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MAKING THEATRE-MAKING

Rehearsal Practice and Cultural Production

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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abstract

This thesis centres on an analysis of two theatre rehearsal processes that took place in Sydney in the late 1990s: Mary-Anne Gifford's direction of Patrick White's *The Season at Sarsaparilla* for New Theatre in Newtown; and Tony Knight's direction of Kevin Elyot's *My Night With Reg* which was produced by Esoteric Entertainment and performed at Newtown Theatre.

This project has two encompassing aims. The first is to analyse the day-to-day micropractices and experiences of rehearsal for the practitioners. The realization of this first aim also involves the interrogation of macro-contexts—socio-cultural, historical, and institutional concerns—and the exploration of relationships between these practices and contexts. The second aim is to develop a methodology to study other people's rehearsal practices.

After exploring rehearsal research methodologies adopted thus far, I advance a set of organising principles, drawn largely from critical ethnography, that constitute the theoretical framework of the thesis. In Chapter Two, I turn to the rehearsal analysis proper, and begin with spaces, places and temporal considerations: how were the processes located geographically, how were they positioned by people, and what exactly were the practitioners' experiences of them? How did rehearsal scheduling, as well as the time allocated for each process, inform the work done and even particular embodiments? Then I examine the rehearsal practices themselves—what it meant to 'work at the table' or 'on the floor'—and argue that these practices and the discourses with which they were framed must be understood on their own terms rather than through recourse to ideas of acting traditions or genealogies. The practitioners did not invoke 'Stanislavsky' or 'Grotowski' in their work, but rather referred to 'the NIDA thing' or 'professional acting'. This talk and the associated practices were intimately caught up with struggles to legitimise and authenticate their theatre-making: the practitioners were, in Samuel Weber's terms, working to 'institutionalise their interpretations' (1987) of what real theatre—what *good* theatre—entailed. More specifically, the theatre organisations and the individual practitioners coupled ideas of 'discovering meaning in the script', 'discovering characters' psychologies' and 'constructing a show' with the broader circulating discourses of 'community', 'professionalism' and 'prestige'. Finally I understand the two rehearsal processes at the level of embodiment, where the practitioners' work operated in terms of specific embodied states: something was felt that enabled practitioners to say in rehearsal, "We got that moment right". This work was often couched not so much in terms of individual agency, but as group sociality or intersubjectivity.

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p r o l o g u e

The True Density of First Impressions

O.1 "I Just Want To Push Through"

In a large rented room in Sydney in 1998, during hot January days, the cast and crew of *My Night With Reg* rehearsed the theatre piece that was to be performed at Newtown Theatre. The process had just under three weeks to rehearse (this is short even by Australian standards where subsidised mainstage productions are given around five weeks). These practitioners knew how much work had to be done and they worked at a fast pace, with little time taken for sit-down discussion. From the start, I heard the director Tony Knight say "Let's run that scene again". And often, when a lunch-break was due, he was keen to keep working: "I just want to push through". As metaphors, *running* and *pushing* were not only articulated verbally, but the dynamics of the space, the movement within that space, and the very present presence of the *Realpolitik* of production created a distinct adrenalin-like pulse. Tony spent virtually every rehearsal barefoot, often with an unlit cigarette in his hand, which he might use as a bookmark or he would shove it behind his ear or play with it in his hands. When actors rehearsed a scene on the taped-out set of the rehearsal room, Tony would watch, perched on a corner of a chair, with his bodyweight somehow suspended between a full sit and a stand, ready to leap up into the space at any moment. He leapt up often to approach the actors with directions, or to answer half-asked questions (actors would often barely have finished asking the question before he had answered it). At one point, after pacing swiftly onto stage and giving Steven a number of directions, he said, "Tell me if I'm flustering you darling." Peter (actor and co-producer) spent his time either on the floor rehearsing scenes, or moving off quickly to make mobile phone calls. Once, on catching himself watching a scene, he said to me "I must go and do a little more producing" as he slipped outside the room with his

phone. One afternoon on return from lunch, I encountered Murray (designer) fitting actors in the room opposite the rehearsal room, Tony talking with Pene (administrator), and Betty (voice coach) working with the actors in the rehearsal room proper. It was all systems go.

*Rehearsal notes taken from the **My Night With Reg** rehearsal process*
Kate Rossmanith, 1998

This thesis centres on the analysis of two theatre rehearsal processes I documented in the late 1990s in Sydney, Australia. The above description is from my notes on rehearsals for the 1998 production of Kevin Elyot's *My Night With Reg* directed by Tony Knight and produced by Esoteric Entertainment at Newtown Theatre in Newtown. The production was associated very specifically with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Arts Festival (an annual one-month event). Six months earlier I documented rehearsals for the 1997 production of Patrick White's *Season at Sarsaparilla* directed by Mary-Anne Gifford for New Theatre in Newtown.

The opening description of the *My Night With Reg* rehearsals can be used to isolate the thesis's main concerns. The two processes—*Season* and *Reg*[1]—cannot be adequately understood solely in terms of two directors with two groups of actors rehearsing lines and scenes. As suggested by my opening account, the practitioners' practices, and indeed the days and weeks of rehearsal, were inextricably embedded in rich and complex contexts. For instance, the actors' practices cannot be reduced to a relationship with a playtext or with a single overarching theory of acting. Rather their work was a dynamic process of drawing on prior acting experience, learning new techniques on the job, and making moves to secure further employment. The *Reg* production was the Sydney premiere (the playwright flew out from London for opening night); Tony Knight is the Head of Acting at a national actor training school; Esoteric Entertainment was a small theatre company which formed especially for this production; five of the six actors had high-profiles and had had significant experience in

[1] The practitioners' shorthands for the productions were *Season* and *Reg*—they would refer to 'rehearsals for *Season*' or simply 'during *Season*' to refer to the entire rehearsal

theatre, film and television; and *Reg* had a fairly ambiguous relationship with Mardi Gras in terms of how the publicity material related to the actual practice of constructing the show. An analysis of this rehearsal process cannot possibly ignore these circumstances.

