers a model of traumatic possibilities for performance while the reviews build a shield to protect theatre from Kane's brand of traumatic visual representation. Kane, like much criticism of the play,

may be dismissive of a laundry list of a play's events being a review, but here a listing of events has a very specific shielding function.[61] Listing violent events represented on stage shields a potential audience from the shock. Instead of the excess or the gap in performative representation piercing the shield of representation by the shock of its very visual appearance, a listing of violent events prepares an audience - it allows the shield to hold. In so doing, the dead baby appearing and being eaten becomes an aberrant staged event that is prepared for and resisted, instead of an emblem that in its very shock opens up the potential for limitless stage representation. By taking the shock away from the representation of the dead baby on stage, the dead baby continues to be grotesque but cannot function fully in an economy of performative representation. The more self-aware reviewers such as Michael Billington and Michael Coveney seem to understand this. In the very act of diffusing the potential of a dramatic performance they must be careful not to perform the potential of a traumatic theatre themselves. By warning readers before describing the violence, Billington and Coveney's reviews work toward creating a shield to protect potential readers from the trauma contained in their own writing.

Ultimately, Kane locates traumatic potential in the text. She comes to understand that her belief that "there isn't anything you can't represent on stage" is unrealizable. She confronts the difference between textual representation and performance in her discussion of Ian eating the baby:

> Reading *Blasted* is much harder work than watching it, because when you read it, it's literally *he eats the baby*. When you see it he's clearly not eating the baby. It's absolutely fucking obvious. This is a theatrical image. He's not doing it at all. So in a way it's more demanding because

> it throws you back on your own imagination. But somehow, I don't know – it's more realistic when you read the scene because you get simply the act. (qtd in Saunders 66)

In such a view, even the most material of events can never be as material as textual representation. Reading the stoning of the baby in *Saved* opens up the possibility of infinite representational possibilities - "there isn't anything you can't represent on stage." However, bringing the dead baby onto the stage hopelessly distances the signifier from the signified. Reading a dead baby is to evoke a dead baby, but to perform a dead baby being eaten is to fall short of realizing the image - "He's not doing it at all."

The tension of Kane's stage representations manifest here between the process of reading and understanding that anything should be able to be represented, and a performance in which the error in such a conception is revealed. Whereas Ibsen metaphorizes, Pinter decontextualizes, Pirandello metatheatricalizes and Bond and O'Neill perform the absence, both Shepard and Kane perform the failure by materially staging the dead baby as an object of visual representation.

Kane's description of the eating of the child is much indebted to realism. When the dead baby is said to work as a theatrical image and not literally, it is hard not to read such a statement as a failure of realist visual representation. Reading the play makes the dead baby function as a realist sign, while performing the play causes a rift in the realist network of signification. The emphasis on the play as needing to possess a realism that exceeds text and enters performance is demonstrated in Kane's apparent dissatisfaction with the ability of productions she has seen to realize her vision:

> Directors frequently think the second half of *Blasted* is a metaphor, dream, nightmare (that's the word Cate uses), and that it's somehow more abstract then the first half. In a production that works well, I think the first half should seem incredibly real and the second half even more real. Probably, by the end, we should be wondering if the first half was a dream. (qtd in Sierz 106).

Kane's description of the second half of the play evokes her description of the eating of the baby. Both the emblem and the second half of the play are expected to demonstrate theatrical authenticity. Despite expectations, performative practice falls short. The image does not realize the text and the second half tends to be less material than the first. Upon being visualized in performance, the material image of the dead baby and the half of the play are realist and materialist failures.

Echoing the distinction Kane makes between the realism of the dead baby when reading *Blasted*, and the nature of a theatrical image as non-realist, phenomenologist Radel describes *Buried Child's* dead baby as a "theatrical symbol" (180). There is a sense in which both Kane and Radel envision the theatrical image/symbol as strategy for calling attention to the limits of theatrical representation. A dead baby is a theatrical image/symbol in that it cannot represent without signifying its own theatricality. For Kane this theatricality emerges as a non-textual, non-realist signification that throws viewers back on their imagination. For Radel, the theatrical symbol interprets the play's narrative events. As an object / event that cannot be realistically portrayed on stage, the image / symbol cannot be contained in theatrical narrative.

To keep the dead baby metaphorized, or out of visual representation, is to some extent to contain the theatrical. Narratively, Løvborg's book or Abbie and Eben's child from *Desire Under the Elms,* in the very manner that it escapes realization on stage, can remain firmly contained in the dramatic narrative. The very void - the very manner in which the baby refuses to be seen - allows the narrative to gloss over the traumatic wound thereby allowing the conflict between narrative and visual representation to be mediated.

The consistent effort at resurrection is an effort to make the negotiation over the void irrelevant by filling the void with a visual representation. Seemingly, the rupture cannot be filled with its own signified. To fill in the gap visually, the dead baby must be denied through its own resurrection. Only by being alive can the dead baby complete the network of visual signification in a comprehensible fashion. If the baby can be brought back to life, then theatrical narrative does not have to contain a void to function. For if the baby can come back, then Devlin's project can be victorious. To theatricalize can be understood as knowing and seeing, theatrical representation can be analogous to theatrical narrative, and theatrical representation can be distanced from the traumatic.

In materializing the void Shepard demonstrates the necessity for keeping the dead baby unseen, for to see the baby is to frustrate realist signification. The very recognition of how a theatrical sign differentiates itself from a realist narrative transforms the rupture from an unrealized potential for difference to its actualization. In "Character Behavior and the Fantastic in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child,*" Bruce J. Mann recognizes this actualization through a model of what he terms "the fantastic." Unlike the distancing mechanism of Radel's symbols which present the non-realist dimensions of Shepard's

work as objects to be interpreted and not narrated, Mann's "fantastic" acknowledges that there are parts of Shepard's play which disrupt the narrative from within:

> True to the rules of the fantastic mode, the antinomy between the play's everyday and supernatural worlds is not resolved. We are left with an illogical situation. Are Vince and the buried child the same? If so, how can both be seen onstage simultaneously? (89)

The answer to Mann's questions should be explicit in the discussion of dead babies above as well as in the Shepard epigram which began this chapter. In the epigram, Shepard suggests that the work of a writer is to access another world, "[a] world behind the form. The contradiction is that as soon as that world opens up, I tend to run the other way." The dead baby evokes this other world behind the form. This other world is a world beyond the language of text and vocal utterance.

So many of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century dead baby dramas are a rupture of textual and vocal representation. There seems to be a self-conscious realization that traumatic drama emerges from language. While *Hedda Gabler's* depiction of the dead baby emerging from the vocalization of the destroyed text is the clearest example, it is not the only one. Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *The American Dream,* like *Ashes to Ashes,* envision the dead baby as emblem for the traumatic drama emerging from within the very form of representation it seems to disrupt. In this context, Pinter's play becomes the most vivid example of the potential for the traumatic utterance not only because the content of Rebecca's utterance of cultural catastrophe is a dead baby utterance that can be clinically defined as traumatic, but also because her very

decontextualization project demonstrates the dead baby as a function of narrative construction.

The dead baby as a theatrical emblem should be understood in terms of felicity and infelicity, not in terms of truth or falsehood.[62] Pinter and Albee's dead babies perform felicitously precisely because of their impossibility. A dead baby works felicitously through the very manner it evokes a fantasy. To reemphasize an earlier example, in metaphorizing a text that has not really been lost but will soon be burnt as a dead child in *Hedda Gabler*, a dead child is imaginatively projected as the emblem which disrupts realist textual signification. The dead baby as an emblem for traumatic drama demonstrates the imaginative potential of dramatic performance to make the holes in signification visible.

Shepard's epigram clearly demonstrates the manner in which the dead baby works within *Buried Child.* Uttering what is buried out back opens the new world, or at least ruptures the signification of the old one. In the first act, Halie and Dodge argue about the way Dodge describes their second oldest son, Bradley:

> Halie. You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off to all hours of the morning! thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!
>
> Dodge. He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's out there in the backyard! (*They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.*)
>
> Halie (*Quietly*). That's enough Dodge. That's quite enough. You've become confused. I'm going out now. I'm going to have lunch with

Father Dewis. I'm going to ask him about a monument for Ansel. A statue. At least a plaque.

While the evocation of the dead baby seems to work as a sort of return of the repressed, the dead baby utterance is much too self-conscious to be understood in such a light. So much classical and realist drama from Oedipus's murder of his father and marriage to his mother in *Oedipus Rex*, to Mrs. Alving's understanding that she is the means by which her husband passed on syphilis to their son in Ibsen's *Ghosts* is based on the return of the repressed. In dead baby drama, the secret has nothing to do with repression. The dead baby is hardly a secret at all. In *Buried Child*, everyone already knows about the dead child except Vince and Shelly. As the resurrected child, Vince hardly fits into the equation. Shelly may learn the secret, but very little uncovering accompanies her role as psychoanalytic detective. Instead, with very little prompting, Tilden tells Shelly the story of the baby buried out back.

The manner in which the dead baby works as fracturing speech and not as repressed secret is further emphasized in the original version of the play (1978). When Tilden starts to tell Shelly about the baby, she interrupts Tilden's narrative to ask him not to tell her (103). Requests from both Shelly and Dodge go unanswered, and in his only moment of clear assertiveness in either the original or the revision, Tilden pushes Shelly back in her chair, thereby forcing her to listen to his story of infanticide. In the final act, when Dodge decides to tell Shelly the family secret (a secret that in the context of the play is really not much of a secret at all) Shelly tells Dodge that she's "not so sure [she] wants to find out now" (123).

The narrative of the dead child is compulsively labeled a secret despite the inability of anyone to stop talking about it. In an exchange that appears intact in both versions of the play, Tilden tries to tell Shelly about the child and she initially resists his compulsion to tell:

> Shelly. Well, you can tell me anything you want to.
>
> Tilden. I can?
>
> Shelly. Sure.
>
> Tilden. It might not be very nice.
>
> Shelly. That's all right. I've been around.
>
> Tilden. It might be awful.
>
> Shelly. Well, can't you tell me anything nice? (*Tilden stops in front of her and stares at her coat. Shelly looks back at him. Long pause.)*

Similar to Dodge's uttering what is buried out back to Halie, Shelly's refusal to hear the awful leads to a long pause. Tilden wants Shelly to resist his telling. If he can tell her anything, he intends to tell her about what is buried in the backyard, because the compulsion to perform the telling is irresistible. The compulsion may be irresistible, but it is also undesirable. This is emphasized by the manner Tilden broaches the subject. He initially cautions Shelly that the anything he wants to tell "might not be very nice." The idea of it not being nice is not enough to deter Shelly from hearing what he has the compulsion to tell, so Tilden raises the stakes from not nice to awful. In so doing, fracturing speech is rejected. Since Tilden no longer has a receptive audience, he can let the dead baby that he and Dodge have such a compulsion to evoke lie dormant for the moment.

Dodge's evocation of his flesh and blood being buried out back functions similarly. The early part of the play is obsessed with the materiality of bodies and the congruence between Dodge and a corpse. In addition to Halie's characterization of a decomposing Dodge smelling up the house with his putrid body, Dodge refers to himself as a corpse (11).[63] Dodge's metaphorical burial beneath cornhusks at the end of the first act, and beneath a blanket at the end of the second act, provides an obvious metonymic rationale for his utterance of the dead baby. Halie's emphasis on Dodge's decomposing body creates another version of the compulsion to utter the dead baby that cannot be resisted. Yet, the very utterance of the dead baby, like the frustration of Tilden's compulsion to utter the dead baby, creates a narrative void in the pause. The utterance of the dead baby as well as its frustration point to a break in dialogue. When the dialogue starts up after these long pauses it emphasizes the fracturing utterance of the dead baby which is the content within the pause. This initial evocation of what is buried out back demonstrates a tension between the dead baby as void, and the dead baby as material object. For while the utterance itself works to create a rupture, and the utterance creates a pause that forces dialogue in a different direction, this rupture only manifests through its metonymic connection with materiality.

This paradox between materiality and the void is the essence of the long pause and the means to understand Halie's restarting of the dialogue. Halie restarts the dialogue by moving the conversation away from the organic materiality of decaying corpses as she evokes the possibility of a statue for Ansel. Ansel, apparently a third son of Halie and Dodge, is dead. As an idea to be memorialized over and above the physicality of his body, the move to Ansel shifts to conversation away from the

materiality of Dodge's corpse-like body as well as the corpse out back. In evoking the memory of Ansel, Halie's utterance moves away from the physical reality of a rotting body, and connotes the dead son with an unchanging memorial of a living body, rather than the actual body itself. This functions as a distancing mechanism, as the memorial works to resurrect Ansel, rather than focusing on the materiality of death.

Halie's effort to conceptualize a resurrected Ansel through memorializing a historical figure at a time when he was alive works different from Nietzsche's resurrection of tragedy, or Tesman's resurrection of Løvborg's book in *Hedda Gabler*. A memorialized Ansel functions in a way much closer to Rebecca's traumatic utterance from *Ashes to Ashes*. The memorialization decontextualizes as it dematerializes. Halie is insistent on Ansel being a hero, but Tilden doesn't remember him as a hero (18). Halie wants a bronze statue of Ansel with a basketball in one hand, but, according to Bradley, "[he] never played basketball" (59). Like Devlin's effort to contextualize Rebecca's utterance of her lover, the statue of Ansel offers a hope to solidify an idea of Ansel that will never be reached.

Halie interrupts Dodge's evocation of the dead baby - an evocation that is encouraged by her emphasis on the materiality of Dodge's dead body - with the decontextualized fantasy of Ansel. Halie's fantasy of a decontextualized Ansel overcomes the fracturing speech of a dead baby, and dialogue resumes. In turning to Ansel's statue, Halie tries to resist the knowledge that the seed for the decontextualized utterance lies within the very understanding of materiality. The turn to Ansel's statue is an attempt to embrace the decontextualized rupture of the dead baby as fracturing speech

without acknowledging an exterior materiality that allows the emergence of such a rupture.

The turn to the decontextualized utterance that lies behind Halie's desire to memorialize Ansel with a statue is also explicit in the utterance of the dead baby. When Tilden first tries to tell Shelly about the dead baby, and she rebuffs his compulsion to tell by asking him if he can't tell her anything nice, he broaches the subject through indeterminate language - namely, through the use of the word "might." Like memories of Ansel, Tilden does not simply threaten to tell Shelly something not nice and awful. He "might" tell her such things and in prefacing his compulsion to tell with "might," Tilden foregrounds the indeterminate nature of the baby as fracturing speech. When Shelly rejects his telling by requesting he tell her something nice she not only resists his horrifying confession, she resists an indeterminate confession. Unlike his "might," Shelly's request to hear something nice moves toward taking the interpretive potential out of Tilden's utterance.

The indeterminacy associated with the utterance of the dead baby underlies perhaps the most significant difference between the original version of the play and Shepard's revision. In the original, Shelly, trying to understand why nobody recognizes Vince, questions Tilden:

> Shelly: (*pointing to Vince)* This is supposed to be your son? Is he your son? Do you recognize him? I'm just along for the ride here. I thought everybody knew each other!
>
> (Tilden *stares at* Vince. Dodge *wraps himself up in the blanket and stares at the floor.*)

Tilden: I had a son once but we buried him.

(Dodge *quickly looks at* Tilden. Shelly *looks to* Vince.)

Dodge: You shut up about that! You don't know anything about that!

Vince: Dad, I thought you were in New Mexico. We were going to drive down there and see you.

Tilden: Long way to drive.

Dodge: (*to* Tilden) You don't know anything about that! That happened before you were born! Long before! (*Seven Plays* 92)

Taken together, Dodge and Tilden's contradictory claims work to decontextualize the event temporally. Tilden claims it was his baby, but, according to Dodge, it occurred before Tilden was born. In exorcising Dodge's claim that the child died before Tilden was born from his revision, Shepard removes a great deal of the indeterminacy from the dead baby narrative. This is further reinforced in a line that is added to the revision. When Vince arrives and announces that he is Tilden's son, Dodge tells Vince that Tilden "had *two* [sons], I guess" (32). While the original suggests that the baby might be the result of Halie and Tilden's incestuous relationship, the rewrite attempts to minimize Dodge's alternative utterances about the baby's origin, and thereby limit a great deal of the dissent and the play's ambiguity.

The revised version of *Buried Child* undergoes an alteration in the status of the dead baby that is suggestive as to the relationship between text, materiality, and dead baby plays. I have argued in numerous contexts that the dead baby functions as a dematerializing and a decontextualizing utterance. As the utterance of the dead baby calls attention to the transcendence of a dramatic text and embraces a performative

rupture, the materiality of vision and phenomenology is resisted. Like Kane, Shepard's play refuses to acknowledge that there is a rupture in the very conception of materiality. In essence, Shepard's play refuses to emblematize the dead baby as an utterance that works as the inverse of vision and the dramatic text.

Shepard's revised play places the dramatic text in the service of materiality. In the process of revision - by signifying the origins of the baby more explicitly in the text - the void can be overcome. The dead baby can become an extension of textual signification instead of a recognition of the limits of textual signification. Textual signification can be seamlessly represented in performance by materializing the dead baby and offering a context for it. Rather than a challenge to the interconnection of semiotics and phenemonology, the dead baby can illustrate the unity of textual and performative representation. The text must be closed off from the challenge of the utterance, to incorporate the utterance as part of the potential materiality of the dramatic text.

To understand Shelly as detective is to understand the manner in which *Buried Child* tries to reassert materiality over decontextualization, and the dramatic text over performative utterance. Shelly is told about the baby through no detective work, and indeed, seemingly no action of her own. However, her detective work involves understanding the materiality of the utterance. In the original version, she asks Dodge, "Was [Tilden] telling the truth about the baby?" (112). Such a question redefines the mystery. Rather than a secret to be uncovered, the mystery involves the reliability and the context of the utterance. Shelly's work as detective involves establishing an external referent for the utterance. Instead of understanding the utterance as an utterance that is

felicitous precisely because of its indeterminacy, Shelly must understand it as something that is true, something that can be contextualized beyond fracturing speech. Shelly wants to prove the utterance has an independent material existence.

The third act seems to conclude with the transformation from indeterminate speech act to contextualized exterior truth through the process of repetition. The metonymic connection from dead baby to Ansel is taken one step further as Vince is fully incorporated into the chain:

> Dodge. I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of the litter. Just drowned it. There was no struggle. No noise. Life just left it. (*Halie moves toward Bradley.*)
>
> Halie. (*To Bradley.*) Ansel would've stopped him! Ansel would've stopped him from telling those lies! He was a hero! A man! A whole man! What's happened to the men in this family! Where are the men! (*Suddenly Vince comes crashing through the screen porch* U.L. *Tearing it off its hinges.*)

Many critics have suggested that Vince's appearance serves as a very literal answer to Halie's plea. In addition to any possible hope his reappearance may provide, the reappearance of Vince provides an end to the metonymic chain of dead children and has implications for the struggle going on throughout the play between the truth, the materiality of the dead baby emblem, and the manner in which the dead baby as utterance serves a function of decontextulization - of indeterminacy.

The manner in which Vince's appearance at the end equates him with the dead baby is clearly demonstrated by Mann. Writing of the manner in which, shortly after his appearance, Vince enters the living room, Mann notes:

> Vince cuts a hole in the porch's screen and dives through it into the living room, a stage emblem of birth, as if he were the buried child itself being reborn in order to take over control from Dodge. (88)

More than serving as an emblem of the buried child being reborn, Vince serves as an emblem of the dead baby being materialized and contextualized. In the context of the play, and indeed, in the context of the dead baby tradition as outlined over the course of Part Two, Vince as the reborn dead baby fits firmly among the dead baby tradition. Vince's material appearance is an effort at resistance, an effort to suture the gap, the indeterminacy, within the dramatic text that allows the dead baby to emerge.

Despite the materiality of Vince's appearance, the resurrection is not the end. The play ends with Tilden's entrance onto the stage with the dead baby in his arms. In this moment both Vince as the resurrected dead baby, and the material dead baby appear on stage. The material doubling of the baby in its dead and resurrected forms - characterized by Mann as the illogic of the fantastic - offers an alternative to dead babies and resurrection as dichotomy. As a simultaneous occurrence death and resurrection are both open to vision, and in the process, the ideal of resurrection, the ideal of materiality is overcome. The excess of materiality that allows death and resurrection to enter the stage simultaneously creates a sort of indeterminacy within its very materiality. The ideal behind dead baby resurrection involves a suturing of the rupture, a belief that a fragmented text can be reassembled, that signifiers can comprehensibly connect to

signifieds, creating clear networks of dramatic meaning. In its doubling and its focus on materiality, *Buried Child* suggests that resurrection as difference, - resurrection as contextualization - is only an illusion. In the same way a dramatic rupture like *Ashes to Ashes* offers no hope of clear signification because the emblem of the dead baby cannot be understood as more than fantasy, the excess materiality of the resurrection in *Buried Child* suggests that filling in the textual gap is the same thing as embracing the rupture. A resurrected Vince is the same thing as the dead baby in so far as both lead down the road of indeterminacy. The compulsion toward escaping the indeterminate repetition of the dead baby by resurrecting it, and thereby placing it in a clear context is repetition under the guise of escape.

The dead baby in *Blasted* functions as dramatic emblem in a remarkably similar fashion. However, whereas *Buried Child* presents a dialectic between dead baby as indeterminate utterance and dead baby as material object before reconciling the dead baby and the resurrection as indeterminate material emblem, *Blasted* focuses on the dead baby as doubled material object. Despite the lack of a dead baby as an indeterminate utterance, the conflict between materiality and indeterminacy is in the forefront in Kane's play.

Like *Buried Child*, *Blasted* uses the very materiality of the corpse - the very manner in which the baby becomes an object open to sight - as a means to reject resurrection as an escape from the import of the dead baby. Like the equation of the baby with Vince, *Blasted* creates a metonymic connection between the baby and Ian. This connection is repeated almost obsessively from Cate's reappearance with the baby, beginning with Ian's attempted suicide:

He puts the gun back in his mouth. He pulls the trigger. The gun clicks, empty. He shoots again. And again and again and again.

He takes the gun out of his mouth.

Ian Fuck.

Cate Fate, see. You're not meant to do it. God –

Ian The cunt.

(*He throws the gun away in despair.*)

Cate (*Rocks the baby and looks down at it.*)

Oh no.

Ian What.

Cate It's dead.

Ian Lucky bastard. (56-7)

Following so close on Ian's attempted suicide, it is difficult not to read the baby's death as a success where Ian has failed. Unlike the doubling in *Buried Child* between Vince and the dead baby, or even the doubling in *The American Dream*, where the doubling provides an interconnection between material figure and dead baby, in *Blasted,* the double remains perpetually out of reach. The dead baby as a material object serves as a sort of ideal for Ian. Where all he has been able to do is impotently fire an empty gun into his mouth, the baby is able to die and to be recognized as dead, a task Ian will strive to actualize for the rest of the play. He struggles to become the double, but he can never quite reach the level of a performative double for the material dead baby.

Ian's failure in doubling the baby, and in so doing embracing his own death is another example of the manner in which performative repetition always manifests as

iteration. As the play fragments into montage, Ian, like Mrs. Barker from *The American Dream*, demonstrates the difference intrinsic in similarity. No matter what Ian does, he cannot traverse the gap between "like" and double:

Darkness.

Light.

Ian cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt cunt

Darkness.

Light.

Ian strangling himself with his bare hands.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian shitting.

And then trying to clean it up with newspaper.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian laughing hysterically.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian having a nightmare.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian crying, huge bloody tears.

He is hugging the Soldier's body for comfort.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian lying very still, weak with hunger.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian tears the cross out of the ground, rips up the floor and lifts the baby's body out.

He eats the baby.

He puts the remains back in the baby's blanket and puts the bundle back in the hole.

A beat then he climbs in after it and lies down, head poking out of the floor.

He dies with relief.

It starts to rain on him, coming through the roof.

Eventually.

Ian Shit.

In this montage surrounding the controversial image of Ian eating the baby, the play is at its most material. The play focuses on images over words as Ian, in part, dedicates himself to modeling the behaviors of a baby. In his introduction to Kane's *Complete Plays*, David Greig suggests that this montage presents the viewer with "images of Ian, all the structures of his life destroyed, reduced to its base essence – a human being, weeping, shitting, lonely, broken, dying and, in the play's final moments, comforted" (x). While Ian is reduced, he has also been regressed. His behaviors during the montage echo

his answer to Cate's earlier question of what he knows about babies. Ian tells Cate that "[they] shit and cry. Hopeless" (52). This is a significant part of the behavior Ian models during the montage as he starts to identify himself as the baby's double.

The eating of the baby underscores the continuation of this pattern of material identification. In an explicit echo of the identification through cannibalism in Arrabal's *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*, Ian will try to become the baby's double by eating the baby and sharing the baby's burial site. In some measure, this elaborate struggle to make Ian into the double of the dead baby as material object finally succeeds. Kane's play takes the doubling further than Shepard. For Shepard, the resurrected double, in that it appears alongside the dead baby, is a verification of the failure of materiality - of resurrection - to overcome indeterminacy. Despite efforts to revise *Buried Child* in order to make the dramatic text fend off rupture, materiality merely inaugurates indeterminacy. In the character of Ian, *Blasted* acknowledges that a resurrected double is not enough. The double has to double the baby's death.

According to the stage directions, Ian achieves the material doubling for a moment. He does die, and shares the burial space with the baby. Despite this apparent success, Ian appears to be mistaken when he tells Cate, "When you die it's the end" (56). Ian may die, but he keeps going. Ian's death becomes another artificial barrier for the play to discard similar to representations of stage violence. Reading the text, Ian's death is clearly represented in the stage directions. However, a death that is not the end is precisely the thing that escapes visual representation. In the realm of performance it is too easy to think like Ian. A representation of death must be the end, so if Ian is not at

the end he must not be dead. The text provides a moment where Ian fulfills the doubling of the dead baby but this moment escapes performance.

Blasted provides a representation of a dead baby whose very materiality cannot be repeated in visual performance no matter how much Ian strives for material verisimilitude. Ian can equal the corpse's deadness through textual representation but visual representation presents the corpse as something that is always out of reach. Despite Ian's efforts to double the dead baby, performance can only represent Ian doubling the corpse in a resurrected form. He may have lost his own eyes, but vision still betrays Ian as he can only fill an identical role to Vince. Ian's very effort to double the dead baby emerges alongside the transformation of the dramatic form itself, as the play transforms from a relatively linear narrative to a series of loosely connected fragments. Only after it becomes clear in the realm of visual performance Ian will always fall short of the dead baby because his death escapes the realm of visual representation, does language reenter the play and fragmentation give way to linearity at the play's conclusion.

The effort to double the material image of the dead baby as a doubling that always fails short of its object of representation, offers a means to understand Kane's acknowledgement of the performance of the cannibalized dead baby as a theatrical image. The eating is the scene that in performance is supposed to equate Ian and baby and offer a demonstration of the power of materiality in the theatre. However, Ian can never fully actualize the image of the dead baby in performance. As the narrative devolves into montage, the materiality of the dead baby cannot fulfill its function as an emblem for the possibility, and the expansive potential of theatrical materiality. Attempts

to show an expanding network of material signification emanating from the baby in performance becomes a staged failure. In this sense, the dead baby is understood as a theatrical image because it demonstrates what the text can do and performance lacks. Text allows a fantasy of transcending materiality. In contradistinction, the material image of a dead baby eaten becomes a theatrical image precisely in the manner that it demonstrates that performance cannot place the dead baby as a fulfilled mechanism of signification. The performed dead baby cannot be a material object that fully resonates outward.

Ultimately, *Blasted* demonstrates that the most material theatre can never fully materialize its object of representation. In the effort to move beyond a theatrical image and perform shock, Kane's play reaches toward Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty:

> The theater will never find itself again – i.e., constitute a means of true illusion – except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior. (92)

Kane's theatre is certainly a cruel one, as it engages in the cannibalism, savagery, and dismembering of bodies Artaud outlines. Even more than this, the import of Artaud's title, *The Theatre and its Double* should not be overlooked. The Theatre of Cruelty does not engage in violence for its own sake, but is cruel in an effort to transcend the artificiality that characterizes contemporary theatre. Only through glimpsing its truthful double will the theatre really matter. In this sense, Vince and Ian are not the doubles of the dead baby, but the dead baby is the double of the theatre that remains out of reach.

As material as the cruelty mapped onto Ian's body is, the materiality of Kane's theatre never attains the ideal material cruelty of the dead baby as double. Materiality always falls short.

This inability to fully materialize Kane and Shepard's material theatres other than through the double that works against determinism is the theatrical space of the dead baby. A metatheatrical sign that is a reminder of the lack and excess that illuminates the space of performance and suggests that performance occurs as theatrical networks of signification break apart and not just through interconnection.

Part III:

"It Pierces Too Sharp"[64]: Historical Contextualization and Performative Futures

Prelude: *Perdition*, the Traumatic Theatrical Matrix and Historical Context

On January 20, 1987 Max Stafford-Clark, Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre pulled *Perdition* amid a swirl of controversy two days before the play was scheduled to open. Written by Jim Allen, *Perdition* was based on the libel trial of Rudolf Kastner. In a published pamphlet, Kastner – a Hungarian Zionist leader during World War II – was accused of collaborating with Eichmann and the Nazis by not warning the Hungarian community about the Holocaust.[65] The pamphlet argued that Kastner's silence facilitated the transport of trains to Auschwitz. For this consideration, Eichmann "allowed a special train to take nearly 1,700 Zionist and other 'prominents' out of Hungary to safety in Switzerland" (Rose 118). On behalf of Kastner the Israeli government sued Malkiel Grunwald – the writer of the pamphlet – for libel. The 1954 trial quickly became a platform to renew the accusations against Kastner: "The judge found most of Grunwald's allegations to be justified awarding token damages of one Israeli pound" (Rose 118).[66]

Perdition is a court room drama set in 1967 after the Six Day War. The fictional Dr. Miklos Yaron brings a libel suit against Ruth Kaplan for publishing a pamphlet accusing him of Nazi collaboration during World War II. Allen's play both dramatizes the Kastner case and shows its proliferation. Like Kastner, Yaron is a Hungarian Zionist leader accused of keeping silent about the Holocaust, thereby facilitating the work of the concentration camps. While this makes Yaron a stand-in for Kastner, they are comrades and not the same person. Kastner's war actions are used by Kaplan's lawyer Alec Scott

against Yaron: "It is clear Doctor Yaron, isn't it? That you, Kastner, and other members of the Committee collaborated with the Nazis" (64). Kastner was not alone to blame. Other leaders in Hungary were guilty. In Allen's drama, collaboration expands beyond the borders of Hungary encompassing Zionist leaders in other Allied countries. Stanley Karpin – a former Executive for the World Zionist Organization – confesses during Scott's cross-examination that his organization opposed British aid for European Jews:

> Karpin: At the time our main priority was in building a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
>
> Scott: What did that have to do with it? Here were people in fear of their lives.
>
> Karpin: Yes, but the feeling was that had these refugees found sanctuary in countries other than Palestine, there would have been no Jewish state.
>
> Scott: Then what you are saying is that the holocaust Jews who were being daily massacred were expendable. (30)

In one of *Perdition's* most controversial elements, the play moves beyond suggesting betrayal by some of Hungary's leaders and claims a vast Zionist conspiracy. Rather than save Jews in any way they can, these leaders - both in Hungary and outside of it - use the horror of the Holocaust to found Israel.[67]

Despite the radical difference in the *mise en scene, Perdition* shares much in common with *Blasted* and the critical controversy that would surround Kane's play eight years later. Allen's courtroom drama searches for truth and blame, and in so doing contains and sanitizes the materialized violence that is *Blasted's* content. *Perdition* was scheduled to be staged at the same theatre that would house *Blasted.* Perhaps the most

significant link between the two plays is how play interconnects with critical response forging a traumatic theatrical matrix of meaning. The public furor which kept *Perdition* in the newspapers for almost two months after its cancellation shielded the theatre going public from the trauma of the play's performance. However, where *Blasted's* theatrical matrix protected its audience from too much materiality, *Perdition's* theatrical matrix insulated from Allen's understanding of history.

Advance copies of *Perdition* were sent to the press. Diverging from the more self-aware reviews of *Blasted* which cautioned readers about the trauma contained in the very review that warns, the Royal Court Theatre was seemingly unaware that text can traumatize in its own right. In preparing reviewers for the trauma of *Perdition* by creating a textual shield, the Royal Court shocked through the written word and merely replaced the performative rupture the theatre was aiming to subvert with a textual variety.

Amidst the accusations that *Perdition* was anti-Semitic, bad history, and bad drama, *Perdition's* trauma arose due to the perception that the play was history. Previous to the play's cancellation, Director of the Institute of Jewish Affairs, Stephen Roth met with Stafford-Clark among others and requested a statement in the program classifying the play as fiction.[68] Contextualizing the play as fiction dissociates the play from history and provides enough protection for a performance to occur. There must be a perceived distance between *Perdition* and history for a non-traumatic performance to emanate. There must be a distance between Allen's play and Kastner's trial. Such a distance ensures a gap between dramatic signifier and historical signified.

Apparently the difference between the bad history of *Perdition* that should not be performed, and a performable good history is that bad history warps contextualization

and must be resisted, while good history contextualizes appropriately. The back and forth public debate over the play questioned who is the purveyor of historical authenticity, and who merely perpetuates falsehood. Historian David Cesarani was commissioned by the Royal Court to write a report regarding the play's historical accuracy. In a letter appearing in the January 21, 1987 *Guardian*, Cesarani notes that his objections were never substantively addressed: "The unhistorical and grotesque thesis of the play remains unaltered, supported by quotations taken out of context and facts that are frequently invented" (122). Similarly, Stafford-Clark suggests that his decision to pull the play was facilitated by a selective use of history: "I saw the possibility that *Perdition* was a dishonest piece of writing: both because it was so half-hearted in including any mitigating factors, and because its passionate conviction led it to a picture of these horrifying events that seemed less and less authentic" (141).

Opposing such a perspective, Andrew Hornung and the play's would be director Ken Loach take aim at one of the play's critics. The play and not history is being taken out of context: "Victoria Radin's 'review' of Jim Allen's banned play *Perdition* is an extraordinary mixture of distortion and misrepresentation" (136). Loach and Hornung go on to suggest that the context of the play has been "presented through the distorting lens of a hostile press" (136).[69] For Cesarani and Stafford-Clark, an authentic contexualized history comes to the rescue and stops a distortion being performed, while for Hornung and Loach distorting influences stop the authentic from its performative emergence.

Loach and Hornung wonder what all the fuss is about. *Perdition* was pulled and is being attacked in the press for repeating an argument that has been made in other

forms. Most if not all of the charges made in the play can be attributed to various historical documents and texts:

> The analysis is supported in the play by reference to events, speeches, documents, and first-hand accounts of what happened. It has widespread support among published historians, and British and Israeli Jews. If you can read it in books, why can you not see it on stage? (136)

By recognizing a difference between textual and performative representation, Loach and Hornung replicate a question that has been broached in various contexts over the course of this dissertation. At heart they consider: Why does performative representation create a trauma that must be shielded and defused while textual representation freely enters public discourse?

The January 23, 1987 leader for *The Guardian* answers Loach and Hornung's question:

> The Royal Court would not entertain a play which put the blame for the slave trade on the Yoruba chiefs of West Africa, however much alleged historical justification an author might say he had found. Sorry, but it categorises people, it pierces too sharp, and, which is what drama should not do, it peddles certitudes. (125)

While bad history takes specific events and writing of the past and places them in an inappropriate context, bad drama creates certitude where there should be indeterminacy. In a strange transposition of terms, *Ashes to Ashes* is traumatic precisely because its indeterminate narrative resists contextual and historical foreclosure, but for the lead writer at *The Guardian* indeterminacy creates a non-traumatic play. A drama is traumatic

to the degree to which it pierces the shield of critics and audience. Good plays do not challenge the shield, and bad plays pierce the shield either by *Blasted*-like excess materiality, or *Perdition*-like manifest historical certitude.

Much like Kane's epiphany that there isn't anything you can't represent on stage occurs after she reads *Saved*, Allen's dramatic text contains the idea of a performance. In contrast to this potential which resides in all dramatic texts, the sources he culls for his historical evidence contain no such imaginative future event. As text, *Perdition* contains the kernel of a different and more visual signification while the sources the play draws upon are limited as texts. They will never represent in any other register.

The published version of *Perdition* - produced by Ithaca Press – continues the struggle to contextualize the play "appropriately." In addition to the play, the edition contains excerpts from two of Allen's sources, a representative sample of public and newspaper commentary, and a note by Cesarani outlining the differences between the published version, the initial version he reviewed for historical accuracy, the version sent to the press, and the version that was supposed to be performed. According to Cesarani:

> The extent of the current revision is such that it renders a good deal of the commentary at the time of the 'Perdition affair' almost irrelevant: much of the detailed critical comment has been deflected in the editorial process. Yet these changes have themselves become an important dimension for any assessment of the play. (111)

For Cesarani, the changes validate his claim that the play was not historically accurate, despite Allen's assertions to the contrary. This is not to say that the current version has

completely rectified earlier mistakes. Cesarani makes it clear that the play still does not represent "anything approaching a truthful representation of the past" (111).

From the perspective of a theatrical matrix, the published edition successfully binds the traumatic dramatic text and the idea of performance it contains. Cesarani's note emphasizes that far from perpetuating the trauma of the "Perdition affair," the published version of the play is a memorial to an absent text, and a reminder of a missed trauma. Of course, trauma can never be anything other than the missed event. The text embodies a very literal reminder of this missing. In a reflection of how life can imitate art that is already imitating life, Allen was sued for libel by Nathan Dror for referring to him in the play. Dror may sue Allen, but he ignores Allen's sources. The idea of performance contained in the dramatic text represents more traumatically than historical text. Dror's name becomes a textual rupture and a missing, as the published text excises all references to Dror and replaces these passages with a blank space that serves as reminder for what is lost.

Perhaps most striking is how the published version of *Perdition* contextualizes the textual missing that is the dramatic text as a monument to an extra-textual missed event. At the beginning of the play, the text lists a cast who would never perform the play and underneath informs a reader: "This is the revised text of the play not first performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs on 22nd January 1987." The published version marks the lack of a performance as historical occurrence, and in so doing the text contains both the idea of a performance of the current text and an idea of a performance that seemingly will never occur. It is too late.

The final part of this project begins with an emphasis on the similarity between the material and historical traumatic theatrical matrixes because in Part III I turn my main focus to temporality. As the discussion of *Perdition* should make explicit, this is not a departure. Exploring temporal significations and contextualizations shows that materiality and temporality are twin constructs in Modern Drama. The struggle between indeterminacy and certitude is both a material and temporal struggle over how dramatic meanings accumulate.

Chapter Five:

"This Story Has More Other Hands than a Hindu God"[70]: Mathematical Theatre and the Subversion of Indeterminate History

Where a work of fiction features historical characters and historical events it's reasonable to want to know how much of it is fiction and how much of it is history. So let me make it as clear as I can in regard to this play. - Michael Frayn

Joan in a nineteenth-twentieth century environment is as incongruous a figure as she would appear were she to walk down Piccadilly today in her fifteenth century armor. To see her in her proper perspective you must understand Christendom and the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire and the Feudal System as they existed and were understood in the Middle Ages. – G. B. Shaw[71]

Why does *Perdition* pierce too sharply? If we believe the Frayn and Shaw epigraphs which begin this chapter are believed, combining history and drama creates a blunt instrument, rather than the inverse. For Frayn, a history play can never be simply an historical representation. Contrary to public outcry that, if performed, *Perdition* would be understood as historically authentic, Frayn distinguishes a perpetual gap between drama and history. Dramatizing history makes history indeterminate. A history play leaves an audience uncertain of the veracity of what they have just witnessed. Was it truth or merely a play? Similarly, Shaw advocates knowing large societal structures in their historical context to avoid dramatic deformation.

Seemingly in an effort to bridge the mimetic gap between dramatic signifier and historical signified, Frayn's *Copenhagen* (1998) and Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1923) include massive paratexts. Frayn's postscript promises to resolve the ambiguity between history and fiction which his drama perpetuates, and Shaw's preface familiarizes his readers with the large historical structures which must be understood to place Joan in an appropriate

context. Frayn and Shaw's paratexts are yet another functioning component of the theatrical matrix, analogous to dramatic criticism, theatrical reviews, and playwright's reflections on their own plays, working to create a material and determinate understanding of dramatic performance.

Frayn and Shaw's paratexts illustrate the difficulty in establishing a mimetic theatre. The marked opposite of *The Wild Duck* which embraced the dramatic potential of theatrical rupture, Shaw and Frayn return to the history play in the hope of reconnecting things to ideas. If the play cannot make such a connection, then the paratext must. By doing the critics' work for them, these paratexts work to contextualize the historically indeterminate before it is recognized as indeterminate. The paratext is both the optimistic hope that the author can create a mimetic theatrical event by including enough historical background, and the pessimistic realization that if the play cannot self-contextualize, the dramatic text needs a theoretical appendage.

In *Copenhagen* and *Saint Joan*, a mimetic theatre becomes a scientific theatre, as both plays incorporate quantum mechanics into their suturing project. Shaw discusses the electron in his preface, and Frayn's play is the dramatization of a meeting between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. Quantum mechanics constitutes an ideal metaphor for the optimistic / pessimistic understanding of historical foreclosure within the paratexts because both plays try to conceptualize drama as akin to traditional science. Drama should fill all the gaps, be a vehicle for causality, and demonstrate that the world makes sense. However, atomic theory posits uncertainty as guiding scientific principle. By evoking the potential of the electron, the paratexts face the dilemma of mimetic

indeterminacy. What happens when drama – like science – ceases to offer even the hope of firm semiotic links?

Taking indeterminacy as their subject matter, *Copenhagen* and *Saint Joan* strive to regain a measure of historical mimetic foreclosure, and out-science science. In addition to dramatizing the desire to contextualize historical indeterminacy, *Copenhagen*, and *Saint Joan,* take part in this desire. In so doing, these plays illuminate a compulsion to view dramatic form as historical determinacy. By dramatizing two key moments of 1920s indeterminacy – the efforts to understand Joan's heresy as a perpetuation of Catholic faith and not a challenge to it, and the movement of science beyond causality – these plays position drama as antithetical to indeterminacy. By suturing contextualization and embracing historical causality drama can de-liminalize thereby creating comprehensible narratives.

I Joan and the Mathematical Theatre

On May 16, 1920 Joan of Arc was canonized as a Saint. This event marked the end of a nearly five-hundred-year rehabilitation process. After being burning as a heretic in 1431, Joan's heresy was expunged by way of official inquiry in 1456, she became Venerable in 1904, and Blessed in 1908. Joan as historical figure presents an historical signifier whose very liminality exceeds all efforts to contextualize her within an historical signified. In excess of any political or religious reasons for Joan's canonization, the canonization is the ultimate act of contextualization. Her meaning surpasses definition. Or, at least, her meaning exceeds twentieth-century definition. The effort to categorize Joan in the early twentieth-century never encompasses what she is, or how the Catholic Church wants to

define her. Like the emblem of the dead child or trauma, as historical figure Joan illuminates the shortcomings of understanding and representation. Saint becomes the latest effort to fill in a gap that Venerable and Blessed left open.

Three and a half years after Joan's canonization, Bernard Shaw picked up where the Catholic Church left off with *Saint Joan*. In his preface to the play, Shaw argues that Joan matters to current society, but in our efforts to paint a romantic picture of her we fail to understand her and her relevance to us. [72] Joan's resonance was intertwined with her historical reality. We must put her in the proper historical context. Unsurprisingly for Shaw this means appropriating the Catholic Saint as a Protestant hero. However, this is not a simple vilification of Catholic oppression. Joan's voices are an early Protestant challenge to Catholic authority, and her trial is a more tolerant means of carrying out justice than most contemporary examples. Placing Joan's tragedy in its appropriate historical context reveals that a universal human trait and not the superstitious Middle Ages led to Joan's fate:

> Thousands of women, each of them a thousand times less dangerous and terrifying to our Governments than Joan was to the Government of her day, have within the last ten years been slaughtered, starved to death, burnt out of house and home, and what not that Persecution and Terror could do to them, in the course of Crusades far more tyrannically pretentious than the medieval Crusades which proposed nothing more hyperbolical than the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracens. (36)

Historical knowledge becomes a double gesture for Shaw – history is important because it reveals both past and present. The liminality and indefinability of Joan as historical

figure can be overcome, and simultaneous to such a contextualization, the present can be understood more clearly.

This twin temporal conceptualization is actualized through the dramatic text. Drama as a conduit for the contextualization of history that transforms understanding of the present is nothing new in dramatic plots: placing history in its appropriate context forces Oedipus to acknowledge his role in the plague that ravages Thebes; it constructs Mrs. Alving's understanding of history's biological legacy in Ibsen's *Ghosts*; and the parallel inability to separate history from the present defines the action in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

Shaw's *Saint Joan* differentiates itself from these other examples. The prologue defines the play as more than the representation of historical contextualization and its redefinition of the present. Dramatic form fulfills the role that its content represents:

> All I claim is that by this inevitable sacrifice of verisimilitude I have secured in the only possible way sufficient veracity to justify me in claiming that as far as I can gather from available documentation, and from such powers of divination as I possess, the things I represent these three [Cauchon, Lemaitre, and Warwick] exponents of the drama as saying are the things they actually would have said if they had known what they were really doing. And beyond this neither drama nor history can go in my hands. (44)

Drama moves beyond history by combining it and divination, thereby uncovering root causes and motivations unknown even to the actual participants. The dramatic text refigures an indeterminate Joan within a firmly understood historical context. In so

doing, Shaw's prologue suggests that his play succeeds where previous aesthetic representations of Joan and canonization have failed. By creating a dramatic text that reconnects to history, Shaw has forced the indeterminate historical figure into a dramatic form.

In the process of demonstrating how drama can contextualize Joan's indeterminacy, Shaw explicitly connects religious faith to the disparate indeterminacy manifest in quantum mechanics:

> Not for worlds would I question the precise accuracy of these calculations or the existence of electrons (whatever they may be). The fate of Joan is a warning to me against such heresy. But why the men who believe in electrons should regard themselves as less credulous then the men who believed in angels is not apparent to me. If they refuse to believe, with the Rouen assessors of 1431, that Joan was a witch, it is not because the explanation is too marvellous, but because it is not marvellous enough. (41)

Like religion, science has become a matter of faith. People consistently believe in things that are not seen, and for no better reason than that scientists claim it is true. Is it any more of a leap of faith to believe in God than to believe an electron exists? Faith has transformed over the years, not lessened. People may scoff at Joan's accusers, but it would be something very different if the very precepts of Science were challenged like Joan challenged Catholicism.

Where canonization tries to reconcile the difference between Joan and the Catholic faith, drama places Joan in her proper context by revealing the stress points that

canonization tries to gloss over. In the play Cauchon reflects on the nature of Joan's crimes:

> To her the French-speaking people are what the Holy Scriptures describe as a nation. Call this side of her heresy Nationalism if you will: I can find you no better name for it. I can only tell you that it is essentially anti-Catholic and anti-Christian; for the Catholic Church knows only one realm, and that is the realm of Christ's kingdom (99).

Joan's secularism challenges the mission of the Catholic Church, and her nationalism challenges the Feudal social structure. She must either be converted or her challenge must be marginalized. Far from being unfair, when Joan's accusers fail in the former, they must resort to the latter. Canonization tries to consume uncertainty within a structure of belief, but the drama suggests that placing events in appropriate context illuminates the uncertainty that faith must resist at all cost.

Appropriate historical context envisages drama as a deconstructive force. By insisting on the potential of drama to contextualize Joan as determinate figure, and in so doing understand her capacity to dismember the Catholic Church, Shaw curiously characterizes himself with the new breed of faith – science. The theatre - like faith itself - is transitioning from the failing faith of religion to the new faith of science. While there are still those who attend the theatre like they attend church, to a large degree a religious theatre becomes a bankrupt activity: "For in London the critics are reinforced by a considerable body of persons who go to theatre as many others go to church, to display their best clothes and compare them with other peoples" (46). In the midst of his

scathing critique of theatre critics, Shaw offers hope for a theatre audience more closely associated with the faith of science:

> But I can take no more notice of it than Einstein of the people who are incapable of mathematics. I write in the classical manner for those who pay for admission to a theatre because they like the classical comedy and tragedy for its own sake (46)

Shaw imaginatively constructs himself as the theatre's Einstein. Critiques of *Saint Joan* based on its length, or the epilogue's lack of verisimilitude are a result of misunderstanding the language of Shaw's theatre. Where previously atomic theory was equated to religion in that both are a result of faith, by becoming Einstein Shaw takes faith out of the equation. An audience either understands the mathematics that is Shaw's incontrovertible theatrical truth, or an audience does not matter because they cannot understand the math.

Shaw's metaphor transforms science to a retrograde activity. The scientific theatre is a return to the tried and true form of classical theatre. More than the deforming of Einstein's science, Shaw's version of relativity equates Einstein with theatrical return and envisions scientific innovation as historical understanding. In the same way understanding Joan allows a new understanding of the present, understanding theatrical performance as atomic theory brings the ideals of the theatrical past to the present. As belief systems, science and religion both metaphorize the interconnection between historical contextualization and present revelation that is integral to the Shavian Theatre.

Shaw critiques religion for the impossibility of blind belief. Once the church becomes more about being seen than religious observation, the ideal of theatre as religion

is bankrupt and theatre as science emerges. Shaw may assert that the existence of electrons must be accepted with a religious-like faith because they cannot be seen, but the faith that is necessary for science is supplemented by the math. In this sense science one-ups religion. Religion is strictly a matter of belief or doubt. In science – if you can understand the math – and in theatre – if you can understand the intrinsic virtue of classical theatrical structure – there is a guide to help foster belief in the unseen. Quantum theory offers theatre the seductive promise of a piercing exactitude exhibited by "the modern physicists who have settled to the billionth of a millimeter every movement and position in the dance of the electrons" (41).

Heisenberg's 1927 theorization of uncertainty shatters this faith in the exactitude of science. Where Joan's trial shows dramatic form overcoming indeterminacy by placing a liminal figure in her appropriate historical context, scientific uncertainty offers no such analogy. Heisenberg suggests that the more accurately the position of an atomic particle is known the less accurately its velocity can be known. Such an assertion eliminates Shaw's absolute perception of science in which the scientist has determined "every movement and position in the dance of the electron." In the world of uncertainty, science fails to be an effective metaphor for dramatic representation. Or, at least, science is an inefficient means of analogizing Shaw's structural theatre of exactitude. A precise theatre based on science becomes a bankrupt proposition. Metaphorically, science becomes inferior to religion. Religion may not have a foundation to support its faith in determinacy, but at least religion does not transform into a faith based on the guiding principle of indeterminacy. A theatre based on science becomes a theatre displaced from the clarity of context.

II Canonizing the Electron

More than seventy years after Heisenberg conceptualized uncertainty, Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* premiered. In taking Heisenberg and uncertainty as its subject matter, *Copenhagen* struggled to overcome indeterminacy in a fashion remarkably similar to *Saint Joan*. Like Shaw's Joan, Frayn's Heisenberg is a liminal figure indeterminate in the face of history. Echoing the scientific discoveries that made him famous, Heisenberg remains resistant to a causal narrative despite the desire to contextualize him within the larger historical structures of World War II and quantum mechanics.[73] If Heisenberg himself can be contextualized, Frayn's play can validate the mathematical theatre which the uncertainty principle destabilizes.

Why did Werner Heisenberg go to Copenhagen to visit Niels Bohr in 1941? This trip is the historical "fact" that drives the action of the play. Rather than failing to provide any answer to this question, the play provides too many answers. Bohr understands the visit as Heisenberg's effort to ply his former mentor for information on the progress of the Allied nuclear program, Bohr's wife Margrethe thinks Heisenberg came to show off his position as a leading Nazi scientist, whereas Heisenberg suggests that the trip was about Nazi and Allied scientists both discouraging their governments from pursuing a nuclear program.

Ostensibly, the play is a sort of dramatic experiment. The uncertainty - the core unknowability - of Heisenberg's 1941 visit is meant to echo the theoretical precepts of Hesienberg's uncertainty principle. In his postscript to the play, Frayn suggests an

analogy not only between Heisenberg's visit and the uncertainty principle, but between the principle and all motives:

> What people say about their own motives and intentions, even when they are not caught in the traps that entangled Heisenberg, is always subject to question - as subject to question as what anybody else says about them. Thoughts and intentions, even one's own - perhaps one's own most of all - remains shifting and elusive. (99)

Frayn's success in transfiguring Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to human motivations, and an understanding of such a transfiguration as a dramatic experiment is explicit in the enthusiastic critical response to the play. In "'Disturbing the Spirits of the Past': The Uncertainty Principle in Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*," Donna Soto-Morettini suggests that Frayn:

> structures his play like a controlled-observation experiment: conditions surrounding the eve of Heisenberg's visit are carefully set up and played out a number of times, then behaviors and reactions are carefully recorded. Each time, data is analysed, questioned, and the characters become more detached, and more observant of themselves. But their scientific method is not adequate to the task of answering the fundamental question: why did Heisenberg come? What was it he had to say? (71)

Thoughts and intentions remaining "shifting and elusive," just like characters becoming more detached and observant of themselves is certainly not new to dramatic practice. Again to return to the above examples of contextualizing history in order to understand the present: *Oedipus* must become more detached and observant of himself to understand

his role in the plague; both Reverend Manners and Mrs. Alving must become more observant of themselves to understand their roles in community hypocrisy; and detachment and observation of the self is the very structure of *The Glass Menagerie*. Further, in *A Doll's House*, Nora must become more observant of herself in order to understand her need to develop as a person; all the characters go through such a process in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*; self-observation is the essence of the obsessive labeling and listening to the past self that might be a present self in Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*; and such detachment is the foundation of Brecht's alienation effect.