It is my project to describe and make sense of the 'true density of first impressions' (Selbourne 1982: xxxii), where rehearsal was a thick weave of bodies, experiences, discourses and contexts which were intimately related. The principal question that drives my work and that critically informs the methodology taken up in this thesis is as follows: What frameworks do I need in order to think about these rehearsal processes?

0.2 Research Horizons

I began studying theatre rehearsal as an undergraduate in 1994, watching projects at the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney. This involved observing and analysing the rehearsals of professional practitioners as they used a university studio to work.[2] My notes documented the busy goings-on of administration and management, how actors spoke about their characters, how actors spoke about themselves, how actors and directors interacted, where practitioners worked in the space, how practitioners worked in the space, the constant referencing of the playwright artist, what it felt like to be there, and my own position or role in the processes. At the time, it felt only natural to extend this study by actually experiencing rehearsal processes within the contexts of practitioners' own environments.

When I conducted my rehearsal placements central to this thesis, particular sets of critical thinking informed my initial observations. My objective during each rehearsal process was to remain open to the (complex) goings-on,

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process—and I adopt these abbreviations throughout the thesis (this also distinguishes the productions from the playscripts).

[2] The rehearsal projects at Performance Studies at Sydney University are further explained and outlined in Chapter One.

and to record (via notebook and pen) as much as possible. I was careful not only to document how practitioners constructed sign-systems but also the 'business' involved in producing the shows. At the time, Goffman's 'frame analysis' (1974) was a primary analytic.[3] Gregory Bateson (1972) and Erving Goffman are responsible for developing the concepts of 'frame' and 'framework', arguing that they are 'set off' by a number of communicative markers or cues indicating how a sequence of signs should be interpreted (Goffman 1974). A frame analytic was a useful departure point to consider the common sense relations in a theatre rehearsal process: practitioners (in their social reality) work to construct a dramatic fiction. Therefore my observations partly revolved around constructions of (the 'frames' of) social realities and fictional worlds. It was only on leaving 'the field' and beginning to reflect and write up the experience that the inadequacies of much theory became apparent. For instance, Goffman's 'frame' analytic reified the 'fictional world' and 'social reality' without explicating practitioners' less conscious construction of such 'frames'; performance semiotics might begin accounting for the self-reflexive meaning-making processes of actors and directors but not for broader socio-cultural concerns or the layers of the practitioners' discourses; discourse analysis may reveal the competing metaphorics but does not engage with embodiment. Overall, any one of these theories in isolation tended to move the analysis above and away from the thing at hand: the thickness of rehearsals, with the hum of administration, the methodical script analysis, the sweating bodies, the moments of boredom, and the pulsing adrenaline.

In the rehearsal processes for *Season* and *Reg*, practitioners engaged with a playtext and with one another to create a fictional world for the audience. In this sense I was privy to the self-conscious practices of these artists as they drew on sign-systems of set, costume, gesture, voice, movement, and so on. But I was privy to other dimensions of the process as well. Crucially, I

[3] Goffman employs Gregory Bateson's term 'frame', assuming that 'definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles or organization which govern events—at least social ones—and our subjective involvement in them; frame is a word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify' (1974: 10-11).

was exposed to the less conscious construction of selves in the rehearsal room (in particular the reification of 'actor' and 'character'), figurings of textuality and authorship (individuals—in this case playwrights—being invested with the charisma of the creative artist, and practitioners invoking discourses of authorship for individual legitimation), and the *Realpolitik* of production (understandings of the broader cultural sphere of production). There was also a dimension of embodied experience, where practitioners' knowledges operated at a level somehow distinct from a purely cognitive realm of understanding. Linked to this was the sense that, for both the practitioners and for myself as well, rehearsals were experienced not only in terms of 'understanding' but also in terms of 'sensing' and bodily affect.

What, then, do I need to tell the story of *Season* and *Reg*? The answers involve frameworks dealing with the minutiae of daily rehearsal work, the actors' physicality, the questions of where and how these rehearsals are located within the sphere of theatre-making in Sydney, spatio-temporal issues (since *Season* and *Reg* occurred in particular places at particular times), and how exactly the rehearsals get experienced by the people involved. This thesis, therefore, has two encompassing aims. The first is to analyse the day-to-day micropractices and experiences of rehearsal in their 'lived immediacy'.[4] The realization of this first aim also involves the interrogation of macro-contexts—socio-cultural, historical, and institutional concerns—and the exploration of relationships between these practices and contexts. The second aim is to develop a methodology to study other people's rehearsal practices. This is a departure from those models advocating a performance-as-research approach, as I suggest the productiveness of being 'outside'[5] the work rather than being directly involved in its creation.

[4] Michael Jackson draws on Ricoeur to describe phenomenology: 'an attempt to describe human consciousness in its lived immediacy' (1996: 2).
[5] This is not meant to reify 'insideness' or 'outsideness'—the epilogue to this thesis interrogates these terms.

This is how critical ethnography came to be central to my project, for it has enabled me to investigate these very questions. As Chapter One will suggest, critical ethnography offers ways of thinking about the quotidian detail of the everyday as well as the broader socio-cultural dimensions. It specifically addresses bodily practice, individuals' experiences of the worlds in which they live, and, importantly, it provides frameworks within which to investigate the position of the researcher. Reading Michael Jackson's introduction to *Things As They Are* (1996), where he sketches some guidelines for a phenomenological anthropology, was an important turning point in my research. He reassures researchers that 'telling the story' is enough, and that lived human experience is both pedestrian and magical.