Despite the scientific pedigree of his characters there is nothing terribly experimental in *Copenhagen's* detachment, observation, analysis, and recording of events. Repeatedly going over the past in an effort to try to understand what the past means seems to go back as far as drama itself. This historical contextualizing compulsion has become an obsessive concern with the emergence of the well-made play and the transition from the well-made play to the modern play in the work of Ibsen. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism,* Shaw suggests that "Now an interesting play cannot in the nature of things mean anything but a play in which problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience are raised and suggestively discussed" (137). The experimental method of *Copenhagen* – like Shaw's evocation of quantum mechanics as a harkening back to classical theatrical practice – is the theatrical method of Ibsen and Shaw in which problems are obsessively discussed and approached from numerous different angles. To paraphrase Strindberg's introduction to *Miss Julie*, where Strindberg suggests that "the new wine has burst the old bottles," in Frayn's play the old bottles are still quite serviceable.

Questioning why Heisenberg went to Copenhagen presupposes a classical mode of understanding remarkably similar to Shaw's pre-uncertainty view of science. Asking such a question, and celebrating the inability to derive an answer as a puzzle implies a unitary sense of motive. The play creates an illusory historical shell game, presenting Heisenberg's, Bohr's, and Margrethe's understanding of Heisenberg's motives as alternatives. The play creates indeterminacy by understanding possible motives as mutually exclusive, ignoring the possibility of multiple motives. Heisenberg may have simultaneously wanted to impress Bohr, been curious about the progress of the Allied nuclear program, and been nervous about its potential implications. But even this rejection of multiplicity is beside the point. Frayn's play compulsively fills historical indeterminacy with answers, looking for the answer that will satisfy the demands of the unanswerable question. Put in slightly different terms, there is a true motive - a secret answer - to the uncertainty intrinsic to questioning that keeps escaping the characters grasp.

This certainty that uncertainty is dictated by a secret determinate answer that keeps escaping revelation differentiates *Copenhagen* from more explicit dramatic indeterminacy. *Copenhagen* never reaches the indeterminacy of *Ashes to Ashes*. While Devlin shares Bohr, Margrethe, and Heisenberg's desire to know the exact details of the past, *Copenhagen* transforms Devlin's impotent desire for contextualization into an explicit truth that just cannot be revealed. Even the motives of a character like Hedda Gabler – despite the desire of the critics – are not contained in an explicit but unrevealed explanation. So, Frayn's dramatization of uncertainty and his equation of uncertainty with motive does not seem to bring new perceptions to dramatic practice. Frayn's play

does the inverse, contextualizing Heisenberg's uncertainty as something very determinate but secret. Understanding uncertainty in such a fashion seems to react against uncertainty. By colonizing uncertainty as an unknowable secret, uncertainty is used against dramatic indeterminacy. The idea of indeterminacy as something that has no answer - be it a scientific principle or a dramatic structure – is rejected.

The inherent dramatic nature of uncertainty - and of science itself - is emphasized in Frayn's postscript as he evokes Heisenberg to make his case:

> The actual words spoken by my characters are of course entirely their own. If this needs any justification then I can only appeal to Heisenberg himself. In his memoirs dialogue plays an important part, he says, because he hopes 'to demonstrate that science is rooted in conversations.' But, as he explains, conversations even real conversations, cannot be reconstructed literally several decades later. So he freely reinvents them, and appeals in his turn to Thucydides. (97)

Shaw justified writing drama in the classical style by anachronistically metaphorizing himself as Einstein. Outlining the historical link between Heisenberg and Thucydides, Frayn follows in Shaw's footsteps. Rather than the endgame, Heisenberg's text is a bridge filling in the history play's gaps. In the same way the inclusion of Shaw and Frayn's paratexts imply that the dramatic text cannot approach history without the aid of a textual appendage, Frayn's paratext exhibits a similar shortcoming. The fictitious element of dramatic dialogue is a gap that the paratext cannot suture. This is a marked contrast to Shaw's paratextual justification of the gap between what historical figures said and the lines his characters speak as the role of the history play and historical analysis.

To overcome the failure of the paratext, Frayn establishes Heisenberg's biography as a paratext of the second degree. In Heisenberg's biography Frayn finds a perfect justification for the historical liberties inherent in the history play and the way to transform dramatic dialogue from fiction to a more Shaw-like historical analysis. Heisenberg creates dialogue in his own biography and substantiates such an act by evoking a paratext. A mathematical inverse of Shaw's valorization of classical writing by turning to modern science, Heisenberg rationalizes dramatizing his scientific discoveries by evoking the classical historian Thucydides. The gap between historical "truth" and dramatic history play never completely closes. In a nesting doll of contextualization, the distance between history and fiction in dramatic dialogue is ultimately dismissed as insignificant because such a process receives a classical historian's stamp of approval.

"Rooted in conversations," science is an inherently dramatic act. As a non-recorded dramatic performance, the dramatic record that is the origin of uncertainty is lost. In essence, the origins of uncertainty are indeterminate. In just one of the many ironies of Modern Drama's need to contextualize, Heisenberg attempts to suture the indeterminate gap in the historical origin of uncertainty by becoming a dramatist. Heisenberg's memoirs engage dramatic form to represent what history has left unrepresented. In a repetition of Aristotle's assertion in *The Poetics* that probability and necessity define poetry whereas history is what has happened, Heisenberg uses dramatic form to present the necessity underlying determinate past events (16). Seemingly, the dramatic structure of scientific process is more important than the exact give and take

within that process. Authentic and created dialogue can merge so long as the dramatic form survives.

Drama becomes both a mark of the content that has been lost in the recording of history, and an authentic return to the form of scientific inquiry. Placing his play in the tradition of Heisenberg and Thucydides, Frayn characterizes drama and history as working in concert. Evoking Heisenberg as dramatist emphasizes there is nothing untoward in using drama to suture the historical gap. Drama as determinate gesture is demonstrated by the author of the uncertainty principle. In the second manifest irony, Frayn justifies the historical validity of a dramatic text in the postscript of a play based on the uncertainty principle.

The postscript attempts to banish and minimize indeterminacy as much as possible. Frayn compulsively justifies his play based on uncertainty by demonstrating the bond between dramatic text and historical event. In the first words to his postscript - which in the form of epigraph are also the first words to this chapter - Frayn banishes as much historical indeterminacy from this play as possible. Imaginatively transforming from author to reader, Frayn establishes the function of readerly desire in reading a work of fiction based on historical truth. A reader wants the history separated from the fiction. If there are any historical gaps, the reader deserves to know.

Apparently, the questions that an audience needs to know after reading *Copenhagen* include: Did Heisenberg really not "understand the crucial difference between a reactor and a bomb?" (80) Did Heisenberg really not do the diffusion equation establishing how much Plutonium he would need to create a chain reaction? (81) And, of course, could Heisenberg really have been intentionally delaying the German atomic

weapons program? Dealing with the key debates among Heisenberg researchers, as well as the historical "facts," Frayn eliminates as much indeterminacy within his play as he can by establishing clear mimetic links between the arguments made by his characters and the verifiable historical evidence.[74]

Perhaps Frayn is right, and his audience really does want historical context authorizing the dramatic text's authenticity. After all, does an audience ever want indeterminacy? Again in the postscript, Frayn alludes to the manner Heisenberg's scientific audience may not have been thrilled with the implications of uncertainty and in so doing, creates another link between himself and Shaw: "Einstein never accepted it, though he could never find a way around it" (101). For Frayn, Einstein validates a desire to escape uncertainty, while Shaw's rhetorical ownership of Einstein establishes the scientific cachet which equates classical theatrical practice as cutting edge. Wanting to escape uncertainty does not have to be bad science. In the same way Einstein wants, but can never find a way around uncertainty, Frayn imaginatively projects himself as the reader of his play and takes it as a certainty that the reading public wants history separated from fiction. Like Einstein this imaginary public wants to banish uncertainty, whether it is scientific or historical. Shaw and Frayn put an experimental gloss on an essentially conservative conception of the interaction between audience and theatrical performance. Historical context and the desire to escape uncertainty is both what the audience wants, and such contextualization possesses the Einsteinian stamp of approval.

Despite the work of the postscript to reduce indeterminacy by historical certitude, the postscript -like Einstein - can "never find a way around" history as indeterminacy as

it relates to the core uncertainty of the play, why did Heisenberg go to Copenhagen in 1941?:

> He [Heisenberg] almost certainly went to dinner at the Bohrs' house, and the two men almost certainly went for a walk to escape from any possible microphones, though there is some dispute about even these simple matters. The question of what they actually said to each other has been even more disputed, and where there's ambiguity in the play about what happened, it's because there is in the recollection of the participants. (95)

The postscript never reaches historical certainty. However, much like Thucydides' endorsing the blurring between historical event and historical enactment as a legitimate historical project, the postscript relies on the repeated "almost certainly." Some likelihoods must be taken as absolute occurrences in order to write a history play about uncertainty. Heisenberg and Bohr must be understand as performing certain actions, and only then does uncertainty emerge as the uncontainable residue. Uncertainty is the fluctuating variable within the rigid determinate structure, and not the controlling principle.

The suturing function in the postscript substantively differentiates reading the play from seeing it performed. Again in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw suggests that one of Ibsen's primary theatrical innovations was replacing a drama of action with a drama of discussion:

> The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's *Doll's House*; and now the serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real center of his play's interest. (135)

A discussion play is a drama "in which problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience are raised and suggestively discussed." The entirety of the performed *Copenhagen* resembles an unsuccessful unraveling – to use Shaw's vernacular – more than a discussion play. By exploring the possible reasons for Heisenberg's trip to Copenhagen the two-act play interrogates a gap in historical knowledge that is of interest to World War II historians and physicists. Heisenberg and Bohr's historical uncertainty fails to reach the requirement set by Shaw in which the discussion covers "problems of conduct and character of personal importance to the audience." It is less than clear how the uncertainty behind Heisenberg's visit matters to the viewing / reading public.

The postscript and its suturing establishes the importance of the first two acts to the audience. The postscript creates mimetic links between the narrative of the play and larger meaning-making structures, and thereby transforms the unraveling into a discussion. Paratext elevates the uncertainty at the heart of Heisenberg's visit from the particular to the universal in suggesting that uncertainty is at the heart of all human motives. The play matters to its audience to the degree it contextualizes. This contextualizing function of the postscript as well as its size and location suggest that it be read as the third act of a discussion play. The individualized conflicts of the first two acts are illuminated in ways that matter to an audience.

Performing *Copenhagen* leaves the discussion unfilled and the Shavian thesis unresolved. Heisenberg as character simultaneously celebrates uncertainty and acknowledges the inability to overcome it in the play's conclusion:

> Our children and our children's children. Preserved, just possibly, by that one short moment in Copenhagen. By some event that will never quite be located or defined. By that final core of uncertainty at the heart of all things. (94)

Where a performance concludes with the possibility that the "uncertainty at the heart of all things" may be the saving grace that kept nuclear weapons from the Germans, in its published version the postscript as third act attempts to complete the discussion through historical contextualization. The gaps in a performance can be filled by writing. What performance threatens to disrupt textual historical discussion smoothes over.

This third act recontextualizes the mimetic valence of the play proper. While the written version of the play in general, and the postscript in particular, facilitate the contextualization of the play within larger registers of dramatic and historical representation, this is a contextualization that has no end and perpetually falls short. In the postscript, Frayn notes that "[s]o much new material has come to hand, in one way or another, that I have extensively overhauled and extended the Postscript to coincide with the production of the play in New York" (126). New material gives Frayn an opportunity to add more almost certainties to the list he has compiled. Text becomes the balm for dramatic indeterminacy. Adding more information to the postscript will enable text to complete the discussion comprehensibly and overcome performative uncertainty. However, no matter how long the postscript gets, no matter how many sources it cites, text cannot transform the uncertainty of Heisenberg's visit into certitude. The best text can do is be satisfied with "almost certainly," and ignore the loss that can never be filled by asserting that the form of historical models is more important than the specifics such

models may contain. Frayn can only look for the next place for textual expansion that may finally complete the transformation from "almost certainly" to certitude.

A compulsive belief that textual representation can overcome the very dramatic indeterminacy emblematized in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle proliferates beyond *Copenhagen*. Frayn and David Burke – the actor who played Bohr in the original run of *Copenhagen* – co-wrote *The Copenhagen Papers: An Intrigue* (2000). Set during the initial run of *Copenhagen* , the short novel plays with the conventions of non-fiction, and encourages its readers to categorize it as another *Copenhagen* paratext. The book is structured as alternating chapters by Burke and Frayn in which Burke tricks Frayn into believing that German instructions for setting up a table tennis table may reveal Heisenberg's secrets. The book perpetuates the desire to textually foster historical certitude that is so explicit in *Copenhagen's* postscript, as the narrativized Frayn is easily made Burke's dupe. *The Copenhagen Papers* reveals that Frayn's character mistakenly places his faith in textual representation. Text will not suture the gap, solve the secret, and reveal an "authentic" lost history.

Over the course of the narrative Heisenberg continually serves as a sign of textual representation and certainty. If Frayn is unable to glean the secrets contained in the text Burke supplies him with then he must be mistranslating and misinterpreting the text, or, alternately, the text must be in code. The text contains answers. Ironically, Frayn eventually learns he is being duped as Matthew Marsh - the actor who plays Heisenberg - explains the truth to him. Marsh as Heisenberg provides certainty thereby creating a lens for Frayn to interpret Burke's forged texts. Rather than the text providing determinacy, the text – like any other mimetic structure – must be contextualized in a determinate

fashion. As the one who enlightens Frayn, Heisenberg undergoes a substantive transformation from *Copenhagen* to *The Copenhagen Papers*. In the play, Heisenberg emblematized indeterminacy which the play and the prologue strove to contextualize. In the book, Heisenberg / Marsh becomes the voice of causality explaining how texts signify.

Performance illuminates appropriate textual signification. The actor who plays Heisenberg can explain how texts mean because uncertainty is simply a role to be assumed and discarded. More than refiguring what Heisenberg signifies, Marsh's explanation to Frayn suggests that performance can overcome indeterminacy. The performer contextualizes the text and shows the author how the text means. The man who plays Heisenberg proffers escape from the convoluted muddle of textual representation. The determinacy of Marsh as actor can overcome the indeterminacy of Heisenberg as character. Marsh's determinate project signifies backward to *Copenhagen* and provides another example of paratext attempting to contextualize indeterminacy:

> Matthew Marsh, it occurred to me, had been put in rather the same position as his character. Like Heisenberg, he had found himself torn between keeping a secret and revealing it – between the demands of loyalty and those of common humanity. Like Heisenberg (if we are to believe his own account of his actions), he had preferred the latter. Like Heisenberg again, he understandably didn't wish to advertise his choice. (80)

Marsh is not simply an actor playing a role. He experiences the same conflict and resolves it by making the same decision. However, the actor who plays the role and

resolves a similar conflict in a similar way provides answers where previously there was uncertainty.

As character, Frayn is looking for text to contextualize indeterminacy, but there is no indeterminacy to be found. Frayn's view of reality becomes destabilized because he believes in causal relationships. He believes Burke's mysterious pages connect to larger structures. The pages must contain more than is initially apparent. These pages cannot simply be a bad (and sometimes incomprehensible) set of instructions for constructing a table tennis set:

> Could there be some other message buried in all that humorousness? Could this table-tennis table just possibly be something more than a table-tennis table? Further down the page I could see a thumbnail sketch: [. . .]
>
> Whatever this represented, it didn't seem to be a table-tennis table or any part of one. (14)[75]

The instructions might contain a code that if cracked would reveal unknown information about the German scientists held prisoner by the British at Farm Hill. Frayn's understanding of the infinite potential of mimesis is shattered as Heisenberg / Marsh informs him that textual representation can be transparent. Sometimes a bad translation of how to set up a ping pong table is simply a bad translation for how to set up a ping pong table. Burke's desire to play a practical joke is the only excess representational residue the pages contain.

In the same fashion that *Copenhagen's* postscript becomes a makeshift third act for the printed play, Frayn encourages the readers of *The Copenhagen Papers* to read it as if it too, were a play:

> So here it is, laid out rather like the dialogue in a play. MF speaks first; DB speaks second; and we shall both have a lot more to say to each otherbefore we are through. It's a bit like a play in other ways as well: the story falls neatly into two acts, each neatly rounded off by a celebratory dinner, and there will be plenty of dramatic conflict between the two of us before we reach the resolution and reconciliation over the final dinner at the end of Act Two. (5)

Frayn underestimates the play-like qualities of the text when he claims that it is "rather like the dialogue in a play." The text is structured as a play aside from the inclusion of a prologue and an epilogue. Both *Saint Joan* and *Copenhagen* illustrate the contextualizing value of appending prefatory and concluding appendages to a dramatic text. My earlier characterization of *The Copenhagen Papers* as alternating chapters by Frayn and Burke was inaccurate, an attempt to ignore the text's dramatic structure and impose novelistic conventions upon it. Breaks in the text are marked by a shift in speaker. There is no reason to apprehend each attribution of a new speaker as a new chapter other than a desire to ignore the dramatic structure of the text by conceptualizing play as novel.

In Frayn's assertion that the text is "a bit like a play" the text plays with genre distinctions. Despite being broken into acts, and almost completely made up of dialogue, the text is not a play – it is something else that merely gestures toward a play. Frayn's understanding of the text as something that is influenced by dramatic form while remaining fundamentally apart leads to his vision of a textual structure that is Aristotelian and symmetrical. Dramatic conflict between characters finds completion in a scene of resolution and reconciliation. Neatness is emphasized as there will be two acts each

completed by a dinner. Text as play is a play structured by logic and causality. As book approaches play (or possibly as play almost escapes conceptualization as play) a vision of classical dramatic structure – and dramatic causality - develops. Dramatic causality emerges as text ceases to be dramatic.

Causality is explicitly performed in the text's content. Frayn becomes most uncertain after he learns the truth, after Marsh demonstrates an appropriate context that the reader has known from the beginning. Knowing about Burke's joke forces Frayn to realize that "the ground had shaken – and went on shaking" (81). However, this shaking does not result from uncertainty of events. The ground of reality shakes because Frayn – despite the evidence – cannot believe he has bridged the gap between fiction and "truth."[76] A reader may be given direct causal links, but despite such a structure Frayn as character cannot help but question the veracity of determinate bonds. Frayn redefines uncertainty as his inability to believe in the guiding principles of causality and authenticity regardless of what he sees before him.

Frayn needs Marsh to see the uncertainty amid what appears to be a determinate network. Frayn tries to fulfill the role of Marsh for the reading audience. No matter how rigid and how textual the reimagining of dramatic texts becomes, the ghost of Heisenberg and uncertainty influences the text and will not be tamed. Early in the second act Frayn exults in the book's inability to mean in the same way as the documents he is tricked by:

> At this point, possibly, even you – yes, you reading this, who are far too shrewd to be taken in by stunts like the one I fell for, who have never been hoaxed in all your life – perhaps even you begin to feel a faint shadow of unease. Up to now you have assumed that I, at any rate, was telling the

truth, and that this was a factual account. You have felt as superior to my ridiculous naïveté as I did to Mrs. Rhys-Evans's. What you're thinking now is that I have been at some pains to remind you of the kind of writing I usually do, which is fiction. [. . .] Is *this* all a fiction as well?

And this "David Burke" who has apparently been making such a fool of me, and who is now allegedly writing the account of it with me – is even *he* an artfully suggested fiction, my own private version of the real David Burke, just as my Niels Bohr is of the real Niels Bohr?

[. . .] You believed that a grown man who writes plays about quantum mechanics was taken in by such childishness! That is the most ludicrous implausibility so far! And yet you managed to believe it! The joke was on *you* all the time!

No, of course not. I was telling the truth before. It's all fact. Up to the last paragraph. And now it's fact again. It is! I assure you! Honestly! Believe me! (82-3)

The narrativized Frayn like the Frayn who wrote the *Copenhagen* postscript imaginatively constructs an audience that interprets Burke's joke on Frayn and its aftermath as a biographical narrative detailing backstage hijinks. Whereas the *Copenhagen* postscript begins with the assumption that the reading audience wants to know truth from fiction, the joke played on Frayn as well as the possibility of the joke finally being on the audience relies on the audience not being able to determine the difference between truth and fiction. Frayn's imaginary audiences are filtering mechanisms placing the texts in the service of determinacy. Displacing determinacy

from the texts to their reception, determinacy becomes a sort of litmus test. Does the audience get what they want from the text, or is the joke ultimately on the audience?

The evocation of both imaginary audiences allows the delineation of a text that pleases an audience as a text that establishes firm mimetic links. In contrast, in a text that leaves an audience open to humiliation uncertainty becomes an historical and mimetic disjunction that an audience is unable to reconcile. Such a process defines uncertainty as a failure of mimetic understanding and historical relationships. *The Copenhagen Papers* evokes uncertainty because the audience cannot establish firm connotative links between text and signified. The reading audience has no answer to whether the dialogue attributed to David Burke is written by David Burke. In the absence of Heisenberg's uncertainty revealing itself to be a mask for Matthew Marsh's contextualization, texts provide no answers. The imaginary audience's desire for mimetic certitude must go unanswered.

Both Shaw's introduction to *Saint Joan* and the content, structure, and postscript of Frayn's *Copenhagen*, and *The Copenhagen Papers* envision the dramatic text as mathematical equation. This retrograde conception of mathematics – this determinate mathematics – creates a bond between dramatic structure, mathematical equation, and historical causality. Contemporaneous to the initial performance of *Copenhagen*, and the publishing of *The Copenhagen Papers*, David Auburn's *Proof* (2000) presents drama as certitude. The play forges clear mimetic links between mathematical certainty and historical causality that perpetually eludes Frayn's imaginary audiences.

The play opens after the death of renowned mathematician Robert. Due to a mental breakdown, Robert has spent the last several years of his life writing gibberish in notebooks and being cared for by his daughter Catherine. The first act culminates with a

crisis of mimetic uncertainty. Catherine presents one of her father's notebooks to Robert's protégée Hal containing a new mathematical proof. Hal assumes that Robert must have regained his faculties and created the mathematical proof. However, Catherine claims to have written it. In so doing, the narrative creates the very rift that distresses Frayn's imaginary audience. Mathematical certitude separates from historical certitude. Mathematics promises order and understanding, but fosters indeterminacy in the wake of its logical structure and illumination of causality. Who wrote the proof emerges as another version of the question: "Why did Heisenberg go to Copenhagen?"

Similar to the way each character in *Copenhagen* has a theory for why Heisenberg came, toward the end of *Proof* Hal believes he has proved Catherine's authorship by interpreting the proof's mimetic signs. While the handwriting looks like Robert's, "[p]arents and children sometimes have similar handwriting , especially if they've spent a lot of time together" (80). For Hal, far more revealing than the handwriting is the math. More than mathematical causality, the math offers proof of mimetic causality. The proof uses newer math, math developed over the last decade. Hal dismisses the argument that if Robert was well enough to write the proof he may have been well enough to learn the new math. The style of the math – the math signature – is more revealing than the handwriting. Hal argues for absence as further evidence of a mimetic signature. Since Robert always dated his writings and the proof is not dated, Robert did not write the proof.

Despite Hal's mathematical detective work, Catherine suggests that mimetic links cannot be forged from absence and mathematical style. She suggests that – mimetically speaking – the proof does not prove anything:

Hal: Come on, Catherine. I'm trying to correct things.

Catherine: You *can't*. Do you hear me?

You think you've figured something out? You run over here so pleased with yourself because you've changed your mind. Now you're certain. You're so . . . *sloppy*. You don't know anything.

The book, the math, the dates, the writing, all that stuff you decided with your buddies, it's just evidence. It doesn't finish the job. It doesn't prove anything.

Hal: Okay, what would?

Catherine: *Nothing.*

You should have trusted me. (80-1)

The question of who wrote the proof is too large a signifier to be contextualized by the discussion in the play and the evidence procured by the mathematical detective.

While Catherine suggests the proof's mimetic signature can only lead to uncertainty, the play takes a very different route. By the time Hal attributes ownership of the proof to Catherine, the audience already knows that this is the correct interpretation. The Second Act of *Proof* transforms the mimetic indeterminacy of who wrote the proof into mimetic certitude by historical enactment. Mimetic understanding transfigures from "just evidence" that "doesn't prove anything" to objective knowledge. This transfiguration occurs as a result of the convergence of temporalities. Rather than conceptualizing the past as an uncertain event open to interpretation, in Auburn's play the past is performed. By performing the past on the stage, the audience sees Robert's effort to start working again. Robert thinks he is writing a revolutionary proof, but when

Catherine reads it aloud it is clear that Robert is producing nonsense. He couldn't have written the proof. The performed analepsis provides all the proof needed.

Performing the past –bonding history and vision – creates firm mimetic links between past and present and banishes uncertainty. Following in the footsteps of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* and Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, *Proof* alluringly presents an objective and intelligible past that would satisfy the mimetic desires of any imaginary audience. However, such a vision of history as visual analepsis deforms the historical. Presenting the past as visually determinate requires a confluence of temporalities. Past becomes something it previously was not. Past becomes present. Dramatic time provides determinacy as it contains the possibility for temporal blurring.

III Performing the Emperor

I created the role of the Emperor. That role belongs to me. That Irishman, he just wrote the play. – Charles S. Gilpin[77]

Because the play has been explicitly and tacitly deemed a significant object of U.S. cultural history and a narrative meriting preservation, analysis of The Emperor Jones must be ethical, focusing on the reasons for the 'distance between what is and what ought to be.' – Ann Folino-White[78]

In *The Copenhagen Papers,* phenomenology differentiates Burke's tricking of Frayn, from Frayn's possible duping of an imaginary audience. For Frayn, the body of the actor who plays Heisenberg substitutes a determinate textual interpretation for a signifier that cannot reconnect to a signified.[79] The reading audience has no such recourse to grounding the narrative signifier with the phenomenological performer. The novel as dramatic text perpetuates uncertainty by being empty of all material content.