0.3 Fieldwork

To this end, I borrow anthropological frameworks, in particular the term 'fieldwork', to describe the many hours and weeks I spent in the rooms with the practitioners. During the processes I kept what I refer to as a 'fieldwork diary' full of raw jottings from each day's documentation. I have referred to the subsequent writing up of this initial diary work as 'rehearsal notes'. This is to distinguish the spontaneous note-taking during the fieldwork from the more reflective, nuanced, organised material I generated later on. My research is based on a select period of time—rehearsals in May to July 1997 and January 1998—as well as interviews conducted between 1997 and 2002. The interviews subsequently bear on the rehearsal processes and production work of 1997 and 1998. My adoption of the idea of 'fieldwork' is meant to be analogous rather than homologous to the way it is used in anthropology and other fieldwork-based disciplines. I am by no means suggesting that sitting in on rehearsal processes in Sydney is 'just like' spending months or even years in a radically different cultural environment. In fact, the conclusion to this thesis addresses some of the implications for research when the researcher studies (in) very familiar socio-cultural settings.

Most of the rehearsal literature written thus far has focussed on prominent artists: Peter Brook, Peter Hall, Maria Irene Fornes, Simon Callow, Max Stafford-Clark, Elinor Renfield, Arianne Mnouchkine, Anthony Sher, Sam Sheperd, and Arthur Miller, to name a few. When, early on in my research, I was busily securing my first rehearsal placement, it did not occur to me to target one of the larger companies in Sydney (or, for that matter, nationally). It was not, and never has been, a preoccupation of mine to exclusively document the work of high-profile actors and directors within a flag-ship company. Rather than selecting a production on the basis of how well the artists and the organisation were 'recognised', I was more concerned with how groups and individuals struggled to *get* recognised, and once recognised, how they continued to carve out space for themselves. In this way, the two productions were mainstream in the sense that they adopted a page-to-stage trajectory. However, they were not mainstage.

I undertook two placements because at the time I wondered if comparing and contrasting the practices might be useful. The opportunity for the second placements emerged in potentially productive ways. During rehearsals for *Season*, one of the actors—Peter—asked if I would be interested in documenting rehearsals for a show he would be producing and performing it in January the following year: *My Night With Reg*. Considering the possible productiveness of undertaking this process, I isolated five ideas or questions:

> i. how would Peter be different working as a producer/actor rather than solely an actor?;
> ii. the directors of the two productions, Tony and Mary-Anne, both studied at the same prominent drama school: how might their approaches relate?;
> iii. *Reg* was being rehearsed and performed just blocks up the road from New Theatre where *Season* was produced: what is the role of 'place' in the rehearsal process?;

iv. *Reg* was being produced for the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras: how do broader contexts relate to the daily practice of practitioners' work?; and, finally,
v. how might a 'professional' show (*Reg*) compare to a 'semi-professional'[6] one (*Season*)?

These questions were foregrounded in the months leading up to the *Reg* documentation. However, within days or even hours into the process, the *Season* weeks receded from my immediate consciousness and the initial questions lost some clarity. From the outset, *Reg* became all-consuming, and it was not at all possible to conceive of it merely as something with which to reflect on *Season*: my entire experience seemed to move beyond a 'compare and contrast' framework.

That said, in the writing up of the research and in the compiling of this thesis, I have resisted dealing with each of the rehearsal processes in turn. There is a compulsion to present the processes equally, since there is such an excitement and intensity in both—Jim Hiley describes theatre rehearsal in terms of 'comedy and tragedy' (1981: x)—and, in many ways, I can no longer think of one process without the other. Michael Jackson describes fieldwork as 'messy' (1996); the actor, Simon Callow, writes of rehearsal as 'murky' (1984: 163): both the *Season* and *Reg* processes were so specifically nuanced and complex that, rather than simply sketch out the similarities and differences, each required a depth of attention in order to maintain the integrity of the research. The result is that the writing in this thesis moves in and out of each of the processes, sometimes leaping between descriptions and sometimes considering the groups together in order to reflect on broader social and cultural contexts.

I attended the opening night of the performance for both shows, and the following chapters address the ways in which the theatre groups organised

[6] Chapter Four explores a discourse of 'professionalism', examining how it operates to 'centralise' or 'marginalise' productions (Fotheringham 1998).

the experience for the audience (for instance, the cocktails, the opening night party). However, my analysis does not extend into the performance as such. It has not been a project to study how particular meanings made in rehearsal got taken up by the practitioners during the run of the show, or, for that matter, how spectators came to understand and experience the productions. The emphasis in this thesis is less on the perspectives offered by semiotic and performance analysis,[7] and more on the ways in which practitioners make sense of what it is that they do when they rehearse theatre. The following analysis is not directed towards uncovering what the theatre-making 'meant'—how performance elements encode 'meaning'—but, rather, I examine how the rehearsal work was understood as being meaning*ful* for those practitioners involved in the two processes and for myself as an observer.[8]

0.4 Names and Terminology

There are a large number of cast and crew names scattered throughout the thesis: over 50 people. I have used first names[9] because that is how we all addressed one another. The upshot is that the following chapters are littered with names: Steve, Steven, Stephen, Pete, Peter, etc. I wondered if using initials or some other code would not only distance the reader but might also result in some confusion. Moreover, by reinforcing first names (and therefore individual people) I hoped to avoid what Geertz refers to as 'ethnographic ventriloquism' (in Desjarlais 1992: 31) where researchers collapse all voices into one anonymous mass: 'blindly "doing" the natives in different voices' (31). Using actual names also has the effect of

[7] While theatre semiotics has been a dominant paradigm to engage with theorising and analysing live theatre, it is not the only approach. For instance, Maria Shevtsova has developed what she terms 'the sociology of the theatre' where she researches how productions are located within specific socio-cultural and historical settings, and how different audience members (from various socio-economic backgrounds) engage with such productions (see Shevtsova 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1993, 1997). More recently, she has taken Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' in order to discuss the stagings of particular shows (see Shevtsova 2002). For other works on social semiotics, see also Alter 1990.

[8] Ian Maxwell (2003: 180-88) makes a similar point in his work on the Hip Hop community in Sydney.

[9] See appendix 1 and appendix 11 for full cast and crew lists.

foregrounding those practitioners other than the directors;[10] the actors and the crew, for instance, are not reduced to nameless bodies.