Frayn's text embraces the actor's body as a site of contextualization. However, like any other paratext, the phenomenological performance can either be a resource for contextualizing the dramatic text or a means to foster its indeterminacy. Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* is an ideal site to explore the conflicting possibilities of performance as paratext because the dramatic text as well as the play's production history performs the struggle between historical indeterminacy and historical contextualization as a conflict of performance.

Sometimes characterized as the play that made Eugene O'Neill famous, *The Emperor Jones* was a hit by any standard, running for two-hundred-four performances in its initial Broadway run (Schaeffer 36).[80] Even more significant than the play's impact on O'Neill's career, the play provided a first in American theatrical representations of race. In playing Jones in the original production, Charles S. Gilpin became "the first Negro ever cast by a white American company for a major role" (Schaeffer 32).[81] While Aoife Monks may be overstating matters in asserting that by the casting of Gilpin, "O'Neill's place in the history books as an important figure in the history of African-American emancipation seemed a sure thing," Gilpin's performance did appear to be a watershed moment of the Harlem Renaissance. Montgomery Gregory, the director of the Howard Players 1919-1924, asserted that "[i]n any further development of Negro drama, *The Emperor Jones*, written by O'Neill, interpreted by Gilpin, and produced by the Provincetown Players, will tower a beacon-light of inspiration" (157).

Underlying such characterizations of *The Emperor Jones* as an early century "progressive masterpiece" is a faith in the political power of representation (Monks 541). As Peggy Phelan has noted in *Unmarked*, there is a common belief "that greater visibility

of the hitherto under-represented leads to enhanced political power" (2). *The Emperor Jones* is progressive by Gilpin's act of playing the role. However, increased visibility is not always inscribed as an empowering gesture. In playing the role of Brutus Jones, Gilpin's increased racial visibility was used to give a theatrical representation of a black man as oppressive colonizer. As the play progresses, Jones is revealed as a ruthless plunderer of native resources, a murderer, and perhaps most unforgivably, a coward. In addition, in a play that is almost exclusively made up of a Jones monologue, a modern reader seemingly cannot help but read Jones's dialogue as anything more than an offensive racial caricature. According to Caswell Crews, in the very playing of the offensive traits that make up the character of Jones, Gilpin betrays his race: "We imagine that if Mr. Gilpin is an intelligent and loyal Negro his heart must ache and rebel within him as he is forced to belie his race" (qtd in Krasner 486).

The ambiguity over how to read representations of race in the play can manifest in the same interpreter. W. E. B. DuBois both lauded O'Neill as one of "our great benefactors – forerunners of artists who will yet arise in Ethopia of the Outstretched Arm" (qtd in Manuel 4), and, five years later, suggested "that blacks are 'still handicapped and put forth with much hesitation as in the case of 'The Nigger,' 'Lulu Belle,' and 'The Emperor Jones'" (qtd in Krasner 487). Similarly, Langston Hughes lauded Gilpin as representational figure in "When the Negro was in Vogue," but wonders in "Shows," "who wanted *The Emperor Jones* running through the jungles? Not Harlem!" (223, 259).[82]

The ambiguity associated with mimetic representations of race - this tension between whether an audience member privileges the reading of Gilpin's racially marked

body or the mimetic actions undertaken by that body in performing the role of Brutus Jones - underscores the effort at destabilization that is at the core of *The Emperor Jones's* structure and action. Gilpin's body is placed in the service of the play. *The Emperor Jones* succeeds in decontextualizing mimetic understanding, as Gilpin as Jones perpetually defers what race means in the play. Gilpin / Jones succeeds in escaping from origins where Jones, as a character, fails.

The theatrical representation of race in *The Emperor Jones* remains an object of performative exploration to this day. In the same manner that Gilpin's body became an overdetermined racial signifier by calling attention to the performing body that does the signifying, the Wooster Group's revival of the play brought racial representation back to the forefront. Starring as the African-American protagonist, Kate Valk played Brutus Jones in blackface for the Wooster Group production.

The Emperor Jones was not the first time the Wooster Group used blackface in their staging of a canonical text. The group had used the technique in their 1981 staging of *Route 1 & 9* – a liberal restaging of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. However, where *Route 1 & 9* was controversial and eventually led to a loss of funding, the use of blackface in *The Emperor Jones* was met with nearly universal acclaim.[83] For example, in his *New York Times* review of the 2006 Wooster Group revival of their earlier production of the play Charles Isherwood lauds Kate Valk's "riveting, haunting, [and] altogether astonishing" performance as Brutus Jones. Isherwood evokes the theatrical ghosts of Sarah Bernhardt, Laurette Taylor, and Maria Callas to celebrates the theatrical fashioning of Valk's performance as he contrasts the "thick, oily black makeup covering her entire face" to "[t]he petite, Caucasian, obviously female Ms. Valk" underneath the

blackface. The language used in such an enthusiastic review underscores the tension between the theatrical avant-garde and the canonical. Isherwood uses the terms of postmodernism to describe how Valk in blackface presents "a simulacrum of a stereotype," but the results of this postmodern theatrical triumph is to institutionalize (and perhaps sanitize) Valk alongside Bernhardt.[84]

Conflating the postmodern with traditional theatricality is explicit in the Wooster Group's decision to stage *The Emperor Jones*. Aoife Monks notes that due to "their radical fragmentation of canonical texts, the Wooster Group have established an international reputation for their deconstructive approach to theatrical performance" (561). Despite such a reputation, the Wooster Group's production of *The Emperor Jones* was not so much a deconstruction of the play as a re-deconstruction. In staging O'Neill's play the Wooster Group not only presents a revival of a text written in 1920, but also performs a revival of their own 1993 staging of the play. By re-playing the role of Brutus Jones thirteen years later, Valk transforms a deconstructive performance into a canonical performance. Where the 1993 production by the Wooster Group may have subverted expectations for O'Neill's play, the 2006 revival institutionalizes the earlier production as a performance event worthy of reproduction. Both Isherwood and the Wooster Group engage in a complex process of colonizing the postmodern potential of a deconstructive staging by inscribing it as a normative stage practice – Valk in blackface is categorized as analogous to Bernhardt playing Marguerite Gautier - and Valk, in replaying the role, evokes a remembrance of the novelty of the first time she played the role.

Gilpin and The Wooster Group do not merely perform the play, their performances enact the play's structure and conflict. Like *Saint Joan* and *Copenhagen*,

The Emperor Jones is a history play. Initially performed less than six months after Joan's canonization, Brutus Jones joins Joan and Heisenberg as a liminal and indeterminate figure. Similar to the questions of "Why did Heisenberg go to Copenhagen?", and "What was Joan's relationship to God?" O'Neill's play asks "Who is Brutus Jones?"

As a character, Brutus Jones believes in individual identity as a thing apart from personal and collective history. To a large degree, the unfolding of the action is an explicit demonstration that Jones is gravely mistaken. Jones's non-normative view of history will be repressed by a linear conception of temporality that privileges the importance of the historical upon the present. However, by privileging the importance of history to Jones's identity, *The Emperor Jones* performs its own counter historical discourse. In *Romancing the Postmodern*, Diane Elam suggests that "[p]ostmodernism is not a perspectival view on history; it is the rethinking of history as an ironic coexistence of temporalities" (3). "[A]n ironic coexistence of temporalities" is precisely the means by which the play demonstrates history as something meaningful for Jones. The historical becomes relevant as Jones is forced to confront phantoms from his past. A counter-historical discourse of coexisting temporalities must be used to rescue the relevance of the historical from a protagonist who believes in his ability to self-fashion an ahistorical identity in the present.

In this sense, the play presents performativity and history as opposing sides of a dialectic. A performative Jones is a Jones who can live entirely in an indeterminate present. The play enacts the power of the historical – and with it the relevance of dramatic certitude – by enacting history's destruction of the performative. However, in creating the historical as an anti-indeterminate and anti-performative gesture of certitude,

the play follows the same pattern that would be used in *Proof* over eighty years later. O'Neill's play literally presents history. History is a visual analepsis enacted on stage. This creates a determinate past that only becomes determinate by failing to be past. Past only becomes certitude as the past becomes more firmly integrated into the present. History connotes certitude by enacting and by its visual presence becoming something else. Isherwood's comparing Valk's performance to Bernhardt's performing of the classics, and the Wooster Group's making the avant-garde canonical by repetition, explicitly echo the action of the play by transforming a present performance into a determinate historical context and offering an alternative to the ambiguity inaugurated by Gilpin's performing body.

Gilpin puts the onus for dramatic creation in the moment of performance when he asserts: "I created the role of the Emperor. That role belongs to me. That Irishman, he just wrote the play." O'Neill has not created the role of Emperor in his writing of the play, but has simply given Gilpin what he needs to create the character. The manner in which Gilpin performed the role verifies his belief in ownership. In what Krasner describes as Gilpin's postmodern approach to performing the play, the actor incorporated "unpredictability on stage" in part by refusing to perform the play as written:

> He balked at what appeared to him to be an excessive and repetitive use of the term *nigger,* preferring instead to use the less offensive terms *black-baby, Negro,* or *colored man.* (484)

By changing the language of the play, Gilpin presents performance as subversion. For in the staging of a play the largest historical resonance derives from the dramatic text. This

is especially true in playing a role that has never been staged before. Gilpin comes to a character that is only a character due to the language on the page.

Gilpin's postmodern performance rejects the staging of the play as a historical appropriation. The changing of language demonstrates a fluid vision of theatrical representation. Theatrical representation is not a static attempt to actualize textual representation. As a consequence, performative representation places primacy in the present. The historical text can be used or discarded at Gilpin's discretion as he represents Brutus Jones. Brutus Jones is nothing more or less than the sum total of Gilpin's actions and utterances within a specific performance.

This creation of Jones in a performative present and not in a historical text offers a productive link between Gilpin's performance of Jones and Jones's performance of self within the narrative of the play. For in his implication that theatrical representation occurs in the performative present and that the historical text is relatively superfluous, Gilpin replicates Brutus Jones belief in the ability to self-fashion identity.

The Jones who opens the play is nothing if not a personification of the American Dream. Solely by his own hard work, and the tireless oppressing of those who have resources waiting to be exploited, Jones has progressed "[f]rom stowaway to Emperor in two years!" (118). Despite Jones's pride in his fulfilling the role of self-made man, this is possibly the only unfettered glimpse Jones gives of his relationship to the past over the course of the opening scene. The play opens in Jones's nearly deserted audience chamber. Nearly deserted, as the indigenous population have gathered to plan Jones's overthrow. Smithers, a white trader who shares a history of oppressing the natives with Jones, reminds Jones of their past and how their roles used to be reversed, as formerly Jones was

Smithers' subordinate. In response, Jones tells Smithers: "What I was den is one thing. What I is now's another" (117). Jones's division between then and now begins to illuminate his conception of identity. The now has nothing to do with then. Who I am has nothing to do with who I was.

As the scene progresses, Smithers continues to interrogate Jones about his history. The relationship between the history Jones professes and some independent historical truth is convoluted, to say the least. Smithers confronts Jones with his belief that Jones escaped from jail in the United States, but according to Jones "Dat's all talk" (121). Smithers brings up "'o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States," but Jones wants to know "How come dey're lies?" (121). What Smithers believes to be historical truth transfoms to lies, and what Smithers thinks are lies become truth in Jones's revisions. As Smithers attempts to place Jones in a historical context of past actions, historical truth keeps slipping through his fingers. In the midst of Smithers continued attempts to question Jones about his history, Jones offers a clarification:

> Jones (*in the same tone – slightly boastful*): Maybe I goes to jail dere for getting' in an argument wid razors ovah a crap game. Maybe I gits twenty years when dat colored man die. Maybe I gits in 'nother argument wid de prison guard was overseer ovah us when we're wurkin' de road. Maybe he hits me wid a whip and I splits his head wid a shovel and runs away and files de chain off my leg and gits away safe. Maybe I does all dat an' maybe I don't. It's a story I tells you so's you knows I'se de kind of man dat if you evah repeats one word of it , I ends you' stealin' on dis yearth mighty damn quick! (122)

This narrative clarifies Jones's understanding of history more than Jones's history. By the time Jones devolves into threats there is very little for him to worry about. He need not fear Smithers revealing his past because Smithers - like the audience - cannot be sure of Jones's past. While Jones's historical narrative presents a logical progression and a progression that is not surprising to Smithers - from murder to prison to murder to escape – the obsessive use of "maybe" resists any such determinate historical foreclosure. Jones's maybes are a marked contrast to Frayn's use of "almost certainly" in an effort to get at historical truth in the *Copenhagen* postscript. Like Gilpin's understanding of the playtext as something fluid that can be molded as necessary for each present performance of Jones, Jones evokes the historical as indeterminate – Jones controls history, not the inverse. By using "maybe" as indeterminate marker, Jones can invoke the historical as a means of threatening Smithers. Jones is a dangerous man. Since he might have killed, he might kill again. At the same time, Jones's refuses to own the historical narrative as an absolute definition of individual identity ("Maybe I does all dat an' maybe I don't"). Like Gilpin, Jones exploits the exterior historical event while refusing to be bound by it.

In contrast to an historical definition of identity, Jones offers a conception of self based on performativity. Like an Austinian speech act, to say is to do: "Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big – long as he makes folks believe it?" (120). Jones believes he can construct the self solely by his ability to utter the self in a persuasive enough fashion to foster belief. More than being smarter, stronger or – as Smithers would have it – luckier, Jones becomes Emperor by the speech act of persuasively proclaiming himself as such. Or, more precisely, in his performance of an ahistorical

identity, Jones evokes the conception of a performative identity Judith Butler would later apply to gender[85]:

> Consider gender, for instance, as *a corporeal style*, an 'act,' as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "*performative*" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning. (177)

I am less concerned with the racial implications of Jones's performative distancing himself from history so he can create an empowered Jones of the present than in highlighting the nature of such a constructive practice.[86] Jones's use of self-fashioning to perform a present by saying and doing while destabilizing the historical by presenting it as indeterminate is the process Jones uses to become Emperor.

This is a vision of identity the rest of the play demonstrates as insufficient. The narrative of the play, from the second scene forward, illuminates the failure of Jones's performativity. By showing the continued relevance of the historical, a self-fashioning based on the present becomes a less and less tenable means of constructing identity. Jones will be destroyed because of his inability to integrate his performative identity in which he is what he says with a more traditional conception in which he is what he has done. As Jones himself notes, "Dat Emperor job is sho' hard to shake" (138).

The performative Jones will not go down without a fight. For while the plot to depose Jones may have developed earlier than he thought; he has a contingency plan for escape. Jones planned an escape route for just such an occasion, and he had the foresight to bury food along the path. All Jones has to do is make it through the forest by a path he knows well and he can escape the island and live the good life off the spoils of the natives. Despite the native revolution, Jones's world view has not changed. He may

have to run for his life, but he is still the Emperor. That is to say, Jones still believes in the power of speaking and acting to keep historical truth at bay, which determines a self based in the present.

However, upon entering the forest it becomes impossible to perform identity. History becomes an absolute and demonstrates that regardless of what Jones would like to be, history determines who he is. In his explication of his past to Smithers, Jones was able to use history to threaten Smithers while keeping the past at bay by the interjection of the indeterminate "maybe." Once Jones is in the forest, he as well as the audience see Jones's past acted out in front of them. History becomes personal, as memories from Jones's past torment him and hinder his escape. The first of these visualized memories is Jeff, Jones's first murder victim. "[M]aybe" is exorcised from the equation as Jones, upon seeing Jeff shooting craps, tells the apparition: "Nigger, I kills you dead once. Has I got to kill you ag'in?" (136). Similarly, Jones confesses to killing the guard in his escape from the chain gang: "I kills you, you white debil, if it's de last thing I evah does! Ghost or debil, I kill you again!" (140).

Jones wants to reject history in favor of the performative. Despite this desire, upon being confronted with his history Jones tries to escape it by replicating it. Upon seeing the "maybe" given independent veracity - in the visions of Jeff shooting craps and the guard of the chain gang - Jones tries to dispel this independent historical truth by continuing down the road of history. Jones tries to return to the performative by completing the historical narrative - by becoming involved in the historical events which unfold before his eyes. He will escape the power of these historical events by killing the specters from his past, just like he did the first time.

Escaping the eruption of past into present becomes an impossible task. Trying to escape history, Jones gets further enmeshed in a historical trajectory. This compulsion to escape the memory by enacting the memory and thereby illuminating the interconnection between Jones and history is what causes Jones to flee from the site of each memory in an effort to maintain his performative self.

All Jones needs is to be able to find the other side of the forest and he will be able to continue the performative present that is the persona of the Emperor. To make it through the forest is to demonstrate that what Jones does and what he says is who he is, not what he has done. However, Jones gets lost in the forest. Trapped in the forest and distracted by his own memories, Jones must confront the impossibility of forging an identity divorced from what he has done. Even more horrific from Jones's perspective, the memories of the forest illuminate a vision of identity that transcends individual history to encompass collective history. Jones is forced to confront the African American collective experience of being sold as a slave, of coming to the United States on a slave ship, and an even earlier primitivist history involving a witch doctor and a crocodile god.

As Philip J. Hanson has suggested in "*The Emperor Jones* : Naturalistic Tragedy in Hemispheric Perspective", "the play argues his [Jones's] crimes cannot be separated from his racially based experience - and his race's history - in America" (135). Jones's crimes also cannot be separated from his identity. This is what Jones can never accept. Having experienced the freedom and the empowerment of being able to live entirely in the present by his evocation of the past as indeterminate and his performing whatever role he wants to currently perform, Jones cannot accept the helplessness of a self that cannot be refashioned to suit the needs of the present, let alone a self that may be fashioned by

large cultural forces before its birth. O'Neill's play metaphorizes as much in the final scene. A gunshot is heard and the natives carry Jones's body onto stage at the almost identical spot Jones entered the forest. The death of Jones seems to suggest that if only Jones could have accepted the forces of history as part of his self he may have been able to traverse the forest with a better understanding of himself. Without such an understanding Jones can run through the forest all night and literally not go anywhere.

As Hanson's emphasis on historical determinacy would suggest, it is possible for a performer to minimize and marginalize the importance of the first scene's performative Jones. Not everyone playing Jones brings the same performative self-fashioning to the role as Gilpin. Langston Hughes describes a Harlem performance of the play with Jules Bledsoe playing Jones. Hughes's summary of Bledsoe offers a vision of a performer much more willing to accept the forces of history than either Gilpin or Jones:

> He [Jules Bledsoe] appeared in Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* at the old Lincoln Theater on 135th Street, a theater that had, for all its noble name, been devoted largely to ribald, but highly entertaining Vaudeville of the "Butterbeans and Susie" type. The audience didn't know what to make of *The Emperor Jones* on a stage where 'Shake That Thing' was formerly the rage. And when the Emperor started running naked through the forest, hearing the Little Frightened Fears, naturally, they howled with laughter.
>
> "Them ain't no ghosts, fool! The spectators cried from the orchestra. "Why don't you come out o' that jungle - back to Harlem where you belong?"

> In the manner of Stokowski hearing a cough at the Academy of Music, Jules Bledsoe stopped dead in his tracks, advanced to the footlights, and proceeded to lecture his audience on manners in the theater. But the audience wanted none of *The Emperor Jones*. And their manners had been all right at all the other shows at the Lincoln, where they took part in the performances at will. So when Brutus continued his flight, the audience again howled with laughter. And that was the end of *The Emperor Jones* on 135th Street. (258-9)

Hughes's description is often evoked in criticism of the play as a demonstration of dissatisfaction with the play within the African-American community. While Hughes certainly demonstrates this, his description also alludes to the inadequacy of traditional fourth-wall theatrical representation. Like Jones's unwillingness to be a passive receptacle for history and like Gilpin's unwillingness to simply pronounce O'Neill's words, the Harlem audience is unwilling to watch a performance simply unfold. Similar to the vaudeville shows the audience was used to seeing, the audience expected *The Emperor Jones* to provide an opportunity for it to "take part in the performances at will." So, it is not only that the play, due to some inherent quality, displeases the Harlem audience, but the Harlem audience is subjected to an inferior production. Rather than performing the ideals of Jones, Bledsoe is content to utter O'Neill's words. Correspondingly, he expects his audience to submit to the conventions of the theatrical event. By the subversion of Bledsoe's traditional theatrical event, the audience shares a Jones-like world view.

Hughes's description of the Harlem audience's rejection of Bledsoe's well meaning but traditional performance in favor of taking part in the performance at will offers a more far-reaching evocation of Jones. Unlike his performativity outside the forest, inside the forest and confronted by his memories, Jones faces an antithetical version of performance. Upon seeing Jeff shooting craps, Jones "*stares fascinatingly*" (135). Jones has made a transition from performativity to watching a traditional performance. Reminiscent of Brecht's critique of the theatre, and what Bledsoe expects from the Harlem audience, the horror of seeing a past from which Jones cannot escape commingles with the horror of being an audience member who must submit to the performance occurring before him. Jones has no control. By shooting Jeff and forcing the memory to dissipate Jones reasserts control. Action replaces passive spectatorship.

Jones's next enacted memory raises the stakes. Rather than simply being forced to be an audience member, the prison guard of the chain gang forces Jones to become an active performer in the scene: "*The prison guard points sternly at Jones with his whip, motions him to take his place among the other shovelers. Jones gets to his feet in a hypnotized stupor*" (139). As fascination with the previous memory becomes a "hypnotized stupor," the guard strikes Jones with his whip. Jones has been absorbed within the memory, as he feels the pain of the blow. However, in his effort to replicate history in order to escape the memory, Jones realizes that unlike the guard's whip, his shovel is not real. He has to assert control outside of memory to banish the historical performance. Jones must reassert linear temporality by reentering the present and banishing the past into the past. Unable to hit the guard with his shovel, Jones shoots him

with his gun and thereby reasserts control and reaffirms the distance between performer and audience member, and between past and present.

As each scene progresses, Jones finds it more difficult to escape the converging temporalities, and finds his bullet supply diminishing. In the next scene, the performances become cultural. Part of a slave auction, Jones becomes paralyzed with horror. On a slave ship, Jones's "*voice, as if under some uncanny compulsion*" joins in a collective wail (146). In the final scene before the natives murder Jones, "*he moves with a strange deliberation like a sleep-walker or one in a trance*" and later, he "*has become completely hypnotized*" (147, 148). O'Neill's text dramatizes the victory of history over performativity as it grapples with the nature of performance. Jones is forced to crumble before an irresistible power which the Harlem audience rejected. The text overcomes the performativity of the present by reasserting a historical theatricality in which past becomes present. The text narrativizes the failure of an individual to control a performance. The historical antecedents are too strong, and the individual - whether Jones or Gilpin - must be absorbed within the historical theatrical matrix of meaning.

The parallel between Jones's performance of self and Gilpin's performance of Jones do not stop with the belief of the present overcoming the historical. Like Jones, Gilpin's performance of the present relies on indeterminacy. In his discussion of Gilpin's revision of the playtext in performance, Krasner confesses:

> Admittedly it is difficult, if not impossible, to know exactly where, how often, and in which of the over 1,500 performances Gilpin changed the text. I am not necessarily concerned with the date of such changes

> (something we will probably never know anyway). In all likelihood Gilpin altered the text differently on different occasions. (489)

Krasner's relegating Gilpin's transformation of the dramatic text to the realm of the unknowable could be characterized as the inherent "maybe" of theatrical performance. While Folino-White asserts that the play is "a significant object of U.S. cultural history and a narrative meriting preservation," the play can only be such an object by equating the dramatic text with the play. Understanding the play as Gilpin's performances of the play involves a recognition of the gaps in the archive of U.S. cultural history. Ephemeral in its very nature, Gilpin's revision of O'Neill - like Jones's efforts to destabilize the historical event - challenge the primacy of the preexisting historical event while simultaneously resisting the specifics necessary to institutionalize performance as artifact.

Gilpin's theatrical "maybe" transcends the intrinsic impossibility of archiving a performance to include the relationship between O'Neill and Gilpin. Schaeffer notes that "O'Neill threatened to have him fired but finally vented his feelings by telling him, 'If you change the lines again, I'll beat the hell out of you!'" (35). However, according to Gilpin, as quoted in *The Cincinatti Star Times*: "My understanding of the character has developed as I have worked with it and new meanings are constantly unfolding. Mr. O'Neill has been very kind in this respect, giving me the liberty of changing the lines to suit the characterization" (qtd in Krasner 484). To complicate matters even further, while in one letter O'Neill characterized Gilpin "all ham and yard wide" (qtd in Krasner 484), in 1946 O'Neill said: "As I look back now on all my work, I can honestly say there was only one actor who carried out every notion of a character I had in mind. That actor was Charles Gilpin" (Schaeffer 37). Or, to put the liminality and the ambiguity of Gilpin's

acting body in terms analogous to those used by Jones: maybe *The Emperor Jones* is a U.S. cultural artifact or maybe Gilpin's changing of the dialogue makes the play too fluid to be conceptualized in such a determinate fashion; maybe Gilpin's changing of the dialogue creates a division between text and performance event and resulted in antagonism between O'Neill and the actor, or maybe it was a collaborative process between the two men and they understood the nature of theatrical performance as such, and maybe the potential for subversion inherent in indeterminacy demonstrated by Jones as a character is replicated in the theatrical representation of Jones and the relationship between the actor who played Jones and the playwright who wrote the text.

IV Converging Temporalities and the Scientific Theatre

In his introduction to *Saint Joan,* Shaw promises a mathematical theatre and a classical theatre that will place Joan in a recognizeable and understandable historical context. The indeterminate will be placed in the realm of intelligibility and certitude. Simultaneously, the introduction serves as a confession that Joan can never be anything but indeterminate and drama cannot bring absolute understanding to such a liminal figure. For while Shaw claims in the introduction that the play "contains all that need be known about her," if this were true why include the introduction? The very presence of the massive introduction questions such assertions. The introduction strives to add context and solve the indeterminacies that the drama leaves uncertain.

One of these primary indeterminacies is Joan's voices. The introduction asserts:

> Joan's voices and visions have played many tricks with her reputation. They have been held to prove that she was mad, that she was a liar and imposter, that she was a sorceress (she was burned for this), and finally that she was a saint. They do not prove any of these things; but the variety of the conclusions reached shew how little our matter-of-fact historians know about other people's minds, or even about their own. (13)

Shaw's characterization of how historians are ignorant about their own mind as well as other peoples, is perhaps the most explicit echo between the introduction to *Saint Joan* and the postscript to *Copenhagen.* There is little difference between such a suggestion and Frayn's assertion that "[t][houghts and intentions, even one's own - perhaps one's own most of all - remains shifting and elusive (99). Shaw's introduction encapsulates the indeterminacy of history and the indeterminacy of thought in the inability to appropriately contextualize Joan's voices.

For Shaw, by recognizing a Frayn-like uncertainty of intention we are asking the wrong questions and focusing on the irrelevant. In a startling reversal for a play and introduction in which historical context and certitude is so important, Shaw dismisses cause and focuses on effect. All that matters is that the voices gave Joan good advice: "The test of sanity is not the normality of the method but the reasonableness of the discovery" (13). Further, "[t]he soundness of the order proves that she was unusually sane; but its form proves that her dramatic imagination played tricks with her senses" (14). Shaw marginalizes the indeterminacy of the voice by emphasizing the logic contained within the voice's content is the important thing and not the form the sound advice takes. Simultaneously he –like the other historians – cannot resist the urge to

contextualize the voices. The voices are merely imaginative. By such a double interpretive gesture, Shaw marginalizes and contains the indeterminacy intrinsic in intention. The voices are not an indicator of anything and should be disregarded, and even if we must focus on the voices they are certainly not an indicator of anything more than imagination and sound judgment.

Such an effort to contextualize and marginalize Joan's voices is necessary because in the play Joan's actions serve as an antithesis to Shaw's effort at contextualization. The introduction replicates the desires of the trial in the play. Joan's accusers will not have to burn Joan if they can get her to sign a recantation. The written word will silence the uncertainty of the voice. However, despite the belief that the written word can contextualize the voice, during her trial Joan suggests otherwise:

> Joan: You say this to me every time. I have said again and again that I will tell you all that concerns this trial. But I cannot tell you the whole truth: God does not allow the whole truth to be told. You do not understand it when I tell it. (126)

Despite the belief of Joan's accusers that the writing of a confession is the whole truth, or the desire of Shaw that a written introduction can contextualize Joan's liminality, the truth of Joan's voices exceed representation. Shaw's play betrays his introduction as the source of the interior voice matters. More than what the voices tell Joan to do, the interior voices contain an untranslatable essence. The triumph of the voice resonates at the trial's conclusion. Joan's accusers believe they have satisfactorily contextualized the voices within textual representations as Joan – after Ladvenu shows her how to spell her name – signs a recantation. However, reminiscent of *Hedda Gabler* Joan rips up her

confession upon learning that she will be imprisoned for the rest of her life. On the heels of the triumph of the voices over the text Joan's accusers burn her as a heretic.

Like the failure of textual representation to overcome Joan's voices, the destruction of her material body proves equally ineffective, as canonization tries to succeed where the text and the dematerialization of the body fails. Similarly, Shaw adds an epilogue to his play seemingly in a final effort to contextualize Joan in a manner the introduction and the play proper fails. In the introduction, Shaw explains his need for an epilogue:

> As to the epilogue, I could hardly be expected to stultify myself by implying that Joan's history in the world ended unhappily with her execution, instead of beginning there. It was necessary by hook or crook to shew the canonized Joan as well as the incinerated one; for many a woman has gotten herself burnt by carelessly whisking a muslin skirt into the drawing room fireplace, but getting canonized is a different matter, and a more important one. So I am afraid the epilogue must stand.

The epilogue which "must stand" is a mesh of conflicting temporalities. The epilogue takes place twenty-five years after Joan's burning on the night of the inquiry which reversals the ruling of the trial. King Charles has a series of visitors to his bedchamber, including Joan, a soldier from hell, and a clerical looking gentleman in 1920 dress who announces the canonization of Joan.

Similar in technique to the contextualization by performed analepsis of *The Emperor Jones* and *Proof*, *Saint Joan* performs the future of the play, a future analogous to the present of its viewing audience. Converging 1456 and 1920 in the same scene,

Shaw's epilogue resorts to the same contextualization as the Catholic Church. If textual representation does not offer any contextualization for the indeterminacy of the interior voices, canonization is all that is left. However, canonization only becomes a resource of the dramatic text through the potential of dramatic representation to converge various temporalities – to present the past and the future. Such a convergence of temporalities undercuts the ideals of the scientific theatre presented in Shaw's introduction. In the introduction Shaw presents his scientific theatre as a classical theatre. The converging temporalities within an epilogue that "must stand" is tantamount to an admission that the scientific theatre and the classical theatre are different entities. In the very efforts to contextualize the theatre, to make history and mimesis knowable in *Proof*, *The Emperor Jones*, and *Saint Joan*, to present a drama that contains the radical uncertainties of science, the convergence of temporalities emerges as a scientific theatre.[87]

Chapter Six

"Words Drop Like Stones or Dead Bodies"[88]: Performative Futures and Anti-Theatre

> *A real play for me is more likely to be about formal structure than a story – Eugene Ionesco*[89]
>
> *If a building constructed for the faithful has no need of the faithful to be a building just the same, if it does not need a congregation – neither does a play need an audience to be a play.*
>
> *And yet a play has been written for a public, for the public of its own time; it cannot be conceived without reference to the audience it is aimed at. – Eugene Ionesco*[90]

I We Have No Bananas Today, But What About Tomorrow?

October 12-21, 2006 saw a rare emphasis on theatrical event as event as Harold Pinter starred in Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. Critics worked themselves into a lather from the moment this pairing of British drama's two twentieth-century luminaries - with all due respect to G. B. Shaw - was announced. Writing on October 12, before he had seen the production, Paul Taylor asserted: "Harold Pinter in *Krapp's Last Tape* is the major mouth-watering event of the Beckett centenary celebrations." The play's run was reported to have sold out in sixteen minutes (Shenton), and the tickets were reputedly being offered for seven times their $45 cover price on eBay (Cowell). Michael Billiington wrote that "[i]t is easier to get a cup final ticket than one for Harold Pinter's performance in the Theatre Upstairs."

More so than Shaw's introduction to *Saint Joan,* or Frayn's postscript to *Copenhagen,* Pinter's performance of Beckett becomes the ultimate contextualization of dramatic performance. Alan Cowell's review of the production for *The New York Times* was titled "Life Meets Art: Pinter's Last Stand," and few critics could resist drawing

parallels between Pinter's health and Beckett's protagonist. In a very real sense, the play became *Pinter's Last Tape*. Holding out Pinter's ability to complete a performance as an accomplishment in itself, Billington wrote that "although the event has stimulated its own extra-theatrical curiosity, the fact is that Pinter not only gets through it well but also offers the harshest, least sentimental reading of Beckett's play I can recall." Billington went on to suggest that "it is impossible to dissociate Pinter's own recent encounters with mortality from that of the character." Gillian Hanna - an actress lucky enough to get a ticket - suggested that "It is beyond acting," and "[t]here is something about the coming together of this particular piece and this performance that took me somewhere else" (Cowell).

In Pinter's performance, beyond acting becomes a sort of non-acting, as Pinter's phenomenological body is said to overwhelm Beckett's text with a more authentic vision of realism. Ironically, it is in this convergence of Theatre of the Absurd icons that the audience is witness to the possibility of a theatre of transfiguration. Pinter as Krapp seems to suggest that the hope for a theatre of context, a theatre that creates links between the world of theatrical representation and the world outside the theatre does not have to be understood in terms of mimetic failure. Pinter's recent struggles with cancer, and his playing the role entirely from a wheelchair seduces the audience into believing that they are seeing an authentic Pinter. Mimetically speaking, Krapp is neither an everyman nor an indeterminate character. The reviewers cannot resist understanding Pinter's recitation of Beckett's lines to the audience, at least in part, as an unfettered view of the actor. Krapp is more than character. Krapp is Pinter. Pinter's Krapp commodifies contextualization itself. More than a Beckett play, and more than a Pinter performance,

the run is noteworthy for the links it forges between the two. Mimesis becomes dramatic subject as well as dramatic affect.

The site of performance intensifies this commodification of mimesis. Staging *Krapp's Last Tape* in the eighty seat Theatre Upstairs guaranteed there would be insatiable demand for the run. Pinter's health may have necessitated the small theatrical venue. However, in housing Pinter's *Krapp* the Theatre Upstairs – a theatrical space designed for experimental work and emerging artists – housed a double entrenchment of the canon. Writing for *The Guardian* in 1971, Nicholas De Jongh described the theatre as "a fine place for writers whose reputation is not as secure or even conceived" (qtd in Roberts 139). Lindsay Anderson, co-Artistic Director of the Royal Court 1969-72, characterized the Theatre Upstairs in more pejorative, but similar terms: It "was always to me fringe and I've never approved of an alternative society . . . a bit of a self-glorifying ghetto" (qtd in Roberts 137).

Pinter's performance transforms theatre as fringe into a theatrical elite. The audience for *Krapp's Last Tape* resembles a who's who of the London theatre scene: "the rest of the tiny audience were mostly well known faces, from Peter Hall and Kristin Scott Thomas to Samuel West, accompanied by playwright Laura Wade, as well as Mark Rylance and Bill Paterson (whose wife Hildegard Bechtler designed the production)" (Shenton). The celebrity audience evokes Shaw's critique in the introduction to *Saint Joan* of many theatre patrons as "a considerable body of persons who go to theatre as many others go to church, to display their best clothes and compare them with other peoples" (46). The theatre itself transforms from a theatre laboratory dedicated to performing the new into a retrograde theatre apart, as noteworthy for who does the seeing

- for the seeing as event - as for what is seen.

Pinter's performance departs from Beckett's written text. Pinter replaces Krapp's "*laborious walk*" (221), with a static performance in which "Pinter sits behind a desk in a motorised wheelchair" (Billington). "He doesn't sing. He doesn't try to fake the Irish accent the text invites" (Nightingale). Perhaps most significantly, Pinter eliminates Krapp's banana fixation, as the two bananas he eats over the course of the play are stricken from the performance. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that Pinter offers "the harshest, least sentimental reading of Beckett's play [Billiington] can recall." A banana-less *Krapp's Last Tape* is a harsher and more humorless play. The bananas help set the tone for the play, as Krapp plays with and devours the fruit before he speaks a word or plays a reel from his collection: Krapp unlocks a drawer, pulls a banana out, locks the drawer, strokes the banana, peels it, holds it in his mouth, eats it, and slips on the banana peel, before returning to the drawer and beginning the cycle again (222). Krapp's banana addiction almost starts the play with a foray into slapstick from a Bergsonian blueprint.

While it is certainly debatable how much or how little a fruitless Krapp transforms the play as a whole, the ability of the Pinter production to install these changes is surprising. During his life Samuel Beckett was adamant that his plays be produced as written. Beckett had been known to go so far as to institute legal action to shut down productions that were taking liberties with his text. In 1988, Beckett sued a Dutch theatre company for mounting a production of *Waiting for Godot* with an all-woman cast. Continuing the tradition after his death, the Beckett estate sued a French production in 1992, and an Italian production in 2006 for similar reasons. In 2003, the estate sued an

Australian production for using music.[91] These examples of Beckett and his estate's attempts to limit improper productions focus on extra-textual discordance. Rather than taking liberties with the text itself, the text is placed in a deforming context.

In contrast, Pinter controverts the primacy of the written text (much like Gilpin's changing of Jones's dialogue) by omitting written stage directions. Unlike the court battles that ensued from inappropriately contextualizing Beckett's text, Pinter's Krapp sans bananas proceeded without the slightest hint of public protest from Beckett's estate.[92] Pinter's Krapp subverts understanding of where the "authentic" Beckett lies. The Beckett estate can perform the role of impartial guardian of Beckett's artistic integrity against manifest productions that contextualize the text in such a fashion that an "inauthentic" Beckett play emerges. However, playwriting proves to be thicker than blood. Pinter as Beckett's theatrical heir and friend becomes a more reliable source for appropriate actualization of the theatrical text in performance than Beckett's nephew Edward. In Pinter's hands, performance can diverge from textual fidelity and still maintain its position as an authentic representation of Beckett's play.

The authority of Pinter is buttressed by the evocation of Beckett himself. Ian Rickson – the director of *Krapp's Last Tape*, and Artistic Director for the Royal Court at the time – playfully entrenches Pinter's authority as a legacy granted by Beckett: "Mr. Rickson asked rhetorically, 'Were we serving Sam by taking the bananas out?' He then offered a wry answer: 'Harold said he had a conversation with Sam, and Sam said it was O.K.'" (Cowell). Obviously, the two playwrights discussing the importance of the bananas in performance previous to Beckett's death in 1989 is meant to be taken less than seriously. More serious is Pinter's appropriation of the authorial voice. Speaking for

Beckett beyond the grave, Pinter becomes Krapp's caretaker, effectively silencing the Beckett estate and their interest is maintaining Beckett's textual purity. In Rickson's banana justification, Beckett's voice disrupts the continuity of his text in a way that would delight the victims of the estate's bid for historical fidelity.

Pinter's selective use of stage directions and the attribution of Beckett's consent to such a decision highlights the conflict over the Beckett aesthetic object, and how it functions. Neil Armfield, the director of the Australian production Edward Beckett threatened to shut down for adding music to *Waiting for Godot*, charges that the Estate is the one damaging the playwright's work: "If there is something to hope for at this watershed 50th anniversary of the play ... it is that Edward gives his uncle's work back to artists to work with it. Let it go. Because if he doesn't, he's consigning it to a slow death by a thousand hacks" (qtd. in Verghis). Much in the spirit of Pinter's Krapp, Armfield views the aesthetic object in the moment of performance. A living performance is a performance that interacts with the text, and murder via hacks is the inevitable fate awaiting the Beckettin aesthetic object that is actualized in production after production that merely enacts the words on the page.

Armfield's challenge to the Beckett Estate assumes that the dramatic text is incomplete, only a component of the collaboration intrinsic to performance.[93] However, what if the dramatic text is a complete aesthetic object in itself? In such a scenario, all performances are adaptation. No performance or lineage of performances can kill the aesthetic object, because as a dramatic text the aesthetic object exists independently of its performance. In such a light, the guiding principle of judging performance is whether the

performance is a "correct" adaptation or an "incorrect" one. In addition to doing everything the dramatic text dictates, the performance must not engage in actions not dictated by the text.

Like Beckett and his Estate, Eugene Ionesco tried to protect his plays from the contextualizing distortions of performance. Although Ionesco never sued to stop an improper production, he made it very clear that a good performance does neither more nor less than enact the dramatic text. After seeing an American version of *Rhinoceros* that particularly displeased him, Ionesco wrote:

> I am not writing literature. I am doing something quite different: I am writing drama. I mean that my text is not just dialogue, but also 'stage directions.' These should be respected as much as the text, they are essential, they are also sufficient. If I gave no indication that Berenger and Jean should come to blows on the stage and pull each other's noses, it is because I had no desire for them to do so. (208)[94]

Ionesco's assertion that stage directions are essential and sufficient is above all a desire to maintain contextual fidelity. As author, Ionesco must protect his plays from the deforming influence of directors and reviewers. Writing to the first director of *The Chairs* (1952), Ionesco claims that a director "should not want something from the play, he should efface himself, he should be the perfect receptacle. A conceited director who wishes to impose his own personality does not have a director's vocation" (187).[95] Critics must not measure a play against an outside system or ideology, but should judge in a Platonic sense "whether [the play] is true to its own nature" (93).[96] A good director or critic knows that a play is self-contained, and reveals its own context. Subjecting the

play to outside influences exposes it to the contagion of the non-dramatic, and thereby makes the play less of a play. Intuitively paradoxical, performance can disrupt the essential nature of the dramatic contained in the written text.

Critics often characterize Ionesco's plays as an explicit demonstration of anti-theatre. To some degree Ionesco encouraged this label by subtitling *The Bald Soprano* (1950) – his first play – "Anti-play." According to Ionesco, *The Bald Soprano* was an anti-play in that it was "in fact a criticism of the commonplace, a parody of a kind of theatre that was no longer 'theatre.'" (130).[97] The play offers no plot, nothing resembling character motivation, and language itself devolves to characters' shouting letters at each other. *The Bald Soprano* stops more than ends. The curtain falls with the main characters switching roles and beginning again.[98] Anti-theatre becomes theatre by parodying tired realist conventions that no longer contain the essence of the theatrical.

More than the structure of the play itself, both Ionesco and the Beckett estate – in theory and practice – outline a relationship of anti-theatre between dramatic text and performance event. The play exists on the printed page completely independent of the theatrical event. The dramatic text needs to be protected from deforming performances and the critical resonances such performances may elicit.[99] Anti-theatrically speaking, a theatrical performance can do no more than replicate the dramatic text's essence.

Ionesco makes this vision of anti-theatre – of dramatic text as complete in itself – clear by including audience members among his list of theatrical superfluities. In one of the epigraphs which begins this chapter, Ionesco asserts: "If a building constructed for the faithful has no need of the faithful to be a building just the same, if it does not need a congregation – neither does a play need an audience to be a play." Separating play from

performance event, Ionesco rejects the fundamental precepts of Richard Schechner, Peter Brook and Marvin Carleson, among others. Brook asserts in his well-known opening to *The Empty Space*: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for the act of theatre to be engaged" (9). The minimum requirement for something to be considered theatrical is an audience watching an action. In such a practical understanding of theatrical event, Ionesco's conception of the self-sufficient dramatic text is always anti-theatrical because the theatrical performance is unnecessary. [100]

Viewed from an Ionescoian lens of anti-theatre, Pinter's Krapp dramatizes the deforming potential of the theatrical event. It might be argued that Pinter's ignoring of stage directions is appropriate because –unlike Ionesco's understanding of his own stage directions – the banana related stage directions are not essential. However, less debatable is that the demand for tickets is driven much more by the context in which Beckett's play is situated than by the play itself. Pinter and the audience become co-conspirators in colonizing the play. Materiality overwhelms content as the play transforms from a means to explore theatrical form as event into a means to explore Pinter as event.

Despite the risk of performative contamination, Ionesco's theory of a play not needing an audience does not free anti-theatre from the idea of audience reception: "And yet a play has been written for a public, for the public of its own time; it cannot be conceived without reference to the audience it is aimed at." [101] Not quite paradoxical, Ionesco's understanding of an unnecessary audience that must be conceived suggests a radically different conception of dramatic temporality for anti-theatre.

The performance event's temporality is often considered (and has been considered by me over the course of this dissertation) as the always present. To a large degree what makes performance distinct is the understanding of performance as unrepeatable ephemeral event. Instead of understanding the theatrical performance as the present, anti-theatre understands the dramatic text as the present. In the previous chapter, I argued for Gilpin's understanding of *The Emperor Jones* as such an ephemeral present and O'Neill's text as a historical marker. However, taken from the temporal point in which O'Neill wrote his play, Gilpin's performance has yet to happen. Gilpin represents a future performance event in which audience and performer converge to banish the literary text into the past. Such a system allows for an understanding of a play that does not need an audience as the textual present contains the essence of the theatre. Still, this present – this theatrical essence or dramatic form - cannot exist without conceiving the possibility of a future performance. The future performance contains the simultaneous potential and necessity of a conceived audience. To write a play is to imagine a future adaptation in which the text is enacted and the play is witnessed by an imagined audience.

This understanding of dramatic text as anti-theatrical present event containing the complete essence of the theatrical emerges in the opening stage direction for *Krapp's Last Tape*. The play is set: "*A late evening in the future*" (221). In Ionesco's terms this is an essential stage direction. A marker of temporal fluidity, the Krapp who does the listening is more accurately characterized as a Krapp who will do the listening. From a reader's perspective, Krapp's recorded self may be a past, present, or future. Krapp may be waxing nostalgic, and mourning over events that have yet to occur or are currently occurring.

However, in the act of performing the play temporal fluidity is minimized and contextualized. Whereas Pinter's stage directions for *Ashes to Ashes* sets the play "now" thereby establishing cohesion between the dramatic text and the performance event, Beckett's stage directions create a temporal disruption. To perform the play is to deform. Without any spoken temporal marker within the play, the play's textual future becomes a performing present. The temporal ambiguity of Krapp's tapes are relegated to sounds emanating from and recorded in the past. This seems to be further emphasized in Pinter's production of the play. The mimetic links between Pinter and Krapp serve as a biographical marker giving the audience more cues than it needs to understand performance as present. Temporally indeterminate recorded testimony becomes historical testimony that explicitly shapes the content of the performative present. Anti-theatre as temporal indeterminacy is eliminated under the weight of a performed present. Movement from an imaginative audience that is conceived to an actual audience that views a performance reduces theatrical possibility. Future always becomes present in a performance of the play. The inevitable deforming process of performative contextualization simply becomes more overt through Pinter's omission of bananas and the production's commodification of Pinter as Krapp.

II "I would make you go down on your knees": Prophesy, Performative Possibility and the Oedipal Ever-Present

Krapp's Last Tape's temporal setting highlights a conflict of contextualization. The dramatic text is set in the future, but a theatrical performance transforms this future setting into the ever-present of performance. These divergent temporalities evoke an

Ionescoian understanding of anti-theatre in which the performative paratext disrupts the dramatic text's temporality. The play only remains set in the future by perpetually deferring its performative enactment. Much like the future Krapp who listens to tapes he has recorded in his past, theatrical performance must remain in the future. The dramatic text forges a sort of privileged temporal present. This present is textually marked as a present by the kernel of a future potential performance.

Similar to the material deformations and dismembered body parts that are Beckett's characters, the materialization of the performance event transforms and deforms *Krapp's Last Tape*. The dramatic text no longer enacts its stage directions by maintaining its distance from the future material performance. Temporally speaking, the melding of narrative signifier and phenomenological event creates a dramatic monstrosity analogous to *Play's* jarred inhabitants or *Endgame*'s failing bodies. Future as temporal signifier cannot find its signified, and is warped by the irresistible contextualizing presence of the performance event. In the wake of material performance – as performance shifts from potential to actualization – performance event becomes the present. From the perspective of the performance event - in a sort of temporal performative ripple effect - the dramatic text becomes the past. Theatrical performance marginalizes and sublimates "*[a] late evening in the future*" within the ever-present of performance.

By textually producing a temporal future, *Krapp's Last Tape* continues the conflict between indeterminacy and contextualization in plays like Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*. However, where Pinter's play and the critical reception to it portrayed a desire to

historicize and materialize to make the traumatic knowable, the temporal future within Beckett's play suggests that such a process is a facet of dramatic performance.

An indeterminate future made possible by the idea of performance perpetuates beyond the stage directions in Jean Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine* (1934). Cocteau's play dramatizes the subsuming of an indeterminate future within an ever-present performance event and an historical past. *The Infernal Machine* - Cocteau's liberal rewriting of Sophocles' *Oedipus* - proves to be an ideal site for such an exploration, as in addition to being Aristotle's ideal of dramatic form in *The Poetics*, *Oedipus* rejects an indeterminate future. Perhaps Aristotle's idealization of *Oedipus* is a facet of its representation of dramatic temporality and contextualization. Over the course of this dissertation, I have been periodically using *Oedipus* as determinate dramatic ideal that Modern Drama perpetually works to deconstruct or simply falls short of realizing. From the play's rejection of the dead baby emblem, to the belief that the present needs to, and can be understood if put in an appropriate historical context, *Oedipus* establishes causal links and banishes indeterminacy.

Oedipal determinism is grounded in a convergence of temporalities. The tragedy of *Oedipus* can be characterized as a recognition of indeterminacy's illusory nature. Despite all the efforts of Oedipus, Jocasta, and Laius, the future is rigid and unavoidable. To put the Sophoclean determinate future in slightly different terms, the future is recognized as determinate – the future becomes determinate – only at the point the future has become a fixed past. The opening of Sophocles' play introduces an Oedipus whose transgression transpired long ago. *Oedipus* narrativizes the ever-present of performance as the realization that the temporal collapsing of the indeterminate future into the

determinate past has occurred. The moment where future becomes present has already been missed. However, the present's missing of the event is merely a temporary phenomenon. Oedipal narrative is the recognition of what the present originally missed. As a present effect, the plague announces that the missed determinate occurrence finally occupies the temporal space that has long been denied it. *Oedipus* succeeds in creating a determinate future. Such recognition occurs only after the present absorbs the future as past. *Oedipus* is the narrative of an all-consuming present. Past and future as distinct temporal constructs become illusory.

Unlike *Oedipus*, *The Infernal Machine* opens with a clear distinction between past, present, and future. Cocteau's play both restages *Oedipus* and serves as a prelude to its Sophoclean precursor. The first three acts occupy the twenty-four hour period which culminates in the wedding night of Jocasta and Oedipus. The fourth act jumps ahead seventeen years and is a fairly faithful but abbreviated retelling of Sophocles' narrative. By dramatizing a Sophoclean analepsis, Cocteau's play enacts the Oedipal missing. The audience sees Oedipus miss the determinate future as it passes through the present to become past event. Cocteau's play enacts what *Oedipus* relegated to a past event which must be narrated. In so doing, *The Infernal Machine* questions the all-encompassing nature of Sophoclean determinism, what gaps manifest within such determinate dramatic structure, and what alternative to such a rigid causal structure is possible.

For Cocteau's retelling something characterized simply as the Voice serves as the Chorus and introduces each act. Both descriptive and imperative, when the Voice begins the play by proclaiming: "*He shall slay his father. He shall marry his mother.*" the play creates a determinate future – a prophesy that has yet to be fulfilled. The Voice explicitly

contextualizes the prophesy by narrating the events of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. However, rather than relate it in an Oedipal fashion – rather than narrate an ever-present that interconnects to past and future by consuming them – the Voice narrates chronologically: prophesy, Jocasta disposes of Oedipus, Merope and Polybus adopt Oedipus, Oedipus finds out about the prophesy, Oedipus leaves Corinth and kills Laius in a road dispute, Oedipus conquers the Sphinx and marries Jocasta, a plague breaks out, the truth is revealed, Jocasta commits suicide and Oedipus blinds himself. In the Voice's pronouncement, narrativized analepsis achieves a type of agency as it attains the same primacy as the enacted present. The unifying temporal presence of Sophocles' play is relegated to a single paragraph late in the Voice's Act One prologue, thereby transforming from an ever-present to a single time within a linear temporal continuum. As such, the setting of Sophocles' *Oedipus* becomes neither more nor less significant – neither more nor less present - than the narrativized analepsis of Oedipus' adoption and decision to leave Corinth.[102]

The Infernal Machine works against the Oedipal model of the ever-present by returning to Sophocles' narrative, destabilizing the temporal structure, and relegating *Oedipus* to the future but determinate fourth act. By postponing fate catching up with Oedipus, the play creates a dramatic model based on a temporal future. Of course, by including Sophocles' content in his play, Cocteau's future is not only a determinate future but a future that can only temporarily remain a future. The future will become the present. This is both what binds Cocteau's play, and what it, paradoxically, perpetually offers alternatives for. It simultaneously enacts the determinate ever-present structure of

Sophoclean drama while exploring the limits of such a structure by illuminating the infinite possibilities for indeterminacy in such a causal text.