In this thesis, there are not only practitioners' names, but characters' names as well, and there are specific ways in which the actor/character relationship has been notated. When referring to actors during a rehearsal, I sometimes accompany their name with their character role in capital letters (for example, Steven (GUY)) as a reminder of the relationship. However, when describing an actor in the stage space delivering a line or moving in a particular way, I refer to 'Steven/ GUY'. The use of the solidus rather than parentheses is to distinguish those moments in rehearsal when, according to the practitioners, the actor was performing his or her character. This particular notation is a departure from the way in which other writers have negotiated this relationship. Both Robert Benedetti and Susan Letzler Cole, in their respective writings of rehearsal processes, tend not to use actors' names and instead rely on characters' names. For instance, Benedetti writes about his rehearsals for a production of *Hamlet* and refers to the actor playing LAERTES: 'Laertes suggests that his sister is present' (1985: 113). Benedetti is explaining that the *actor* made a suggestion during the rehearsal for a scene. Similarly, Cole sometimes writes of actors as if they were the characters ('Dunyasha says...') (1995: 28). The decision by these writers is problematic as it effaces the actual identities of the performers. It also fails to nuance the actors being 'in' or 'out' of character. The use of the terms 'actor' and 'character' is not meant to reify these two highly constructed ideas, and this thesis interrogates how these terms operated during daily practice. Moreover, I refer to 'practitioners' as 'individuals', 'cultural participants', or 'social agents'. Again, however, this is not to reify them. In using 'agent', I am not unproblematically suggesting 'agency', and even a common sense idea such as 'individual' is addressed in the thesis.

[10] On the director as the most studied figure in the existing literature on rehearsal, see Chapter One.

Throughout the chapters, I use 'theatre' and 'performance' interchangeably, which, perhaps given the intense debates about these terms in some areas of Performance Studies, [11] requires a brief explanation. In this project, I hope to rethink the place of 'theatre' in Performance Studies. In terms of the relationship between Theatre Studies and Performance Studies, McAuley suggests that, in the various demarcation disputes taking place over the last half century, the 'tyranny of the text' has been denounced in favour of avant garde and alternative work. This 'perceived gulf' was, by the 1990s, often referred to as an opposition between 'theatre' and 'performance' (2001: 15). However, in my mind, the differences seem to be more to do with methodology than with the object of study. It would no doubt be possible to do a Theatre Studies-type analysis of an avant garde performance, just as it is possible to do a Performance Studies-type analysis of mainstream theatre. For some academics, the distinctions are not even so pronounced. From a European perspective, the divide between performance theatre and dramatic theatre is not so stark, and 'text-based theatre' not so contested a category (McAuley 2001: 8). By focussing on theatre rehearsal, this thesis is not an attempt, in McAuley's terms, to 'recolonise' Theatre Studies (17), but in fact to adopt a Performance Studies approach—one that involves anthropology, sociology, semiotics, post-structural theory—to studying theatre. My thesis recognises that theatre means something to groups of practitioners in Sydney—for some it is their whole lives—and it explores research approaches that offer ways to think about the way these practitioners made sense of the theatre rehearsal processes they constructed.

0.5 Making Theatre-Making

This thesis is about making theatre-making. It is about making theatre-making in four major ways.

[11] Richard Schechner's well-known proclamation that theatre would be the 'string-quartet of the 21st century' (2000: 5)—a proclamation he has more recently softened—is still suggestive of the sort of theatre/performance binaries that have been continually invoked over the years.

Firstly, the practitioners were making theatre; they were involved in weeks and weeks of rehearsals, working towards an opening night of performance; their practice was couched within a specific, defined temporality. Throughout the following analysis, I am careful to foreground the kind of time involved in such a venture: as Clifford argues, 'Cultures do not hold still for their portraits' (1986: 10). Being in that room with those practitioners, I had the distinct sense of experiencing the rhythm of their specific performance-practice: I felt the bodily knowledge 'on the pulses' (in Conquergood 1991: 187). I felt the rhythms, flows, lurches and stutters of rehearsal practice.

Secondly, the practitioners were social agents involved in a process of cultural praxis[12] where they made and recreated what it was to rehearse theatre; their work was a process of constructing cultural activity where they implicitly and explicitly set out what rehearsal is and should be. They were in Samuel Weber's terms 'instituting their interpretations' (1987) of theatre-making; they were engaging in (micro)political struggles to state, name and label what real theatre was. Ian Maxwell, drawing on Weber, describes this process as '*making a real*'; where social agents (in this case, the practitioners) make moves in 'a real-making game'; where agents attempt to institutionalise their own interpretations of the world (2003: 36).

Thirdly, my work as a researcher and writer 'makes theatre-making' in that it develops theoretical frameworks in order to think and write about rehearsal. It explicitly foregrounds methodology, not only by reviewing approaches to rehearsal studies of the past forty odd years, but also by actively advancing organising principles, or ways into dealing with the 'density' and 'murkiness'. Chapter One lays out the theoretical concerns of the thesis, while Chapters Two to Five constitute the rehearsal analysis proper.

[12] I have borrowed the term 'cultural praxis' from Zarrilli (1998) who uses it to understand the practices and discourses of Kalarippayattu in Southern India.