The Voice includes very little information on Cocteau's first three acts during its determinate retelling of *Oedipus*. This narrative freedom becomes a space for reimagining origins. So long as Oedipus defeats the Sphinx, Cocteau can narrate the encounter however he sees fit, and, similarly, so long as Oedipus marries Jocasta, practically anything can occur during their wedding night. The temporal distance between the death of Laius and Act Four's restaging of *Oedipus* becomes the site of indeterminacy for the first three acts. Acts One, Two, and Three are sites of unknown spaces between rigid determinism. These opening acts suggest that even in *Oedipus* hinges of dramatic indeterminacy must be glossed over to demonstrate a determinate future's causal relationships. However, the indeterminacy between the rigid barometers of past and future are temporary. Eventually the future will be understood as past at the moment it converges with the present. The indeterminate ever-present of Cocteau's play must become the determinate ever-present of *Oedipus*. The space and time of in-between indeterminacy only offers a temporary nodal point to conceptualize an alternative to Oedipal causality. The temporal space between Lauis death and Oedipus and Jocasta understanding their determinate future has already become past is explicitly finite.[103]

Between the First and Second Act the Voice announces that the Second Act takes place simultaneously with the First: "Spectators let us imagine that we can wind back the last few minutes and relive them elsewhere" (33). The coextensive temporality of the first two acts resists closure within future determinacy – they resist the future becoming past. In so doing Acts I, II, and III perform the moment where the Sophoclean future

prophesy of marrying the mother becomes present, and emphasize what the characters missed in *Oedipus.* In the first act, the ghost of Laius tries to warn Jocasta, but she can neither see nor hear him. In Act III, during Jocasta and Oedipus' wedding night, Oedipus calls Jocasta mother, Jocasta makes references to Oedipus being her child, and Jocasta notices the scars on Oedipus's feet. After Oedipus tells Jocasta that the scars were the result of an attack by a wild boar, Jocasta confesses "they remind me of something I am always trying to forget" (79).

Both Oedipus and Jocasta seem to be almost trying to miss the import of each other's address. When Oedipus explains to Tiresias that "I am going to say that I have always dreamed of that kind of love . . . a love – almost maternal," he is unwilling or unable to see his own desire as evidence of determinate foreclosure (67). Conceptualizing Jocasta's maternal love as "almost maternal" enables Oedipus and Jocasta to miss the future as it becomes the present. Such an elaborate and comedic missing of the future becomes necessary to establish Oedipal determinism. In Cocteau's telling, to understand a determinate future too soon – to know the future as it becomes present – short-circuits causality. Missing the determinate future becoming present ensures that a determinate present and an ever-present will not be missed. *The Infernal Machine* dramatizes Oedipal determinism as more choice than inevitability. For Oedipus and Jocasta, determinism is reduced to a strategy for reading signs, and avoiding the sign's narrative import as future prophesy enters present knowability.

In Cocteau's second act, the Sphinx outlines a performance-based indeterminate future as an alternative to an Oedipal determinate future. The Voice emphasizes the divergent potential of Oedipus's confrontation with the Sphinx during its opening

monologue: "Then the encounter takes place. What is the nature of this encounter? Mystery. All that is known is: young Oedipus enters Thebes as a conqueror and marries the queen" (6). The Voice marks the Second Act as the site of indeterminacy by narrating the gap in its own understanding.

Temporal repetition establishes the Second Act's difference. The other acts follow a chronological structure, but Act Two co-occupies the temporal register of Act One. Like its confession that the encounter with the Sphinx is a mystery, the Voice notifies the audience of the temporal doubling. The Voice narrativizes Act Two's double disruption of a rigid chronological structure. Both on the grounds of indeterminacy and temporality Act Two demarcates itself from the other acts in Cocteau's retelling of *Oedipus*.

The Sphinx's indeterminate performance is another evocation of the "*late evening in the future*" glimmered in the dramatic text of *Krapp's Last Tape:*

> Sphinx. And now, I shall give you a demonstration. I shall show you what would happen if you were some ordinary good looking boy from Thebes and not Oedipus, who has the privilege of pleasing me.
>
> Oedipus. I know how far I can trust your privileges.
>
> Sphinx. Don't resist. Don't make it more difficult for me – I may hurt you.
>
> Oedipus. I *will* resist!
>
> *He shuts his eyes and turns his head.*
>
> Sphinx. In vain you close your eyes or turn your head I do not charm through my voice or sight. [. . .]

Oedipus, *weakly*. Let me go! Mercy!

Sphinx. And you would cry for mercy and you would not be the first. I have heard prouder men than you cry for their mothers; and seen more arrogant men in tears.

Oedipus. Merope . . . Mother!

Sphinx. Then I would order you to come a little nearer: I would untighten your limbs.

He crawls forward further.

So! I would question you. I would ask you, for example, which animal walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? And you would comb your mind till you could think of nothing but some tiny medal you won as a child. Or you would mumble a number or count the stars between these broken columns. And then I would reveal the answer to the riddle. The animal is man. He crawls on all fours as an infant; he walks on two legs when he is grown up; and when he is old, he leans on a stick for a third leg.

Oedipus. Of course! How simple!

Sphinx. You would shout: 'Of course – How simple!' . . . as everybody else does. Then . . . then, I would call my helper, Anubis. Anubis!

Anubis appears and stands on the right of the pedestal with his head turned to the side.

Oedipus. No! No! Please, Sphinx! Please don't. No!

Sphinx. I would make you go down to your knees. Down, down, further! That's right. You would bend your head . . . and Anubis would spring and open his wolf jaws . . .

Oedipus. A-a-ah!

Sphinx, *calmly*. I said "Would." I said, "would bend," "would spring," "would open." Don't be terrified. It was all a performance, Oedipus, a mere performance. You are free. (50-2)

Oedipus and the Sphinx's conflict – an indeterminate conflict that is enacted within a repeating temporal frame – is a conflict over how to interpret temporality. The Sphinx's "would" functions analogous to Brutus Jones's "maybe." Whereas Jones used "maybe" to create an indeterminate present, for the Sphinx, "would" creates a future that is indeterminate because it is conditional. Dramatizing without actualizing, "would" both shows Oedipus what the Sphinx would do to him were he foolish enough to challenge her, and allows him to keep his head. By classifying the potential future as a performance, the Sphinx gestures toward the idea of performance more than performance as ever-present act. Closer to anti-theatre than theatre, the Sphinx's performance is a future that maintains its temporal distance from the present.

Oedipus finds this idea of a perpetually delayed performative future unintelligible. He reads the Sphinx's future as present, and her "would" as "is." An Oedipal frame fails to make such fine distinctions. If the future is determinate, and if there is no avoiding prophesy, then the Sphinx's performance in which "Anubis would spring and open his wolf jaws" is all too similar to Anubis springing and opening his wolf jaws. While Anubis may not be currently springing and opening, it is only a matter of time before he

does so. There is no escape. The Sphinx's pronouncement that Oedipus is free is antithetical to the very understanding of *Oedipus's* temporal structure. Without an indeterminate future performance there is no such thing as free.

Oedipus's misunderstanding of indeterminate future performance is echoed in Anubis's dissatisfaction. Immediately following the performance, Anubis says: "Sphinx, he is not allowed to leave; he has not answered the riddle" (52). Oedipus had good cause to be concerned as Anubis forces the Sphinx to strip the future of its indeterminacy. The future must transform into the determinate present. The Sphinx shows herself vulnerable to the same determinate future via prophesy as Oedipus when she asks Oedipus the same riddle, and guided by the trial run of what would happen were he to challenge the Sphinx, Oedipus is victorious. The Sphinx is defeated as the indeterminate future becomes determinate, and the distinction between present and future dissipates. The second act both evokes the performative future and enacts the ever-present performance event's overcoming of the idea of performance. The indeterminate marker "would" loses all power.

The Second Act of *The Infernal Machine* is a microscopic performance of the determinism of the play as a whole and the temporal structure of Oedipal dramatic narrative. Like the Sphinx's use of "would," the Second Act briefly signifies the indeterminacy the Voice categorizes as a mystery. In performing the second act – an act which dramatizes an indeterminate future idea of performance being subsumed into the determinate present of performance – the mystery is solved. Similarly, Sophocles' narrative eventually comes to pass in Cocteau's retelling. The spaces for indeterminacy

intrinsic to Oedipal form are subsumed within the overriding structure of dramatic determinism.

III "Or Possibly There is No Killer At All": Subjecting the Future of Indeterminacy

Krapp's Last Tape engenders a textual performative future while a performance of the play –and the equation of actor as protagonist in Pinter's production in particular- subsumes *"A late evening in the future."* into the ever-present. *The Infernal Machine* dramatizes the ever-present performance event's consuming of a performative future. By emphasizing these conflicts in *Oedipus* - possibly the most determinate and influential Western dramatic text – Cocteau's play conjectures that such a conflict is essential to dramatic narrative. Where Beckett's play offers a glimpse of the fundamental disparity between a dramatic text and a performance event, and where Cocteau's play suggests that the performative future is a potential (although momentary) freeing gesture for Oedipus who rejects it in favor of dramatic determinism, the performative future in Ionesco's *The Killer* (1959) *and The Lesson* interrogates the interconnection between the phenomenological object and the narrative signifier.

The form of *The Killer* is a sort of thesis / antithesis in the Shavian tradition. Much like *The Wild Duck*, or a performance of *Our Town*, the first act of the play calls attention to an Artaudian gap between things and ideas. The opening stage directions read, in part:

> *No décor. An empty stage when the curtain rises. Later there will only be, on the left of the stage, two garden chairs and a table, which the Architect will bring on himself. They should be near at hand in the wings.*

> *The Atmosphere of Act I will be created by lighting only.*[. . .] *The blue, the white, the silence and the empty stage should give a strange impression of peace. Not until a full minute has passed should the characters appear on the scene.* (9)

This full minute of peace is only the first indication of absence as ideal. Upon entering, the Architect shows Berenger around a construction project. Berenger bubbles over with enthusiasm during his tour of the "radiant city," and, in the process, he repeatedly gestures toward a gap between the narrative signifier and the phenomenological object.

Seemingly an appropriate title for a city staged solely by the effect of light, Berenger lauds the materiality of objects in this radiant city by admiring lawns, flowerbeds, vegetables, and the styles of houses. Analogous to the Early Modern setting of the scene, the verbal significations center the audience within the narrative. However, the material objects that pervade the stage in Acts II and III force a retroactive recontextualization. Once verbal signifiers connect to phenomenological objects, objectless signification becomes indeterminate. More of a parody of objectless signification than homage, the First Act calls attention to the artificiality of such a system. In the utter extremity of his descriptions, Berenger emphasizes the emptiness of the stage:

> And yet, *here* I am. Your radiant city is *real.* No doubt of that. You can touch it with your fingers. The blue brilliance of it looks absolutely natural . . . blue and green . . . oh, that grass, those rose-pink flowers . . . (12)

Underscoring a romantic willing suspension of disbelief, Berenger himself has difficulty believing in the radiant city's reality. He consistently falls back on multiple senses to validate the city's materiality. The inverse of verification, this continually underscores the artificiality of the Architect's radiant city. The more Berenger describes and touches, the more the gap between things and ideas is reinforced. The staging of Berenger's ideal acknowledges that there is no ideal city. The radiant city is merely a stage with lights. The first act resists mimetic foreclosure by continually emphasizing the artificiality of the process by which dramatic texts signify.

Act I's emphasis on dramatic rupture provides an alternative to textual foreclosure. *The Killer* is Ionesco's adaptation of his own short story, "The Colonel's Photograph." Things firmly connect to ideas from the opening moment of the short story:

> I had gone to visit the fine new district, with its white houses surrounded by bright little flower gardens. Trees lined the broad streets. New, gleaming cars stood in front of the gates and in the garden drives. The sky was cloudless the light was blue. (23)

Text stages material objects rather than performing their absence. The movement from text to its performative adaptation is reminiscent of *The Wild Duck*'s textual suturing and performative rupture, or Kane's suggestion that reading *Blasted* is more authentic than seeing it performed.

In "The Colonel's Photograph", the Architect compares the city to an oasis, and the narrator ostensibly agrees: "'Yes, that's true. You mean those cities that are also known as mirages,' I said to show I was not completely ignorant" (24). The narrator

either acknowledges the very ignorance he is trying to deny or suggests that the Architect is the ignorant one. Regardless, the Architect and the narrator work on different registers in this exchange. By conceptualizing the city as oasis, the Architect feeds into the narrator's reaction to the "fine new district" as refuge from the hard, cold surrounding metropolis. However, in collapsing oasis into mirage, the narrator's response suggests that an ideal refuge is always illusory. The story enacts this conception, as one by one the ideal city's inhabitants fall victim to the machinations of the Killer:

> it's right there at the tram stop that he functions. As the passengers alight to go to their homes, he comes up to them, dressed as a beggar. He whimpers, begs for alms, tries to arouse their pity. It's the old story: he's just out of hospital, he has no job, he's looking for work, he has nowhere to spend the night. That's not what does the trick. It's just an opening gambit. He sniffs around and picks on some kind soul. He starts up a conversation, clings to his victim like a limpet, tries to sell them bits and pieces which he produces from a basket – artificial flowers, scissors, dirty pictures, all sorts of things. Generally his offers are turned down, the victim hasn't time, is in a hurry. He goes on bargaining until they are close to the pool which you saw. Then, straight away, he plays his trump card. He offers to show his victim the Colonel's photograph. There is no resisting this. As the light, by now, is poor, the kind soul bends down to see better, and that seals his doom. While he's absorbed in gazing at the picture, the murderer gives him a push, and he falls in the pool and is

drowned. The job is done. The murderer merely has to look for his next victim. (29-30)

A city whose inhabitants consistently meet such a fate is a far cry from ideal. The oasis / mirage exchange is carried over into the dramatic text. The play's characterization of the radiant city as mirage has the added relevance that from an audience's perspective the radiant city is Berenger's mirage. The audience only witnesses an empty stage. They witness the delusion, but are unaffected by it. Unlike the story's lauding of the radiant city in mimetic terms, the play idealizes the potential rupture inherent in the phenomenology / narrative divide of performative representation. Berenger's awe for the new district is inseparable from the knowledge that performance exists between oasis and mirage.

In the play, the Architect describes viewing the Colonel's photo as "a disturbing experience" (40). This added detail suggests that the photo disturbs in the play in a way it fails to do in the story. In the story, the Killer and the violence he personifies transforms oasis into mirage. The Killer demonstrates that there is no safe haven. However, in the play, more than the collapsing of a safe haven, the Killer's rampage becomes the center of a competing signifying system. An oasis / mirage, the radiant city differentiates itself from the surrounding metropolis by rupturing things from ideas. Berenger lives in the surrounding metropolis which can never be dissociated from its materiality – its phenomenological objectness.

The Killer shows his soon-to-be victims objects that are specific and material. They belong outside the walls of the radiant city. As such, the radiant city's inhabitants are uninterested in the Killer's bric-a-brac. The Colonel's photograph disturbs where

other material objects can be ignored because it exists in an interstice between the materiality of the city proper and the rupture of the radiant city. The photograph contains an independent materiality of its own, and presumably also represents a Colonel who had a material existence at some time in the past. However, since the Colonel only exists as photographic representation, the photo also gestures to a rupture in signification, a signifier that remains fundamentally disconnected from its signified. Like The Winter Garden Photograph in Barthes' *Camera Lucida,* the Colonel's Photograph functions as a narrative wound. It pierces the boundaries between the exterior city and the new district – it disturbs – because it is at root a signifying absence. Like Barthes' photo, the Colonel's Photograph is perpetually described but never seen by an audience and therefore can serve the narrative function of a pure carrier of affect.

Perhaps this simultaneous materiality and absence contributes to the photo's disturbing nature. To some extent, the radiant city is shielded from materiality. The photo represents something that is not there and can pierce the borders of the radiant city because it evokes a representational rupture analogous to the Architect's development. While similar, the photo still does not belong. The photograph also possesses a materiality that opens radiant city inhabitants to the outside influence of the Killer and the objectness of the exterior city at large. The photograph functions in both representational economies and thereby influences the radiant city and its residents.

The Shavian antithesis of the play is marked by the Killer's material objects and his use of the Colonel's Photo. The second and third acts leave the invisible radiant city, as the action is set amid the object laden surrounding metropolis. During the description of Berenger's apartment – the setting for Act II – *The Killer* makes the material

difference of the two settings explicit: *"The décor of Act II is very much constructed, heavy, realistic and ugly; it contrasts strongly with the lack of décor and the simple lighting effects of Act I"* (43). Where the first act exhibited a *Wild Duck*-like rupture between things and ideas, the second act illustrates a *Blasted*-like rupture of excess materiality. *The Killer's* material rupture fundamentally interconnects with the realness, heaviness, and ugliness of the phenomenological object itself.

Contrasting the silence which begins the first act, the sheer noise of the second establishes the city as a character:

> *there are sounds of hammering from the floor above, a radio blaring and trucks and motorcycles approaching and dying away; at one point too the shouts of children in the schoolyard during recreation: all this must be slightly distorted, caricatured, so the cries of the schoolchildren sound like dogs yapping* (44).

The noises and the figures seen passing by Berenger's window on the street make up the first half of the second act. During this material cacophony, there is no movement and no action occurring inside the room. Ionesco's stage directions emphasize the metatheatrical nature of the stage space: "In the second act it is also better to have the greatest possible number of figures appearing in silhouette the other side of the window, as on a stage behind the stage" (8). Berenger's window frames a traditional proscenium performing space as the street action is visible because *"[t]he curtains are not drawn"* (42). The first two acts establish competing registers of phenomenological rupture and material presence as two contrasting visions of theatricality.

In *Notes and Counter Notes*, Ionesco suggests that these theatrical alternatives are fundamental to his drama as a whole:

> All my plays have their origin in two fundamental states of consciousness: now the one, now the other is predominant, and sometimes they are combined. These basic states of consciousness are an awareness of evanescence and of solidity, of emptiness and of too much presence, of the unreal transparency of the world and its opacity, of light and of thick darkness. (162)

Ionesco's materiality / evanescence dialectic inverts the usual understanding of theatrical representation. Materiality in any form becomes overdetermined, and oppressive. The radiant city's rupture in signification is held up as an ideal, but it is a tenuous ideal that can never be anything but a mirage.

The sheer accumulation of objects, and the way these objects signify, differentiates *The Killer* from *Oedipus* and *Proof.* Whereas in *The Infernal Machine* determinism seems to be more choice than inevitability, in *The Killer* there is no such thing as determinism. Proof becomes nothing more than the rather pointless accumulation of objects. The overwhelming nature of materiality enters Berenger's apartment as Edouard's "*bulging black briefcase*" opens amid his attempts to explain to Berenger that the Killer's rampage in the radiant city is old news. The Colonel's photograph falls out of the briefcase, and this convinces Berenger to get a closer look:

> Berenger [*with authority*] Let me see! [*He dives into the briefcase, pulls out more photos and looks at one :*] Quite a nice face. With the kind of expression that makes you feel sorry for him. [*He takes out more photos.*

Edouard mops his brow.] What *is* all this? Why, it's the photo, the famous photo of the Colonel! You had it in there . . . you never told me!

Edouard: I'm not always looking inside my briefcase!

Berenger: But it *is* your briefcase all right, you're never without it.

Edouard: That's no reason . . .

Berenger: Oh well . . . We'll take the opportunity, while we're at it, of having another look!

[*Berenger sticks his hand into the huge black briefcase. Edouard does the same with his own too-white hand, whose twisted fingers are now very clearly visible.*]

More photos of the Colonel . . . and more . . . and more . . . [*To Edouard, who is now taking things out of the briefcase too, and looking astonished:*] What are these?

Edouard: You can see, they're artificial flowers.

Berenger: There are masses of them! . . . And these . . . Look, dirty pictures . . . [*He inspects them while Edouard goes and looks over his shoulder:*] Nasty! [. . .]

Berenger: [still *taking from the briefcase which is like a conjurer's bottomless bag, an amazing quality of all types of objects, which cover the whole surface of the table and even fall on the floor*] . . . pins . . . and more pins . . . pen-holders . . . and these . . . and these . . . what's that?

[*Much should be made of this scene: some of the objects can fly away on their own, others can be thrown by Berenger to the four corners of the stage.*] (66-7)

The sheer quantity of objects pulled from Edouard's briefcase seems to reach the level of proof. In addition to photographs of the Colonel, and the objects that fail to tempt the Killer's victims, they find visiting cards with the Killer's name and address, and an identity card with a photo of him. In his pocket Edouard finds the Killer's private diary which contains his future projects, including a map marked with the exact times and places he plans to strike. Like Edouard's briefcase, the material objects that serve as evidence of the Killer's crimes are bursting at the seams. The stage directions repeatedly fall back on the metaphor of conjuration to describe the objects' appearance. There is an impossible amount of objects pulled from the briefcase which is like a conjurer's bottomless bag, the box that contains the Killer's visiting cards opens "*in the style of a conjuring trick,*" and in producing the final box containing the Killer's journal, the stage directions suggest that Edouard "*could take it from his pocket or one of his sleeves, like a conjuror, a folding box perhaps, which he flicks into shape as he shows it*" (67. 69).

The stage directions instruct that much should be made of the proliferation of material objects. The sheer quantity of things visually entering the performance space ruptures the realistic set of Act Two. There is always room for further materialistic gestures. Just as the material connections between objects and the Killer seem complete further bonds are established. Material proof is everywhere. However, objective evidence only enters staged representation in the guise of a magic trick. Material objects identifying the Killer and connecting him to his crimes emerge in an illusory context.

Similar to Catherine's assertion near the end of *Proof* that evidence does not mean anything – it is not the same thing as proof – the objects in Edouard's briefcase do not prove anything. Despite overwhelming signs to the contrary, the play does not connect Edouard to the killings. He may very well be telling the truth when he explains: "The criminal sent me his private diary, his notes and index cards a very long time ago, asking me to publish them in a literary journal. That was before the murders were committed" (71). Like Oedipus and Jocasta's determined missing on their wedding night, Edouard never connects the material objects in his possession to the murders that occur. He takes the potent material proof "for idle dreams of no importance" (71).

Unlike Edouard, Berenger interprets the briefcase's contents as evidence. Such a belief in a material theatre's objects replicates the Killer's assault on the residents of the radiant city. In the same way the Killer uses material objects as a means of perpetuating his killing spree, Berenger believes that material objects as evidence will subdue the Killer. If Berenger delivers the briefcase to the Architect (who is also the Police Superintendent) the Killer will be arrested. The Killer is an indeterminate figure whom the police cannot stop because he is too immaterial. The Killer can be visualized, recognized, and eliminated with the contextualizing aide of the objects in Edouard's briefcase

Berenger quickly learns that transforming material objects from evidence into proof is not as easy as it seems. He and Edouard rush off to the Superintendent's, but in their hurry Edouard forgets his briefcase. An elaborate shell game of briefcases ensues. Berenger runs after various briefcases carried by a drunk, an old man, and Mother Peep only to be continually disappointed. One briefcase is empty, another contains the wrong

boxes and the third contains bottles of wine. These briefcases enact the other side of the conjurer's trick from Act Two. A conjurer can make material evidence disappear as easily as appear.[104] Material evidence, and the hope that material evidence contextualizes can be as transient as the radiant city itself.

Eventually, the Old Man suggests that Edouard must have forgotten his briefcase at home. Edouard is sent home to retrieve the evidence, but Berenger never reconnects with the material objects. The desire for material objects to suture firm connotive and contextual links goes unfulfilled. Berenger decides to go the Superintendent to let him know that the evidence is coming. However, material objects literally turn against Berenger and cut off his attempts to move toward the Superintendent. Military trucks are driven onto both sides of the stage with only enough room between them for Policemen to stand. Ironically, Berenger has been entrapped by material forces in a way very similar to his efforts to contextualize the Killer.

The first act's rupture between things and ideas served as an unrealizable ideal – a mirage. In contrast to such a rupture, material objects are ugly, oppressive and dangerous. The phenomenological object is the very reason the radiant city is illusory. The introduction of a narrative of material objects via the Colonel's Photograph suggests what an audience's eyes already have told them. The ideal is illusory. Material objects cannot contextualize the Killer, and a material theatre proves unable to suture the indeterminate within material structures. The phenomenological object is never material enough. Berenger's attempts to bind the indeterminate within a materialist network results in the object escaping Berenger's control. Or, put in slightly different terms, conceptualizing theatrical representation solely through the trope of material

contextualization is nothing but a conjurer's trick. Both the thesis of a rupture within theatrical representation, and the antithesis of a material theatre of contextualization create incomplete visions of theatrical signification.

The second half of the third act offers a possible reconciliation for these disparate forms of dramatic representation. Berenger escapes the material forces that restrict him and confronts the Killer. The opening stage directions describe the encounter as "one short act in itself" (9). This short act is inaugurated by a material rupture: "*As though by magic the trucks move back; the whole set at the back of the stage is moveable and so comes apart*" (93). Like the earlier conjurer's tricks which can make the objects in a bulging briefcase disappear, the material set magically breaks apart transforming the stage into a much emptier space. The set returns to the emptiness of Act One as characters simply vanish. Rather than announcing a traditional exit, the stage directions instruct the belligerent policemen to disappear. The second policeman's disappearance is described as sudden. The first even more so: "*The first policeman has disappeared with the back wall and the trucks*" (93). The moment the policeman disappears is missed. The policeman's disappearance is so sudden that it can only be recognized in the past tense. The disappearance of the policeman is only recognized upon reflection that there is an empty space where his body used to be.

Berenger and the Killer's confrontation depends upon an essential absence emerging from within materiality. This absence is emphasized at the moment Berenger first sees the Killer:

> *The set has of course, stopped changing. In fact there is practically no scenery. All there is is a wall and a bench. The empty waste of a plain*

> *and a slight glow on the horizon. The two characters are picked out in a pale light, while the rest is in semi-darkness. Derisive laugh from the* Killer: *he is very small and puny, ill-shaven, with a torn hat on his head and a shabby old gabardine; he has only one eye, which shines with a steely glitter, and a set expression on his still face; his toes are peeping out of the holes in his old shoes. When the* Killer *appears, laughing derisively, he should be standing on the bench or perhaps somewhere on the wall: he calmly jumps down and approaches* Berenger, *chuckling unpleasantly, and it is at this moment that one notices how small he is. Or possibly there is* no Killer at all. Berenger *could be talking to himself, alone in the half-light* (97-8).

At the moment Berenger sees the Killer, the stage directions focus on scenic absence. Absence becomes scenery. Rather than a rupture which emphasizes a distance between objects narrativized and a phenomenological absence, here there is an unity of absence. Absence is recognized for what it is (not) instead of used to create a rift between phenomenological emptiness and narrative signification.