Finally, this thesis engages in a labour, or 'making', of storytelling. James Clifford foregrounds the writing aspect of the ethnographic enterprise, and maps out how such writing is determined (for example, contextually, rhetorically, institutionally) (1986: 6). He is careful to spell out the processual nature of ethnographic writing, how it is approached, how it is undertaken, and, importantly, the 'cultural poetics' of it (12). In one sense, the analysis throughout this thesis is a creation, for 'ethnography [...] is always caught up in the invention, not the representation of cultures' (Wagner in Clifford 1986: 2). That said, it is a creation grounded in the lived practices of the theatre practitioners. Jackson argues that 'it is never enough to say that ethnography is a form of writing', for it should be propelled by 'a vision of the world' (1996: 43). He writes: 'fieldwork-based writing affirms that truth must not be seen as an unmasking which eclipses the appearance of the thing unmasked' (4). Rather than focus on the creative dimension of ethnography, Jackson is suggesting that it should be a 'form of disclosure which does [fieldwork] justice' (4). In my case, the following analysis is less about 'poetics' and more about 'doing justice' to the weeks and weeks of rehearsal work.

chapter one

'Comedy and Tragedy Against a Background of Slog': Refining Happenstance into Methodology[13]

1.0 Introduction

Later chapters of the thesis constitute the ethnographic analysis of *Season* and *Reg.* In order to prepare the ground for this, it is productive and indeed necessary to consider the various methods adopted by writers in their efforts to write about theatre rehearsal. Jim Hiley (1981) and Brian Cox (1992), who have both written rehearsal accounts of productions, each independently refer to their work as being a 'story'. It is the labour of storytelling and, in particular, methodological issues, that occupy this chapter, In the following pages, I review a wide range of literature on rehearsal, from newspaper articles, to interviews with directors and actors, to practitioners writing about their own work, as well as systematic accounts of rehearsal processes. These sources, while by no means exhaustive, do provide a productive overview of the sort of research and writing approaches that have thus far been adopted, and I have distilled key issues that will prove pivotal in advancing the methodology adopted in this thesis as well as a possible methodology for future rehearsal studies. Three important questions frame this chapter: Whose rehearsal practice is being studied or reflected upon and by whom? What is it to theorise such work? And, lastly, what might be involved in doing empirically-based research?

[13] The first part of this chapter title is taken from Jim Hiley's *Theatre At Work: The Story of the National Theatre's production of Brecht's Galileo* (1981: x); the second part is borrowed from the editors of *New Theatre Quarterly* in their introduction to Gay McAuley's article, 1998, Vol. 38: 183-94.

For the purposes of teasing out the main methodological questions of the thesis, the writings are grouped into three overarching categories: accounts of rehearsal written by insiders; accounts written by outsiders; and theorised accounts by academics. The first two categories make up Part One, while the third—the category most central to my project—constitutes Part Two. By organising the source material in this way, I hope to foreground specific research positions: what is it to be deeply embedded in the rehearsal practices? What is it to be separate from them? And what is it to understand theatre rehearsal within the context of explicit critical thinking?

Finally, Part Three of this chapter advances the methodological and theoretical framework of the thesis before mapping out the shape of the remaining chapters. Critical ethnography[14]—an inherently interdisciplinary area—informs the overall shape of my work, with dimensions of sociology, historiography, discourse analysis, semiotics, phenomenology and hermeneutics creating a dynamic theoretical weave. In this way, I adopt a pragmatic use of theory. The object of my study is unusual for the dominant North American model of performance studies, which has been only peripherally concerned with investigating western theatre practices as they occur in particular places and temporal settings. Specifically, in Euro-American performance studies and theatre studies, there is an absence of empirical social research on contemporary theatre rehearsal and on its related cultural institutions. The empirical focus of my study, then, is unusual not only for performance studies but for ethnography also, as I set about further developing a critical framework within which to study very familiar cultural practices. There are three domains that constitute the main areas of theoretical debate in this thesis. The first is that of developing a microanalysis of theatre rehearsal work. To this end, I draw on social semiotics, discourse analysis and phenomenology to understand the way the practitioners understood their day-to-day work. The second is that of

[14] I use the term 'critical ethnography'. However, this is not to homogenise what Clifford calls 'a blurred purview' (1986: 3)), since the research and writing approaches that identify themselves as ethnographic constitute multiple developing perspectives (3).

macro-institutional contexts where the micropractices are located within broader cultural spheres of institutional struggle and legitimation. The third involves questions of embodiment, and is divided into two separate areas: firstly, how the rehearsal practices were emplaced within specific environments, and how they were subject to, and at the same time informed, a specific temporality; and secondly, how practitioners' professional knowledge was not only articulated verbally but also physically.

Thus, to recap: Part One studies how practitioners directly involved in the work have written and thought about rehearsal, and then it looks at how people outside the practices have observed and written about rehearsal; Part Two examines how academics have started theorising theatre rehearsal; and Part Three outlines the methodology of my own thesis.

PART ONE
MAPPING THE LITERATURE

1.1.i Insider Accounts on Rehearsal

Rehearsal accounts by practitioners about their own work come in the form of interviews, short articles where actors or directors reflect on particular rehearsal processes, practitioners writing about their specific working approach, and lengthy casebooks where directors and actors document the daily work of rehearsal throughout a specific process. Overall, while this material offers insights into the usually private sphere of rehearsal, it does not necessarily extend into examining or describing the minutiae of what actually occurs over the weeks and even months of a process.

Since at least the early 1960s, some theatre and performance journals—notably *TDR*[15] and *New Theatre Quartlerly* (*NTQ*)[16]—have

[15] Originally *Tulane Drama Review* between 1955-1966 , the journal was then renamed *The Drama Review* (1967-).
[16] Originally *Theatre Quarterly* in the 1970s, the journal was resuscitated in the 1980s to become *New Theatre Quarterly*.

regularly published interviews with practitioners, the emphasis here being on finding out about the working processes either of a specific production or general practice. The sense of these pieces is journalistic rather than academic, as interviews elicit personal ideas from practitioners without any critical analysis or explicit theoretical framework. In 1963 the editors of *TDR* interviewed Herbert Blau about his production of *King Lear* for an Actors' Workshop (Blau 1963). They asked Blau how, during rehearsals, did he make the actors aware of the dark world of the play? Blau replied:

> By various objective and subliminal means, including the mise en scène and music. But, to begin with, we read the text carefully and looked over our own world... Affective memory of the larger traumas is important, but what we also looked for was the subtler fault, the thing you do and don't mean to do, the psychopathology of everyday life, the suicidal trap in our more conventional behaviour, that little slip of will that becomes deadly (1963: 125).