The Killer's material presence appears to oppose the phenomenological absence. The stage directions focus on the Killer's size, the shabbiness of his dress, the shine in his eye and the expression on his face. He is described in greater detail than any character in the play. By way of contrast, Berenger is physically described as an "average, middle-aged citizen," and The Architect is said to be of an "ageless, bureaucratic age," Dany –the Architect's typist, one of the Killer's victims and someone who infatuates Berenger – is described as a "conventional pin-up" (7). Resorting to generalities, average, ageless, and

conventional modify the descriptions of these characters. Unlike the characters whose appearance remains ambiguous, the Killer is the most material character in the play.

The Killer is also the least material character in the play. Ionesco reverses the phenomenological presence after he describes the Killer: *Or possibly there is* no Killer at all. Berenger *could be talking to himself, alone in the half-light.*" The final act in itself between Berenger and the Killer is a Berenger monologue. The stage directions emphasize the possibility of there being no Killer in the choice of font for the stage directions. Typically stage directions are given in italics. The description of the Killer follows this convention until it raises the possibility of there being "no Killer at all." These words return to regular type. Much like the possibility of there being no Killer arises amid the character's vivid material presence, the stage directions emphasize the possibility of no Killer by omitting emphasis.

The play's direction that the Killer is either a very material presence or a fundamental absence is not the first time Ionesco uses such an ambiguous stage direction. At the conclusion of *The Lesson* the Professor stabs the Pupil with a knife that, according to the stage directions, is "*a big knife that is invisible or real according to the preference of the director*" (73). The possibility of the Killer and the knife's presence or absence gives a performance of either play some leeway within Ionesco's assertion that stage directions "should be respected as much as the text, they are essential, they are also sufficient."

Ionesco's stage directions enact a performative future analogous to *Krapp's Last Tape* and *The Infernal Machine*. *The Killer* and *The Lesson* contain an essential plurality as texts that any performance of the play must reduce and contextualize. The dramatic

texts evoke the potential of stage direction as deferral – the choice not made. A performance of either play must make a choice in performing the play, whether to privilege the material presence of the object or its phenomenological absence. The stage directions represent the decision between presence and absence as a choice that must be made in the future. As such, in the dramatic text the Killer and the knife are simultaneously both present and absent. A decision that has yet to be made, the potential of a performative future interconnects material presence and phenomenological absence. The ever-present performance event must contextualize the indeterminacy of a dramatic text. An actual performance must make a decision, thereby transforming the multi-valence of the idea of a performance yet to occur into a determinate performance event.

The future of indeterminacy in Ionesco's performative futures here becomes apparent. By envisioning the idea of a performance yet to occur, the performative future creates a text that represents via an indeterminate plurality. Moving beyond the realist textual suturing of Ibsen, Kane, Shepard, and Frayn, the idea of a performance deferred into the future gives the dramatic text room to play. Understanding performance as a future that has yet to occur envisions theatrical materiality neither as a rupture between things and ideas, nor a material contextualization because it is both. Reconceptualizing dramatic temporality as a performative future gives a new outlet for approaching theatrical materiality.

The performative future enters the dramas' content as violence. The Killer connects presence to absence as Berenger makes it clear over the course of his monologue that he is incapable of understanding why the Killer does what he does. The Professor murdering the Pupil with the knife that is both there and not there is the

culmination of the Professor's voice inflicting pain on the Pupil's body. Even the Sphinx's performative future culminates with the threat of Anubis devouring Oedipus. The performative future enacts its own violence on a temporal register. At the moment that these plays dramatize a gap between the performative future and the ever-present performance event violence enters the dramatic content. Using the same word that would later be used by *The Guardian's* leader writer in their critique of *Perdition*, the Pupil tells the Professor that "It's so piercing!" (73). However, where the *Guardian* understood piercing as the antithesis of drama, Ionesco envisions piercing as the essence of drama. Asking, does it pierce?, almost becomes a litmus test which reveals a text as dramatic. This is a piercing that a performance of the play sutures over. Much like the determinism that silences the Sphinx, the performative future cannot survive any dramatic theory that refuses to see the interplay between text and performance event.

Endnotes

[1] Marie's warning to the Professor in Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (60).

[2] For a revealing discussion of the misoginist and homophobic rhetoric emerging from Schechner's school of performance studies see Stephen J. Bottom's "The Efficacy / Effeminacy Braid: Unpicking the Performance Studies / Theatre Studies Dichotomy."

[3] Over the course of this project I use the term phenomenological in its theatrical sense of calling attention to the material existence of the object rather than broader philosophical connotations. In doing so, I follow in the footsteps of Bert O. States. In *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, States cites Max Scheler's understanding of the phenomenological object, and thereby offers a theatrical vision of phenomenology:

> "As the phenomenologist would say, the object becomes 'self-given,' and 'something can be *self-given* only if it is no longer given merely through any sort of symbol; in other words, only if it is not 'meant' as the mere 'fulfillment of a sign which is previously defined in some way or other. In this sense, *phenomenological* philosophy is a continual *desymbolization of the world*'" (23).

[4] In Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, Katurian recognizes the potential for mimetic disruption between narrative signifiers and signifieds as a rule of storytelling:

> Katurian: This is just like story telling.
> Michal: I know.
> Katurian: A man comes into a room, says, 'Your mother's dead,' yeah?
> Michal: I know my mother's dead.
> Katurian: No, I know, but in a story. A man comes into a room, says to another man, 'Your mother's dead.' What do we know? Do we know that the second man's mother is dead?
> Michal: Yes.
> Katurian: No, we don't.
> Michal: No we don't.
> Katurian: All we know is that a man has come into a room and said to another man, 'Your mother is dead.' That is all we know. First rule of storytelling. "Don't believe everything you read in the papers. (39-40)

[5] The effort to subvert Chekhov's gun is literalized in the First Act as George shoots Martha with a shotgun. Not only does the gun go off too soon, instead of bullets "*a large red and yellow Chinese parasol*" pops from the barrel (192).

[6] Although materiality often takes on a Marxist connotation, over the course of this dissertation my use of materiality simply refers to the presence of the material object.

[7] I use "real" here in an attempt to elucidate Gregers's idealized conception of the world. Below I consider the larger mimetic frame of any performance of the play which must encompass both forest and loft.

[8] Ekdal's privileging of the imitation over what is being imitated is analogous to Vivian's third doctrine of new aesthetics in Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying:" "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" (254). While Ekdal does not go so far as to put the forest subservient to the imitation, both Ekdal and Vivian conceptualize the imitation as possessing greater significance than the exterior society which contains the imitation. Written in 1889, Vivian's new aesthetics appear five years after the first performance of *The Wild Duck*.

[9] Smith is just one among a wealth of critics to emphasize metatheatricaliy in *The Wild Duck*. In *Theatrical and Narrative Space: Studies in Ibsen, Strindberg, and J. P. Jacobson*, Erik Osterud locates this

metatheatricality within Hjalmar's melodramatic speech. Analyzing the distance between Hjalmar's evening at the Werles and his description of the same, Osterud writes:

> The theatrical qualities of the situation have a value of their own. The content (the humiliation) disappears completely behind the expression (the theatrical 'performance'). As a consequence it is more Hjalmar's present performance that his audience is applauding than his confident behavior in the social arena. (27-8)

Hjalmar's metatheatricality has consequences in this reading, as Hedvig, the only authentic character, becomes a victim of her father's melodramatic speech. While the signifier (Hjalmar's performance) may not have the signified (Hjalmair's "confident behavior in the social arena") which Hjalmar intends this seems very different from a disappearing content. More in line with Osterud's overall argument, I would suggest that Hjalmar's melodramatic performance has a content, but it is a wandering signified that may have a different meaning for Hjalmar than it does for Hjalmar's audience. For an earlier discussion of Hjalmar's melodramatic speech see Daniel Haadonsen's "The Play-within-the-Play in Ibsen's Realistic Drama." While I do not dispute Hjalmar's melodramatic language, I wish to suggest that such a retrogressive theatrical form is ill equipped to explain the vision of metatheatricaliy Ibsen's play evokes within the Ekdal's nature preserve.

[10] The traditional/modern theatrical dialectic elaborated within *The Wild Duck* breaks down in class terms strikingly similar to those that would later be proposed by Brecht. The working class, characterized by Ekdal's disgrace, Gina's malapropisms, and Hjalmar's Hjalmarness is the class that embraces the modern theatre, while Gregers, with his upper class pedigree, desires a traditional theatre of illusion.

[11] I use dramatic realism and dramatic naturalism as analogous terms. States also seems to use the terms interchangeably. For coherence I use the term realism exclusively. While such a generalization effectively describes the late nineteenth-century movement toward an accurate social representation within drama such a confluence of terms is more problematic in other genres. In *The Concept of Modernism*, Astradur Eysteinsson points out the distinction between modernism and naturalism made by Lukacs. According to Eysteinsson, Lukacs "saw the naturalist emphasis on the various details of social life initiating the modernist tearing of details out of the unified fabric of the realist text" (194).

[12] See the current proliferation of theatrical studies that interrogate the social impact of the staged phenomenological object including the aforementioned *The Stage Life of Props* by Andrew Sofer, and Bert States' *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*.

[13] This heritage of realism can be seen as a strong influence on the work of anthropologist and performance studies pioneer Victor Turner. In *Theatre and Ritual*, Turner evokes Richard Schechner's model of an infinity loop as a means for understanding the relationship between theatre and the exterior society which contains the theatre. According to Turner, society unconsciously influences the theatre and changes its content. As a result of this, the transformed theatre unconsciously influences society. Thus, theatre and society are each constantly being influenced and influencing the other. This loop of mutual influence relies on a conceptual frame in which spatial difference is replaced by a conception in which theatrical space and exterior space are both parts of an interactive organism. This connection between theatre and society is further reinforced through Turner's suggestion that society can be understood as a series of social dramas (61-89).

[14] Chris Burden's performance of *Shoot* in which he is shot in the shoulder in front of an audience is a more current example (1971) of this desire to view classical conceptions of mimesis in a pejorative light. For Burden, violence becomes the means of escaping metaphor that is engrained within the theatrical event. While Burden's success in escaping metaphorical space and transfiguring performance space into an exterior space is open to debate, his desire to do so is much more explicit. Burden asserts that "Getting shot is for real . . . there's no element of pretense or make-believe in it" (Carlson 103).

[15] One of the more overt expressions of this idea occurs at the end of Jean Genet's *The Balcony*. Irma informs the theatrical audience: "you must now go home, where everything – you can be quite sure – will be falser than here" (96).

[16] In *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Arthur Symons makes the difference between a realist art which merely imitates the structure of the world and a symbolist art which elucidates the essence of humanity explicit: "Here, then, in this revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition; in this endeavor to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realized by the consciousness; in this dutiful waiting upon every symbol by which the soul of things can be

made visible; literature bowed down by so many burdens, may at last attain liberty, and its authentic speech" (5).

[17] Also see Verna A. Foster's "Ibsen's Tragi-Comedy: *The Wild Duck*." Foster asserts that "[c]ritics have noted in particular Ibsen's use of a central pervasive symbol that implicates the metaphysical in the mundane: the endlessly suggestive wild duck is metaphorically related to all of the major characters, while the loft full of junk that is like the 'depths of the sea' evokes the recesses of the mind" (292).

[18] For another elucidation of Hedvig's victimization by those around her see Joan Templeton's *Ibsen's Women*. According to Templeton: "Daddy's girl with a vengeance, Hedvig alone performs the 'little celebration out in the loft' that 'dear, dear Daddy' promised for her birthday. Hedvig's death, her gift of love, is her birthday present from her father" (175).

[19] Also see Osterud. Osterud refuses to see Hedvig's death as tragic because she acquires no insight and she is totally without blame. According to Osterud, tragedy cannot be blamed on misunderstandings (40).

[20] Ibsen's vision of critics squabbling and interpreting the play echoes Gregers's effort to understand the duck in the play.

[21] This desire to conceive of the mimesis of language as synonymous with the mimesis of performance thereby conceiving of performance within the mimesis of language is made explicit by Schechner as he uses a metaphor in describing the performances of the Gahuku men. Schechner writes that "The system is analogous to a printing press, where information is imprinted upon a piece of paper as it is fed through" (130).

[22] This idea that the doubleness which always exists within performance can either help or hinder the mimesis of language is futher emphasized by the name he gives the phenomea. In titling this theory double negativity, Schechner presents a theory that is based on the working of metaphor yet is titled after a subversion of language convention.

[23] For a related characterization of the emergence of the Schechner school of performance studies see Stephen J. Bottom's "The Efficacy / Effeminacy Braid: Unpicking the Performance Studies / Theatre Studies Dichotomy." Bottoms argues that theatre is represented as being impotent while performance is characterized as able to achieve real world results.

[24] Anyone familiar with Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* will recognize that at least as far as Finley's performance is concerned this should be looked at as merely presenting a layer to her performance. While on stage Karen Finley is performing the role of Karen Finley which is far different from the Finley while not upon the stage. Yet here I am interested in the ideal of trying to discard the concept of a role.

[25] This is not to marginalize perpetually off-stage objects previous to *The Wild Duck*. In just a few well known examples, Lauis is never seen in Sophocles' *Oedipus*, and Alving is never seen in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. However, where *The Wild Duck* consistently calls attention to the absent object and shows the difficulty of interpretation, *Oedipus* and *Ghosts* fail to thoroughly question what it means for a staged object to be absent. Actually, *Ghosts* and *Oedipus* announce the death of the absent character thereby minimizing the distance between linguistic and performative signifiers. In Early Modern Drama's theatrical practice of staging non-objects, the way to interpret such objects is never critically questioned.

[26] J.L. Styan develops a similar conception to Barry's retrospective time in his effort to understand the theatrical event. Carlson notes: "Theatre theorists must therefore consider the historical conditions of performance: the attitudes of audiences in different periods to the physical configuration of the stage, to improvisation and the actors' belief, to such matters as asides and prologues" (488). The significance behind critical efforts to institute a theatre of transfiguration by historically contextualizing the theatrical event in a replication of characters' efforts to do the same will be elaborated below.

[27] While Oedipal often tends to reference the Freudian concept, my use of the term should be understood as an alluion to Sophocles's play unless stated otherwise in the text.

[28] While Classical Greek Tragedy leaves the violent act off stage the effects of violence are staged. Murder escapes visual representation but corpses are clearly represented. This will be a significant counterpoint to my discussion of Sarah Kane below.

[29] In *The Poetics*, Aristotle critiques *Medea* for Medea's escape at the ending which is too much a *deux ex machina* convention. It is worth noting that this happens on the heels of her murder of her children.

[30] Mark Ravenhill's *Earnest* homage *Handbag* takes the opposite approach to *Bunbury*. Instead of a materialized Bunbury, Ravenhill's play culminates with the death of a baby named Jack. In so doing, Ravenhill's play rejects the Oedipal narrative of historical recognition and embraces the dead child.

However, Ravenhill offers what seems to be a different conception of the dead baby. Whereas up to this point the dead baby has been conceptualized as an indeterminate speech act that counteracts determinism and materiality, Ravenhill's physical representation of the dead baby offers dead baby as material object instead of dead baby as alternative to material object. As such, Ravenhill's material dead baby functions analogous to that evoked in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Sam Shepard's *Buried Child.* The materialized dead baby of Kane and Shepard are discussed at length in Chapter Four below.

[31] While purely speculative, it is hard to resist reading *huit clos* a phrase that is difficult to make sense of, as a misspelling of *huis clos*, the title of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential drama. Interestingly, in a chapter focusing on a psychoanalytic interpretation of dead children in American drama, Kubiak's text never references Sartre or the narrative of the dead child in his play. In essence, the text represses the dramatic connection to dead children outside of American drama by replacing the s with a t.

[32] For a less psychoanalytic analysis of the dead child as a definitely American dramatic image see Peter L.Hays's "Child Murder and Incest in American Drama." Hays writes that child murder demonstrates how "our selfish values are destroying our country and the lives of the people within it" (446).

[33] Not only is there a starting number of canonical modern plays that contain dead children, but, in addition, the plays that do contain a dead baby often allude to more than one. In *Desire Under the Elms,* Abbie tells Eben upon meeting him that she had a baby who died (23). In *Who's Aftraid of Virginia Woolf?,* Honey serves as a foil to Martha by apparently terminating at least one real pregnancy that she claimed was imaginary (176-7). In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, both children die within the culminating memory (687). The plays seem to suggest that the culminating dead baby image is not a new development but rather the continuation of a pattern within a text as well as between texts. The significance of this proliferating pattern will be considered below.

[34] I do not mean to suggest that Ibsen was the originator of either the prose play or the problem play both of which emerged in France well before Ibsen's turn to prose. For a brief overview of the French realist and problem play tradition, see Maurice Valency's, *The Flower and the Castle: An Introduction to Modern Drama* (58-117).

Despite the French origin of realism and the problem play, both phenomena became synonymous internationally with the work of Ibsen. Following in the footsteps of Kenneth Muir, John Fletcher and James McFarlane, suggest in "Modernist Drama: Origins and Patterns:" "'The most important event in the history of modern drama,' it has been confidently (and in approximate phrases, repeatedly) claimed 'was Ibsen's abandonment of verse after *Peer Gynt* in order to write prose plays about contemporary problems.'" For a more historical based example of this cultural furor upon the performance of Ibsen in England see G. B. Shaw's *The Quintessence of Ibsenism.* Shaw takes delight in the negative reaction *Ghosts* received upon first being performed, taking it as a sign that "the destroyer of ideals, though denounced as an enemy of society, is in fact sweeping the world clear of lies" (40). Shaw cites an early review of the play which is strikingly similar to the reaction Kane's *Blasted* would receive a century later: "If any repetition of this outrage be attempted, the authorities will doubtless wake from their lethargy" (71). Furthermore, In his introduction to the 1922 third edition Shaw goes so far as to suggest that Ibsen's content is a manner of life and death:

> Since the last edition of this book was printed, war, pestilence and famine have wrecked civilization and killed a number of people of whom the first batch is calculated as not less than fifteen millions. Had the gospel of Ibsen been understood and heeded, these fifteen millions might have been alive now; for the war was a war of ideals (3).

[35] One of the most famous examples of this being the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, in which Mary Shelly offers to "give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me – 'How I, then a young girl, came to think of, to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea? [. . .] And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper" (169-173).

[36] The manner in which *Hedda Gabler* serves as a continuation of the transition which is begun in *The Wild Duck* is emphasized by the similar names of the heroines. In "The Unspoken Text in *Hedda Gabler*," Evert Sprinchorn suggests that "Hedda, [is] a form of Hedvig, meaning battle" (356).

[37] See Susan Torrey Barstow's "'Hedda is All of Us': Late-Victorian Women at the Matinee" for a further discussion of the identification potential of *Hedda Gabler* as a performance event. Barstow asserts, "it is clear that the [British] Ibsen matinees of the 1890s contributed to the creation of turn-of-the century

feminism, a feminism that would later realize itself in the theatricalized struggles of the Edwardian suffragette movement" (386-7).

[38] For an example see *The Times* April 21, 1898 review of the play collected in *Ibsen: The Critical Heritage*. According to this unsigned notice, "[t]here is no reasoning as to a lunatic's behavior; and Hedda Gabler is manifestly a lunatic of the epileptic class" (Egan 219).

[39] Similar to Fuchs attempt to find comprehensibility outside of realism, Rhonda Blair suggests that "our reading of *Hedda* is incomplete if we try to fit it into a neat, rational cause-and-effect explanation of behavior or a sociological or psychological paradigm that doesn't encompass the full dimensions of the work. We miss the dark core of the play" (144).

[40] My interpretation of Hedda's threat to burn Thea's hair as a continuation of the ritual themes within the play is indebted to Fuchs's analysis.

[41] In addition to Fuchs, see Mary Kay Norseng's "Suicide and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*" for a reading which privileges Nietzsche's theory of tragedy and the Dionysian. While Fuchs writes that "*Hedda Gabler* may be taken as representative of his [Ibsen's] own view of civilization's diminished spirit" (219), both Fuchs and Norseng seem to view the Dionysian as still functioning within the play. Although the society dramatized in *Hedda Gabler* may diminish the results of the Dionysian spirit, the Dionysian is still a very real force. Below I question the viability of the Dionysian spirit as a modern construct and consider the dead baby as an emblem of a post-Dionysian dramatic force.

[42] Viewed in strictly historical terms, while Nietzsche initially publishes *The Birth of Tragedy* three years before Ibsen's turn to prose in *Pillars of Society*, the attempt at self-criticism is published in the midst of Ibsen's plays which involve dead children. Published in 1886, Nietzsche's regret of not leaving the dead child alone occurs well after the first performance of *The Wild Duck* but well before the first performance of *The Lady From The Sea*.

[43] At least in Hedda's case there is the added link between the metaphorical child and her unwanted pregnancy.

[44] While this is a continuation of the definition of mimesis I outline in Chapter One, phenomenologists will no doubt take issue to this assertion. In *Great Reckoning in Little Rooms*, Bert O. States uses animals on stage as an example of a phenomenological object that can escape the semiotic web of signification. This is also the effort of body performance artists such as Chris Burden. Yet, as should be clear I am much more skeptical of the potential for the visual to escape a semiotic network of signification.

[45] In "Ibsen and Feminism," Gail Finney describes how "unlike Nora [from *A Doll's* House], Hedda is still too much the victim of traditional thinking to move from hysteria to feminism" (100).

[46] Although I use the conventional spelling for fantasy, my definition of fantasy is indebted to the Freudian concept. This choice is made for regularity, with the exception of citing Freud directly.

[47] It is interesting to note that Caruth's book is published in the same year that Pinter's play is first performed. This focus on trauma as a break in time is also emphasized in Felman and Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. According to Laub, knowledge of a trauma "dissolves all barriers, breaks all boundaries of time and place of self and subjectivity" (58).

[48] Prinz is much more ambiguous in her characterization of Rebecca as victim (or as just victim) than Stanlake as she wonders: "How can the same character be a perpetuator of atrocity or at the very least an indifferent bystander, a witness, and a victim all at the same time?" (100). The short answer would be that Rebecca can't. While for Prinz, Rebecca is more than just victim the overall point of privileging Rebecca's utterance as history over fantasy is clear in Prinz's analysis.

[49] Stanlake played Rebecca in the Women at Play production in Columbus Ohio October 21-31 1999. The production was directed by Katherine Burkman.

[50] While Prinz and Stanlake are being used as representative examples they are meant to illustrate a larger trend in *Ashes to Ashes* criticism. The majority of criticism on the play could be indicted along with Devlin. See, for example, Robert Conklin's "Political and Personal Worlds of Play: Women at Play Perform Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*." Conklin characterizes Rebecca as taking "her place in a history of the Holocaust that she cannot have lived" (135). Conklin's interpretation derives from the production starring Stanlake. Also see Hanna Scolnicov's "*Ashes to Ashes*; Pinter's Holocaust Play."

[51] Naturally this excludes the typical plethora of silences and pregnant pauses found in a Pinter play.

[52] This idea of Devlin trying to distract or bully Rebecca from evoking the baby and from larger cultural utterances is indebted to Owens. According to Owens, "[i]nstead of investigating why Rebecca might have

so uncannily mentioned the unexplained 'bundle,' Devlin deflects conversation away from her Freudian slip, first by asking two intimidating, stifling rhetorical questions, and then by suggesting a quintessentially escapist escape from the conversation: 'a movie" (91). However, whereas Owens suggests that "Devlin acts as a repressive force, systematically thwarting Rebecca's attempts to work through her own neuroses and thereby to establish subjective unity," I wish to suggest Devlin's project is much more context specific depending on his potential for owning the individual traumatic utterance (90).

[53] The Shepard epigram is from his essay "Visualization, Language and the Inner Library" (55). The Kane epigram is taken from her interview with Heidi Stephenson and Natasha Langridge published in their book, *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting* (130).

[54] Tinker's review was famously entitled "THE DISGUSTING FEAST OF FILTH." Tinker's attack did not go unanswered by Kane as she named the torturer in *Cleansed* Tinker. For another example of the hostile critical reaction to *Blasted* see Bick Curtis's review for the *Evening Standard.* According to Curtis "Blasted is a powerful experience in the same way being mugged is a powerful experience" (46).

[55] While I wish to suggest that the staged dead baby is a definitive image in the effort to stage the unrepresentable, the staged violence of *Blasted* works similarly. In "'In Better Places': Space, Identity and Alienation in Sarah Kane's *Blasted*," Christopher Wixson suggests that being "[c]ommitted to the repressed, Kane in *Blasted* strives to represent onstage what is often only implied or relegated offstage, moving the margins to the center"

[56] *Saved* was the last play prosecuted by the Lord Chamberlain. Perhaps it is not so surprising that it was Bond and Pinter, two dead baby dramatists, who wrote editorials in support of *Blasted.* Bond's editorial published in *The Guardian* under the title of "A BLAST AT OUR SMUG THEATRE" characterized *Blasted* as "the most important play on in London" (22). *Blasted* was originally performed in 1995, the year before *Ashes to Ashes.* Michael Billington recognized connections between the two plays in his review of the 2001 revival of *Blasted.* In another connection between the two dramatists, Kane was planning on reviewing *Ashes to Ashes* for the *Observer*: "I was really keen to do it, and then they phoned me up and said: 'If you don't like it, that would be great', and I thought: 'This is a set-up, so I didn't do it'" (qtd in Sierz 121).

[57] In this context, it is worth returning to Curtis's comparison between seeing *Blasted* and being mugged. In such a characterization, Curtis collapses the distinction between violence and representations and violence

[58] For Radel, to a large degree, phenomenology is the point of the play: "The complex of ideas associated with corn in America enriches the texture of the work, ensuring that Dodge's house is seen as something more than a single family unit" (181).

[59] Kane's stage directions read that Ian "eats the baby" (60). It is suggestive that in transforming eating to devouring Billington's review may make the image more horrifying than Kane's dramatic text.

[60] Similarly, in "Mythic Structure in *Hedda Gabler*: The Mask Behind the Face," Elinor Fuchs describes Hedda's burning of Løvborg's book and Hedda's handing Løvborg one of her pistol's as shocking.

[61] According to Kane, "A list of a play's contents is not a review. So, inevitably, a list of what happens in *Blasted* – middle aged male jurno rapes his girlfriend and gets buggered by a soldier who sucks his eyes out – isn't going to enamour me to your average middle-aged male theatre critic" (qtd in Sierz 98).

[62] Such a distinction is indebted to J. L Austin's use of the terms in his analysis of the performative speech act.

[63] *Blasted* provides an echo of this as Ian is very concerned with his own stinking body and the stinking city.

[64] "Paths to Perdition." *The Guardian.* January 23, 1987. Leader. (qtd in *Perdition* 125).

[65] For sake of regularity I use Allen's spelling of Kastner throughout.

[66] Three years later, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the verdict. Kastner did not live to see his exoneration. He was murdered in 1957.

[67] Allen says that the play is "the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written" (qtd in Cesarani 118).