This interview is representative of the style and format of all the interviews with practitioners: they are encouraged to reflect on their rehearsal approach. And, rather than provide details of working hours or production pragmatics (for instance, budgets), the information concentrates on practitioners' attitudes to rehearsing and performing (for further interviews, see also Robertson 1964; Schechner and Lee 1964; Carlson 1967; Kellman 1976; Pegnato 1981; Champagne 1981; Allen 1986; Féral 1989).[17] In all this work, the emphasis is less on providing systematic accounts of theatre processes or on finding ways to theorise such practice and more on gleaning insights—albeit useful insights—into an area of practice usually kept secret from the public. This is most apparent in the way that interesting stories or comments are foregrounded over what might be seen as the more mundane dimension of practice. In fact, the articles are not unlike the sort of publicity pieces published in Arts sections of newspapers when a

[17] While the main style of such articles is in interview format, one paper I found was actually authored by a practitioner who wrote about his experience as an actor working with director Joan Littlewood. Rather than focussing on his own practice, Howard Goorney (1966) concentrates on Littlewood's approach, and therefore the piece reads more as observational than participatory as he describes her process rather than focussing on his own. Also, while interviews elicit fairly unstructured and discursive responses from practitioners, Goorney's written paper allows him to organise his thinking and present it in a structured format.

production is due to open. For instance, in 2001, there was a spate of pieces in the *Sydney Morning Herald* specifically about the rehearsals of upcoming shows (see McDonald 2001; Jinman 2001; Adamson 2001). Here the reader, or in this case, prospective spectator, is allowed a seductive 'behind-the-scenes' glimpse of theatre practitioners at work.

Practitioners who write about their own working methods differ from the short interview-based format in that their writing involves a more intense degree of reflection and rigour. These writers have spent time organising their thinking and structuring the material. However, as in the interviews, many assumptions are made about rehearsal procedures, and there is an emphasis on directors' or actors' processes rather than, for instance on the day to day workings of a rehearsal room. In the first part of the twentieth century, a number of significant directors were engaged, to differing extents, in documenting their own practice: Andre Antoine, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Edward Gordon Craig, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jacques Copeau, Max Reinhardt, Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht and Jerzy Grotowski (see Bradby and Williams 1988; Cole and Krich Chinoy 1966). Brecht, who was especially interested in the rehearsal process, outlined what he saw as the fifteen 'Phases of a Production' from analysing the play, through to 'reading' rehearsal, 'positioning' rehearsal, and finally opening night (Willett 1964: 240-2). He preserved some of his staging solutions through photographic records, and then turned to documenting rehearsals themselves using stenographic records, and, in the case of rehearsals for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1953-4), through wire recordings (Fuegi 1987: 132). Writings by contemporary directors include those by Peter Brook and Robert Benedetti. Brook's comments on rehearsal provide an important guide to his directorial approach: 'rehearsal work should create a climate in which the actors feel free to produce everything they can bring to the play' (1988: 3). While not all directors focus solely on rehearsal, they do provide general theatre approaches and the writings are therefore potentially useful for anyone interested in rehearsal. More specific methods are offered by Robert Benedetti with his book *The Director at Work* (1985) where he provides a

work book for would-be directors. The Australian director Rex Cramphorn was rigorous in developing and, to an extent, theorising his own practice. His paper 'L'Illusion Comique to Theatrical Illusion: Textual Changes for Performance' (in McAuley 1987: 59-71) documents how and why he made changes to the French playtext in his 1978 production. Two (unpublished) papers also address working methods in rehearsal: one involving what he calls an 'unimposed directorial style' and the other a possible approach for actors in rehearsal (see Minchinton 1998).

While this territory is dominated by directors, Simon Callow's book *Being An Actor* (1995) is a notable exception. The writing is not a systematic reflection of working practice in, say, the way that Benedetti or Cramphorn offer. However, it certainly departs from memoir in that, rather than map a personal history, Callow aims to 'give an account of the whole experience of an actor—not merely the career, but the psychological and emotional circumstances in which we find ourselves: what it's *like* to be an actor, externally and internally' (1995: xiii). (The publishers include an endorsement on the book's front cover by Ian McKellen—"The most honest book written about us all"—thereby further reinforcing Callow's authority to speak on behalf of 'all' actors.) Callow weaves anecdotes about rehearsal throughout the first two-thirds of the book, and in the last part he (briefly) charts chronologically ('Day One', 'Day Two', etc.) his journey of a 'usual' rehearsal process (here he amalgamates many theatre experiences into what he sees as the typical characteristics of each stage of the process).

While all this work provides insights, it does not address actual practice or the pragmatics of rehearsal work. For example, Brook writes: 'The final stages of rehearsal are very important, because at that moment you push and encourage the actor to discard all that is superfluous, to edit and tighten' (1988: 4). While this is partly revealing of his approach, it does not extend into how this philosophy is actually manifested. It lies with the reader to imagine the minutiae of the execution of such an approach.

Rehearsal monographs by directors and actors about specific rehearsal processes depart from the material discussed thus far—that is, more general examinations of ideas or approaches to rehearsing and performing—in that they address rehearsal at the level of daily practice. These accounts differ from the short articles in that they involve a sustained engagement with the rehearsal processes and, importantly, a written document reflecting such a time (as opposed to a brief summary of weeks and weeks of work). However, as may be expected, these writers concentrate on their own processes, and therefore they produce very particular orders of knowledge. A well-known account by a director about his own process is Max Stafford-Clark's *Letters to George* (1989) where he documents his work on the productions of *The Recruiting Officer* and *Our Country's Good.* Directors rarely document their own process of specific rehearsals, and for this reason Stafford-Clark's account is unusual. [18] And, because he structures the book through a series of letters to the dead playwright, George Farquhar (he opens each entry with 'Dear George'), Stafford-Clark offers a sustained first-hand insight into a director-playwright relationship during a rehearsal period. Just as Stafford-Clark's casebook is a rare director's account, Anthony Sher's *Year of the King* (1995) provides an actor's account of rehearsal (see also Cox 1992). Unlike Simon Callow who summarises the rehearsal experience, Sher takes the reader through his day by day working process by way of a diary he wrote during the year he worked on *Richard III.* As in Callow's book, however, the writing not only concentrates on craft but the full experience, with much time devoted to the psychological and emotional journey of the actor. Sher's account of playing Richard III is interlaced with accounts of his therapy sessions. Similarly, the language Callow uses is in terms of 'experience', with a distinct emphasis on how it feels to be an actor (the book's title—*Being An Actor*—strongly invokes this also). This orientation features far less in Stafford-Clark's writing. These two different orientations reflect the different constructions of directors and actors more generally. The directors write about their

[18] Stanislavsky documented his own process, and while the material does not provide rehearsal accounts per se, it does offer insights into his working method (McAuley 1998: 75). See Konstantin Stanislavsky 1948; S.D. Balukhaty 1952.

approaches and how to deal with actors, while the actors often concentrate on their own journey and experiences (this distinction is also quite obvious with practitioner interviews). Consequently, actor accounts will often privilege sensations—one order of knowledge—over what they see as production details—another order of knowledge. Actor Bill Wallis' casebook for *TQ* includes a disclaimer: 'My view of the production will be impressionist rather than coolly coherent' (1971: 83). The distinction between the way that directors write and think and the way that actors do is important since the literature on and by directors far outweighs the material on and by actors. Accounts by directors cannot be deemed to reflect on practice for all.[19] Also, the accounts discussed so far are written by 'insiders' who are not only practitioners but are directly involved in the production. Consequently, while the reader may gain a sense of what it's 'like' to be a director or an actor in rehearsal, these writers do not provide alternative perspectives. In fact, the differences between directors' and actors' writings foregrounds the extent to which practitioners concentrate on their own experiences.

So far, this chapter has explicitly suggested that insiders can provide special orders of knowledge—general ideas of what it is like to direct or act—but this knowledge rarely extends to the description of daily practice or to the detailed pragmatics of production. Just because a practitioner may be directly involved in a theatre rehearsal process (and, therefore, seemingly at the centre of knowledge about that process) does not necessarily make the work transparent to that practitioner. That is, the common sense dimension of rehearsal is indeed so obvious to practitioners—it constitutes the very blocks on which rehearsals are built and sustained—that it has, in a sense, disappeared from the view of the directors and actors.

1.1.ii Outsider Accounts on Rehearsal

If being 'inside' the theatre productions is not altogether the uncontested privileged position, how have outside observers written about theatre

[19] This is not to homogenise 'directors' and 'actors'.

rehearsal? Articles by writers observing rehearsal practices, as well as lengthier studies in the form of rehearsal monographs and collections of rehearsal material, all start to access the sort of common sense details that insiders invariably overlook. Overall, the descriptions of practice and of the production machine are more developed. However, the onus is on these writers to make their agendas explicit. This is not only central to questions of methodology but also the implicit and explicit questions that frame any given project.

Surprisingly, while theatre rehearsal has not been theorised to any real extent by European or North American academics, writers have written about it. As early as 1971, *Theatre Quarterly* (*TQ*), in its very first edition, published what they termed a 'production casebook' which concentrated on the rehearsals of a specific production. These casebook studies continued to be a feature of the journal in the first twenty-two editions until 1976. So, for five years, *TQ* engaged in a sustained commitment to documenting some rehearsal happenings.[20] The actual methodology adopted by the writers raises important questions regarding what it is to be involved or uninvolved in rehearsal. The editors of *TQ* asked practitioners themselves to keep diaries during their work: the casebooks were based on information collected by an actor or assistant director directly involved in the production. Then, usually, an outside writer would help the practitioner organise the material for the journal. Rather than providing a single story or trajectory, these studies are a collection of excerpts from the playtext, directors' comments, rehearsal schedules, a history of the particular theatre company, casting decisions, correspondence between actors and directors, and so on. The work is reminiscent of archive material not yet organised or structured. This is not to say that it is not insightful, for a reader is certainly

[20] Since TQ, there has not been a theatre or performance journal devoted specifically to rehearsal, however individual articles have been published. These range from offering a brief chronological casebook (see Rayment 1982), to focussing on the director's work (see Trousdell 1986, 1991; Harrison 1986; Minchinton 1998), to documenting the company's work (see Arratia 1992; Lyons 1999). As might be expected, these articles deal with high-profile directors and companies; for instance, Giorgio Strehler, Peter Sellars, the Wooster Group, and the Berliner Ensemble. This departs from the TQ casebooks where, due to

introduced to some of the layers of production business, the many people involved in the creative decision making, as well as some of those decisions themselves. However, the research approach largely accounts for the sort of piecemeal nature of the records collected: As director Peter Cheesman bluntly puts it:

> The Editors of *Theatre Quarterly* approached me for suggestions for possible Casebook studies of productions, and I expressed my personal distaste at the inevitably pretentious tone these seem to acquire. I know no professional director who keeps a diary of his thoughts and plans, as the circumstances under which most of us work in British professional theatres are frantic, with short rehearsal periods of four, three or even two weeks. There is simply no time for the luxury of reflection—often even for the luxury of planning. Rehearsal time is the most expensive commodity in the theatre (1971: 86).

The sort of material published in these casebooks, and the organisation of this material, also foregrounds the lack of explicit agendas at work for the writers. Put simply, there were no obvious questions driving the collection of such information. That said, because the interest in rehearsal documentation stretched over years, writers gradually became interested in more direct lines of inquiry: Gary O'Connor, assistant director on Arnold Wesker's *The Friends*, writes that he edited his account 'on the basis of the question, should an author direct his own play?' (1971: 78); Bill Wallis and Ed Wilson (1972: 29), two actors, concentrate on what it is like to rehearse in a new theatre with a new theatre company, thereby foregrounding institutional concerns.

TDR was also interested in documenting rehearsal—however, unlike *TQ*, not as an ongoing project—and it was very much driven by a set of clear questions. In 1974, *TDR* published a 'Rehearsal Procedures Issue', where observers attended rehearsals of various productions. In the introduction, the editor, Michael Kirby, is candid about the aim of the journal issue:

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the sustained commitment to rehearsal documentation, there was an opportunity for less well-known groups to have their work recorded.