[68] Perhaps this is a bit of an exaggeration. According to Roth, he asked that the program include "a brief statement that the historical facts as presented in the play are according to the author's personal perception and that many historians and eyewitnesses – of whom I happen to be one – strongly differ from it, and that the same applies to the definition of Zionism in the play" (142). Regardless, the point is the same. By

contextualizing the play as Allen's perceptions the program tries to create a barrier between performance and historical foreclosure.

[69] Even the suggestion that *Perdition* had been banned is contentious. Cesarani and Stafford-Clark emphasize that the decision of the Royal Court to pull the play is not analogous to the play being banned. However, Allen and Loach suggest that threats of reprisal to any theatre that decided to produce the play amounts to a banning for all practical purposes if not in fact.

[70] Postscript to *Copenhagen* (115).

[71] The Frayn epigram is taken from the *Copenhagen* postscript (95), and the Shaw from the preface to *Saint Joan* (25).

[72] Among the egregious ahistorical Joans in literature Shaw holds up Schiller's romantic Joan for possibly the most scorn: "There is really nothing to be said of his play but that it is not about Joan at all, and can hardly be said to pretend to be" (23).

[73] In his postscript to *Copenhagen*, Frayn acknowledges that he "can't claim to be the first person to notice the parallels between Heisenberg's science and his life" (97). David Cassidy named his Heisenberg biography *Uncertainty*, and in *Heisenberg's War* Thomas Powers describes how Heisenberg's work on the German atomic programme contained "an element of irreducible uncertainty" (qtd in Frayn 98).

[74] Early in the postscript Frayn assets that "the account of the German and American bomb programmes, and of the two physicists' participation in them, is taken from the historical record; so is the fate of Danish Jewry; Heisenberg's experiences in Germany before and during the war, his subsequent internment, and the depression that clouded his later years" (96).

[75] In this citation I have omitted a photograph of the section of the instructions which included the sketch that interests Frayn.

[76] This becomes explicit as Frayn gets "a phone call from someone I didn't know but who claimed implausibly, as it seemed to me, to be the son of a friend; it's David Burke, I thought at once" (81).

[77] Schaeffer (37).

[78] Folino-White (99). Folino-White is citing de Certeau.

[79] Of course this is all a matter of signification. I do not mean to suggest that Marsh's "authentic" body in any sense pervades the text. Merely that within *The Copenhagen Paper's* representational economy, the text embraces the idea of the actor's phenomenological body as a site of certainty.

[80] Folino-White writes that "*The Emperor Jones's* level of success is legendary. In the first week alone more than one thousand subscriptions were sold and the uniqueness of the production catapulted it to Broadway. The play also transformed Eugene O'Neill, largely an unknown, into the great American playwright" (98).

[81] For a more detailed examination of Gilpin's performance see David Krasner's "Whose Role is it Anyway?: Charles Gilpin and the Harlem Renaissance." The importance of *The Emperor Jones* in American performative representations transcends the stage. In "'The Eighth o' Style': Black Nationalism, The New Deal, and *The Emperor Jones*," Anna Siomopoulos relates how "the movie [adapted from O'Neill's play] was noted as one of the first race films with a white actor – Dudley Digges as Smithers – in a second billed role" (76). Paul Robeson played Jones in the film.

[82] Hughes's reaction to *The Emperor Jones* is a complex one. In "When the Negro was in Vogue," he includes "Charles Gilpin, and the tom-toms at the Provincetown" as one of his representative examples of Manhattan's black Renaissance which open the essay alongside *Shuffle Along* and *Running Wild*. However, he distances O'Neill's play from the other examples by writing that "Perhaps some people would say even with *The Emperor Jones*," thereby distancing himself from one of these "some people." For more on Hughes's reaction to the play see below.

[83] See David Savran's *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group* and Aoife Monks's "'Genuine Negroes and Real Bloodhounds.'"

[84] The institutionalization of the performance which occurs alongside the celebration of its postmodern aspects transcends the grouping of Valk alongside renowned actresses to include Isherwood's fetishization of the whiteness and the gender of the actress beneath the blackface.

[85] I do not mean to suggest that Jones's vision of identity is the same of Butler's understanding of the performativity of gender. More like a naïve version of Butler, Jones believes that solely by the power of the utterance and the act he can perform an empowering present and keep history at bay.

[86] Several previous critics have provided fine analysis of the racial implications of Jones's self-construction. Rather than viewing Jones in terms of self-fashioning, Manuel suggests that "Jones's journey

from the whiteness that wraps him up in his palace into the darkness of his psyche becomes an act of cathartic unmasking." Similarly, Phillip J. Hanson argues that Jones "has absorbed the ethics of the oppressors of his ancestors, and for this, in the terms of the play, he must be sacrificed" (139).

[87] Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938) recognizes the difference of converging temporalities and characterizes this difference in terms similar to Shaw and Frayn. The Stage Manager tries to warn the dead Emily against reliving a day because "as you watch it [the day], you see the thing that they – down there – never know. You see the future. You know what's going to happen afterwards" (101). Unlike the uncertainty of motives that haunts Frayn's ghosts, repetition provides too much understanding for Emily.

[88] "My Plays and I." *Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre* (163).

[89] "Interview with Edith Mora." Ibid (122).

[90] "An Address Delivered To A Gathering OF French And German Writers." Ibid (146).

[91] See Barbara McMahon's "Beckett estate fails to stop women waiting for Godot"
and Matthew Rimmer's "Damned to fame: the moral rights of the Beckett estate."

[92] Reviewers reaction to the omission of the bananas varies, to put it mildly. In his review for *The Independent* Paul Taylor assets: "They have junked all the feeble business with the banana, thank God (Samuel Beckett had few faults as a dramatist, but a weakness for slapstick was one of them)," while, according to Nightingale, Pinter "ignores the stage direction that requires him to gorge bananas: which is unfortunate, because that's one way in which Beckett brings out the crude, animal side of this disappointed, disillusioned old man. "

[93] Joy Zinoman directed a production of *Waiting for Godot* that "foregrounded race as an inflection of the social and theistic relations of Beckett's characters (Klein 192). Amid threats of litigation by the Beckett estate, "Zinoman has argued that her production 'is the text'" (Klein 193).

[94] "About *Rhinoceros* in the United States." *Notes and Counter Notes*

[95] "A letter to the First Director." Ibid.

[96] "The playwright's Role." Ibid.

[97] "In The Long Run I Am For Classicism." Ibid.

[98] Donald M. Allen notes in his translation of *The Bald Soprano* that ending the play with the switching of character roles was not adopted "until after the hundredth performance" (42).

[99] In "In The Long Run I Am For Classicism," Ionesco asserts that "In the end I realized I did not really want to write 'anti-theatre' but 'theatre.' I hope I have rediscovered intuitively in my own mind the permanent basic outlines of drama" (131). However, this version of theatre is a theatre that is in constant danger from critics and performers overstepping their bounds and making the play less theatrical. These permanent basic outlines of drama" have nothing to do with the present performance event. As such Ionesco's theatrical text is anti-theatre by any traditional conception.

[100] Beckett's *Breath* questions Brook's opening precept in a different register. Beckett writes a play without any human characters and in so doing suggests that the man walking across the stage may be superfluous.

[101] This conception of an audience that is distant from theatrical essence and yet still must be conceived, helps explain Ionesco's claim in "The Birth of the Bald Soprano" that he originally had "imagined a more shattering ending" (*Notes and Counter Notes* 184) This other ending offers a radically different conception of the relationship between play and audience than the harmonious interconnection of actors planted in the audience asking questions and thereby demonstrating a unified performance event in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*:

> As soon as it [the stage] is empty, two or three accomplices in the audience start catcalling, kick up a row, shout protests and invade the stage. This brings on the manager of the theatre, followed by the Superintendent of Police and his men, who open fire at the rebellious audience, (to make an example of them); then, while the manager and the superintendent congratulate each other on teaching the public a good lesson, the gendarmes, gun in hand, stand threateningly in front of the curtain and order the theatre to be cleared. [. . .]
>
> Too expensive. So I had written a second ending, easier to put over. . . . At the height of the Smith-Martin quarrel the maid arrives and announces the author in ringing tones.
>
> The actors than respectfully make way, line up to the right and left of the stage and applaud the author, who comes quickly forward to face the public; then, shaking his fist at the audience, he cries: 'You bastards, I'll skin you alive!' The curtain would then fall very rapidly" (184-5)

Cathartic manifestations of violence toward an audience that is not necessary for a play and yet cannot be dismissed, Ionesco's unstaged endings never even make it into a theatre. By the time the play has been staged, it is too late.

[102] In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* Shaw describes Ibsen's plots similarly. Rather than describe the plots as they occur – rather than describe the plots as the present narration of past events - the Voice and Shaw deform the plots of Sophocles and Ibsen by giving the narrated event as much primacy as what is enacted on stage. The Voice and Shaw's descriptions demonstrate the contextualizing power of the ever-present by minimizing all distinctions between past and present, and between narrating and enacting.

[103] This is the vision of indeterminacy echoed in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.* Like Oedipus and Jocasta, Stoppard's protagonists have a finite temporal space for play before being absorbed in the rigid causal frame of *Hamlet.* Both Stoppard and Cocteau use explicit metatheatrical structures to outline the indeterminacy in-between and rigid dramatic form's overcoming of this indeterminacy.

[104] The stage directions instruct that in Act I the Architect carries a briefcase like Edouard's.

Works Cited

Albee, Edward. *The American Dream. The American Dream and The Zoo Story.* New York: Plume, 1997.

---. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? The Collected Plays of Edward Albee Volume I 1958-65.* New York: The Overlook Press, 2004. 149-312.

Allen, Jim. *Perdition.* London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

Auburn, David. *Proof.* New York: Faber and Faber, 2000.

Arrabal. *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria.* Trans. Everard D'Harnoncourt and Adele Shank. New York: Grove Press,1969.

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and its Double.* Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature.* Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953.

Austin, J.L.. *How to Do Things with Words.* Cambridge: Harvard UP. 2001.

Aristotle. *Poetics.* New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

Barstow, Susan Torrey. "'Hedda is All of Us': Late-Victorian Women at the Matinee." *Victorian Studies.* 43.3 (2001) 387-411.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida.* Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang. 1981.

Beckett, Samuel. *Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition. Volume III: Dramatic Works.* New York: Grove Press, 2006.

Billington, Michael. "FIRST NIGHT: THE GOOD FAIRIES DESERT THE COURT'S THEATRE OF THE ABSURD." Rev. of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane and Royal Court Upstairs, *The Guardian.* 20 January 1995, 22.

---. Rev. of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane and Royal Court Upstairs, *The Guardian.* 5 April 2001, 16.

---. Rev. of *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett and Royal Court Upstairs. *The Guardian.* 16 October 2006. http://arts.guardian.co.uk/reviews/story/0,,1923097,00.html

Blair, Rhonda. "*Hedda Gabler*: Revisiting Style and Substance." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism.* 16.2 (2002) 143-153.

Bond, Edward. "A BLAST AT OUR SMUG THEATRE." Editorial. *The Guardian.* 28 January 1995, Features Page 22.

---. *Saved. Plays: One.* London: Eyre Methuen Ltd. 1977.

Bottoms, Stephen J. "The Efficacy / Effeminacy Braid: Unpicking the Performance Studies / Theatre Studies Dichotomy." *Theatre Topics.* 13.2 (2003) 173-187.

Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space.* New York: Touchstone. 1996.

Burkman, Katherine H. "Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*: Rebecca and Devlin as Albert Speer," *The Pinter Review.* (1999), 86-96.

---. "Hedda's Children: Simon Gray's Anti-Heroes." *Modern Dramatists: A Casebook of Major British, Irish, and American Playwrights.* Ed. Kimball King. New York: Routledge, 2001. 107-115.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York and London: Routledge, 1999.

Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present: Expanded Edition.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.

---. *Performance: A Critical Introduction.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1996.

Cesarani, David. Letters. *The Guardian.* January 22, 1987. Reprinted in *Perdition.* London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

---. "The Perdition Affair." *Jewish Quarterly.* April 1987. Reprinted in *Perdition.* London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

Cocteau, Jean. *The Infernal Machine. The Infernal Machine and Other Plays.* Trans. Albert Bermel. New York: New Directions. 1963. 1-96.

Conklin, Robert. "Political and Personal Worlds of Play: Women at Play Perform

Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*." *The Pinter Review*. (2000), 131-140.

Connolly, Michael A.. "Mapping Desire: Couching Hedda and Eilert's Conversation in Act II of *Hedda Gabler*." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. 16.2 (2002) 163-70.

Coveney, Michael. "The end of the World: Act One." Rev. of *Cleansed* by Sarah Kane and Royal Court Upstairs *Daily Mail*. 7 May 1998. 7.

Cowell, Alan. Rev. of *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett and Royal Court Upstairs. *The New York Times*. 21 October 2006. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/21/theater/21pint.html.

Curtis, Bick. "Random tour of a chamber of horrors." Rev. of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane and Royal Court Upstairs. *Evening Standard*. 19 January 1995. 46.

Diamond, Elin. *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Egan, Michael. *Ibsen: The Critical Heritage*. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1972.

Elam, Diane. *Romancing the Postmodern*. London and New York: Routledge. 1992.

Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Eysteinsson, Astradur. *The Concept of Modernism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1990.

Felman, Shoshana. *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003.

--- and Laub, Dori. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Fergusson, Francis. *The Idea of a Theater*. Princeton: Princeton UP. 1968.

Finley, Karen. *A Different Kind of Intimacy*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. 2000.

Finney, Gail. "Ibsen and Feminism." *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*. Ed. James McFarlane. Cambridge UP, 89-105.

Fletcher, John and McFarlane, James. "Modernist Drama: Origins and Patterns." Modernism 1890-1930. Ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Folino-White, Ann. "In the Service of Man: Woman and Male Racial Mobility in *The Emperor Jones.*" *American Drama.* 13.2 (2004). 98-117.

Foster, Verna A.. "Ibsen's Tragi-Comedy: *The Wild Duck.*" *Modern Drama* 38.3 (1995) 287-297.

Frayn, Michael. *Copenhagen.* New York: Anchor Books, 1998.

--- and Burke, David. *The Copenhagen Papers: An Intrigue.* New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1989.

---. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria.* New York: Touchstone, 1997.

---. "Extracts From The Fliess Papers." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.* Volume One. Trans. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1966.

---. *The Interpretation of Dreams.* Trans. James Strachey. New York: Avon Books, 1998.

---. "The Uncanny." *Collected Papers Volume IV: Papers on Metapsychology and Papers on Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. Alix Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1959. 368-407.

Fuchs, Elinor. "Mythic Structure in *Hedda Gabler*: The Mask Behind the Face." *Comparative Drama.* 19.3 (1985) 209-221.

Garton, Janet. "The Middle Plays." *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen.* Ed. James McFarlane Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 106-25.

Gillen, Francis. "History as a Single Act; Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes.*" *Cycnos.* 14.1 (1997), 91-7.

Genet, Jean. *The Balcony: Revised Edition.* Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Grove Press, 1966.

Gerland, Oliver W.. "The Lacanian Imaginary in Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* and *The Wild Duck.*" *Comparative Drama* 24.4 (Winter 1990-91) 342-362.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday / Anchor, 1959.

Green, William. "Oscar Wilde and the Bunburys." *Modern Drama*. 21.1 (1978). 67-79.

Gregory, Montgomery. "The Drama of Negro Life." *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. Ed. Alain Locke. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925.153-160.

Greig, David. Introduction. *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays*. London: Methuen Drama, 2001. ix-xviii.

The Guardian. "Paths to Perdition." Leader. January 23, 1987. Reprinted in *Perdition*. London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

Haakonson, Daniel. "'The Play-within-the-Play' in Ibsen's Realistic Drama." *Critical Essays on Henrik Ibsen*. Ed. Charles R. Lyons. Boston: C. K. Hall & Co, 1987. 215-227.

Hanson, Philip J. "*The Emperor Jones*: Naturalistic Tragedy in Hemispheric Perspective." *New Readings in American Drama: Something's Happening Here*. Ed. Norma Jenckes. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

Hays, Peter L., "Child Murder and Incest in American Drama," *Twentieth Century Literature*. 36:4 (Winter 1990) : 434-448.

Hernandez, Ernio. "Dramas Go Wilde as Bunbury Travels Through Albee, Bard, Williams, at L.A.T.W." *Playbill*. June 21, 2006. www.playbill.com/news/article/100454html.

Hughes, Langston. *The Big Sea: An Autobiography*. New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 1986.

Ibsen, Henrik. *Letters and Speeches*. Ed. Evert Sprinchorn. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

---. *The Wild Duck: Hedda Gabler*. Trans. Michael Meyer. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.

Ionesco, Eugene. *The Bald Soprano. The Bald Soprano and Other Plays*. Trans. Donald M. Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

---. "The Colonel's Photograph." *The Colonel's Photograph*. Trans. Jean Stewart. New York: Grove Press, 1969. 23-41.

---. *The Killer. Exit the King, The Killer, and Macbett.* Trans. Charles Marowitz and John Watson. New York: Grove Press. 1973.

---. *The Lesson. The Bald Soprano and Other Plays.* Trans. Donald M. Allen. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

---. *Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre.* Trans. Donald Watson. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

Isherwood, Christopher. "An Emperor Who Tops What O'Neill Imagined." *The New York Times.* March 14, 2006.

Kane, Sarah. *Blasted. Complete Plays.* London: Methuen Drama, 2001.

Kaplan, Merrill. "Hedda and Hjordis: Saga and Scandal in *Hedda Gabler* and *The Vikings at Helgeland.*" Ibsen Studies. 4.1 (2004) 18-29.

Kaufmann, Walter. Introduction. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche. The Birth of Tragedy.* New York: Modern Library, 2000. 3-16.

Kenner, Hugh. "Hugh Kenner: The Grand Tour." Interview by Harvey Blume. http://www.bookwire.com/bbr/reviews/March2001/hugh_kenner_thegrandtour

Kerans, James E.. "Kindermord and Will in *Little Eyolf.*" *Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism.* Ed. Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 192-208.

Klein, Joanne. Rev. of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and The Studio Theatre, Washington D.C. 17 October 1998. *Theatre Journal.* 51.2 (1999). 192-194.

Krasner, David. "Whose Role is it Anyway?: Charles Gilpin and the Harlem Renaissance." *African American Review.* 29.3 (1995). 483-496.

Kubiak, Anthony. *Agitated States: Performance in the American Theater of Cruelty.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Loach, Ken and Hornung, Andrew. "Censorship and Perdition." *New Statesman.* February 20, 1987. Reprinted in *Perdition.* London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

Mackie, Craven W. "Bunbury Pure and Simple." *Modern Drama.* 41.2 (1998). 327-330.

Mann, Bruce J. "Character Behavior and the Fantastic in Sam Shepard's *Buried*

Child." *Sam Shepard: A Casebook.* Ed. Kimball King. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988. 81-94.

Manuel, Carme. "A ghost in the expressionist jungle of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones.*" *African American Review.* 39. 1-2 (2005).

Marker, Frederick J. and Marker Lise-Lone. "Ibsen and the twentieth-century stage." *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen.* Ed. James McFarlane Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

McDonagh, Martin. *The Pillowman.* New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2003.

McMahon, Barbara. "Beckett estate fails to stop women waiting for Godot." *The Guardian.* 4 February 2006. http://arts.guardian.co.uk/beckett/story/0,,1751546,00.html

Meyer, Michael. Introduction. *The Wild Duck: Hedda Gabler.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1997. 3-16, 135-148.

Moi, Toril. "'It was as if he meant something different from what he said – all the time': Language, Metaphysics, and the Everyday in *The Wild Duck.*" *New Literary History* 33.4 (2002) 655-686.

Monks, Aoife. "'Genuine Negroes and Real Bloodhounds': Cross-Dressing, Eugene O'Neill, the Wooster Group, and *The Emperor Jones.*" *Modern Drama.* 48.3 (2005) 540-564.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche. The Birth of Tragedy.* Tran. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Modern Library, 2000. 3-144.

Nightingale, Benedict. Rev. of *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett and Royal Court Upstairs. *The Times.* 17 October 2006. http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,14936-2406429,00.html

Norseng, Mary Kay. "Suicide and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler.*" *Scandinavian Studies.* 71.1 (Spring 1999) 1-40.

O'Neill, Eugene. *Desire Under the Elms. Three Plays: Desire Under the Elms / Strange Interlude / Mourning Becomes Electra.* New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

---. *The Emperor Jones. Four Plays by Eugene O'Neill.* New York: Signet, 1998.

Osterud, Erik. "The Acteon Complex: Gaze, Body, and Rites of Passage in *Hedda Gabler. New Theatre Quarterly.* 18.1(2002). 25-46.

---. *Theatrical and Narrative Space: Studies in Ibsen, Strindberg and J. P. Jacobsen.* Aarhus: Aarhus UP, 1998.

Owens, Craig N.. "The *Unheimlich* Maneuver: *Ashes to Ashes* and the Structure of Repression." *The Pinter Review.* (2002), 78-96.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance.* New York: Routledge. 1993.

Pinter, Harold. "Writing for the Theatre." *Complete Plays: One.* New York: Grove Press, 1976. 9-16.

---. *Ashes to Ashes.* New York: Grove Press, 1997.

---. Nobelprize.org/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html

Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1982.

Prinz, Jessica. "'You Brought it Upon Yourself': Subjectivity and Culpability in *Ashes to Ashes.*" *The Pinter Review.* 2002, 97-105.

Radel, Nicholas F. "'What's the Meaning of this Corn Tilden!' Mimesis in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child,*" *From the Bard to Broadway: The University of Florida Department of Classics Comparative Drama Conference Papers.* (Vol. VII) Ed. Karelisa V. Hatigan. (New York: University Press of America, 1987). 177-189.

Ravenhill, Mark. *Handbag. Plays: One.* London: Methuen. 2001. 141-226.

Rimmer, Matthew. "Damned to fame: the moral rights of the Beckett estate." May 2003. http://www.alia.org.au/publishing/incite/2003/05/beckett.html

Roberts, Philip. *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.

Robins, Elizabeth. *Ibsen and the Actress.* London: Hogarth Press, 1928.

Saunders, Graham. *'Love me or Kill me:' Sarah Kane and the theatre of extremes.* Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.

Schaeffer, Louis. *O'Neill: Son and Artist.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1973.

Schechner, Richard. *Between Theater & Anthropology.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

---. "TDR Comment." *The Tulane Drama Review*. 7.2 (1962). 8-9.

---. "Who's Afraid of Edward Albee?" *The Tulane Drama Review*. 7.3 (1963). 7-10.

Scolnicov, Hanna. "*Ashes to Ashes*; Pinter's Holocaust Play." *Cycnos*. 18.1 (2001), 15-24.

Shakespeare, William. *Henry V. The Norton Shakespeare: Histories*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Shaw, G.B.. *The Quintessence of Ibsenism. Major Critical Essays.* London: Constable and Company Limited, 1955.

---. *Saint Joan.* New York: Penguin Books, 1957.

Shenton, Mark. "Elitism and Awards. . . ." Rev. of *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett and Royal Court Upstairs. *The Stage*. 16 October 2006. http:// www.thestage.co.uk/shenton/2006/10/elitism_and_awards

Shepard, Sam. *Buried Child. Seven Plays.* New York: Bantam Books, 1981. 61-132.

---. *Buried Child: Revised Edition.* New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1997.

---. "Visualization, Language and the Inner Library." *The Drama Review.* 21.4 (1977): 49-58

Sierz, Aleks. *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today.* London: Faber and Faber. 2000.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1988.

Siomopoulos, Anna. "'The Eighth 'o Style': Black Nationalism, the New Deal, and *The Emperor Jones*." *A*rizona Quarterly. 58.3 (2002). 57-81.

Smith, Matthew Wilson. "*The Wild Duck*: A Play of Play." *Modern Drama.* 45.1 (2002): 9-22.

Sofer, Andrew. *The Stage Life of Props.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Soto-Morettini, Donna. "'Disturbing the Spirits of the Past': The Uncertainty

Principle in Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*." *Crucible of Cultures: Anglophone Drama at the Dawn of a New Millennium*. Ed. Marc Maufort & Franca Bellarsi. Brussles: Peter Lang, 2002. 69-78.

Sprinchorn, Evert. "The Unspoken Text in *Hedda Gabler*." *Modern Drama*. 36.3 (1993): 353-367.

Stafford-Clark, Max. "Why I Axed Perdition". *The Guardian*. March 13, 1987. Reprinted in *Perdition*. London & Atlantic Highlands: Ithaca Press. 1987.

Stanlake, Christy. "Shaping Ambiguity: The Chemistry Between Silence, Ghosting, and Framing Devices within a Production of Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes*." *The Pinter Review*. (2000), 141-151.

Staniunas, John. "Negotiating Between Then and Now: Directing Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. 16.2 (2002) 155-61.

States, Bert O.. *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

Stephenson, Heidi and Langridge, Natasha. *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting*. London: Methuen, 1997.

Strindberg, August. *Miss Julie and Other Plays*. Trans. Michael Robinson. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

Symons, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1958.

Taylor, Paul. Rev. of *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett and Royal Court Upstairs. *The Independent*. 16 October 2006. http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/theatre/reviews/article1876696.ece

---. "Samuel Beckett: A Gloom of His Own." *The Independent*. 12 October 2006. http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/theatre/features/article1844244.ece

Templeton, Joan. *Ibsen's Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Tinker, Jack. "THE DISGUSTING FEAST OF FILTH." Rev. of *Blasted* by Sarah Kane and The Royal Court, Theatre Upstairs, *Daily Mail*. 19 January 1995, 5.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1982.

Valency, Maurice. *The Flower and the Castle: An Introduction to Modern Drama.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963.

Verghis, Sharon. "Waiting for Beckett Jnr: 'Bugger that for a Joke.'" 10 January 2003. *The Sydney Morning Herald.* www.smh.com.au/aricles/2003/01/09/1041990050207

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Peterborough: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002.

---. *The Importance of Being Earnest. The Plays of Oscar Wilde.* New York: Vintage Books. 1988. 347-440.

Wilder, Thornton. *Our Town. 3 Plays.* New York: Perennial Classics, 1998.

Wiley, Catherine. "Staging Infanticide: The Ritual of Representation in Elizabeth Robins's *Alan's Wife.*" *Disciplines of Theater: Fin De Siecle Studies.* 42.4 (Dec., 1990) 432-446.

Wixson, Christopher. "'In Better Places': Space, Identity, and Alienation in Sarah Kane's *Blasted.*" *Comparative Drama.* 39.1 (2005) 75-91.

Zarhy-Levo, Yael. "The Riddling Map of Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes.*"*JTD: Journal of Theatre and Drama.* 4 (1998), 133-145.