> We chose five of the most important and innovative contemporary theatres and have attempted to investigate their working methods with the assumption that new types of performance are being developed through new procedures and techniques (1974: 7).

The writers offer brief histories of each of the performance groups and then provide a summary of the rehearsal processes (see Ryder Ryan 1974; Deak 1974). The articles in the TDR issue are written by observers and are oriented differently to TQ as they are interested in how rehearsal research illuminates performance choices. The editor is explicit about the writers' aims: 'It was also hoped that study of the creative process would be another way to document the performances themselves—that, among other things, it would clarify certain pervasive qualities and stylistic aspects of the work' (1974: 7). In a way, the work is less concerned with rehearsal being a legitimate dimension of research and more interested in gleaning further insights into performance. This is why the other work—the TQ material—is potentially so interesting: it marks the start of projects researching rehearsal for its own ends rather than as a means to gather information into performance decisions.

Earlier I discussed rehearsal monographs by directors and actors, but there are accounts by observers as well. Due to the relative impartiality of the writer—or at least the distance from the production—these accounts are detailed and provide contexts that an 'insider' might be unable to offer. Peter Brook has welcomed certain observers into some of his rehearsal processes, and casebooks of productions have been published. Perhaps the best known is David Selbourne's *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1982) which documents Brook's famous 1970 production (see also Smith 1972; Heilpern 1977). Selbourne is methodical in his writing and the reader is offered a day-to-day working process of a director and (to a lesser extent) actors. And, because he is an observer and not a director or actor,[21] Selbourne is careful to document and explain particular exercises and exchanges that insider-accounts tend to gloss over. He writes of the first day of rehearsals:

> The play is to be read for the first time, squatting. And since, today, only the 'mechanicals' are present, they will take all the parts between them. Brook tells them that 'the associations, the lines, the correspondences' must be 'searched out', in order to 'enlarge and intensify the text's meaning'. Flicking through his copy, he instances Titania's 'And this same progeny of evil comes/ From our debate, from our dissension'. This, he says, anticipates both theme and mood of the play's coda. The actors are silent and burdened; their reading cautious (1982: 5).

Here Selbourne actually documents Brook's directions and the actors' responses, rather than, say, explaining Brook's ideas—abstracted from a pragmatic and embodied reality—about what rehearsal should be. Jim Hiley's *Theatre At Work* (1981) is an account of the National Theatre Company's production of *Galileo* and, like Selbourne's work, is detailed with dense descriptions.

These casebook accounts tend to focus on the work of the director. For instance, Simon Trussler's introduction to Selbourne's work is in fact a biography of Peter Brook, and the back cover blurb advertises the book as 'a writer's unique account of the imaginative processes of a director of genius'. Even the subtitle of the book is *An Eye-Witness Account of Peter Brook's Production From First Rehearsal to First Night.* Similarly, Hiley's account concentrates on the director, John Dexter, with Chapter One finishing on the dramatic statement: 'John Dexter was back' (1981: 12). And the whole of Chapter Two is devoted to a history of Dexter. This focus on the directors does not diminish the insights provided by these writers, but it is important to foreground the specific agendas and therefore what aspects of rehearsal are perhaps implicitly overlooked (for instance, actors' physical work).

However, Hiley, unlike Selbourne, also provides a context of the production machine and of the workings of the National Theatre as it attempts to mount a production.[22] For instance, it is significant that the first account of rehearsals with actors comes fifty-seven pages into the book. In the

[21] At the time of rehearsals, Selbourne was a young playwright.

introduction he explains, 'I attended production meetings and rehearsals, and was allowed to roam unchaperoned the corridors, workshops and offices of the National probing what was happening or just soaking up the atmosphere' (x). And he asked questions such as 'How was the National organised and what sort of place was it to work in?' (x). This interest in the institutional workings—implied in the book's subtitle, *The Story of the National Theatre's production of Brecht's Galileo*—is one of the areas where a rehearsal observer is more strategically placed to engage in an analysis whereas a practitioner, caught up in the actual rehearsing, could not spare the time or the distance to describe such details.

As well as the rehearsal monographs, there are several texts by academics who deal with acting theories and practice, or director theories and practice, in which rehearsal is couched in anecdotes and asides rather than being foregrounded in any way. Cole and Krich Chinoy's (eds.) collection, *Actors on Acting* (1975) provides an historical trajectory, beginning in Ancient Greece (with the artists of Dionysus) and moving through different eras. They draw on interviews, manifestos and meditations on acting to create a thick overview of some of the attitudes and approaches to acting in the Western tradition. Delgado and Heritage's (eds.) *In Contact With the Gods* (1996) is a collection of interviews with directors, and the overarching question driving the book involves defining the director's role. Again, as in *Actors on Acting*, rehearsal is mentioned sporadically as the texts address general reflections on practice. Similarly, Donkin and Clement's (eds.) *Upstaging Big Daddy* (1993) also provides a collection of practitioners' accounts of their own working process. Luere and Berger (eds.), in their book *The Theatre Team* (1988) extend beyond director and actor practice and offer a collection of definitions of some of the roles in producing theatre (for instance, 'The Producer'). Like the other collections, this book draws largely on interviews with practitioners, and is useful in that it provides a larger picture of the theatre machine. None of these collections is especially

[22] This is also a focus of Tirzah Lowen's casebook (1990) of Peter Hall directing *Antony and Cleopatra* at the National Theatre.

theorised—there is an absence of critical analysis—nor do they deal especially with rehearsal.[23]

Both Schomit Mitter and Susan Letzler Cole have written lengthy studies on rehearsal, and, unlike the other academic writing discussed thus far, they deal with very specific sets of theatre rehearsals. In their work, Mitter and Cole may be candid about their aims, however they are less clear in interrogating the methodological issues of their research approaches and the implicit critical frameworks they are bringing to the project. Mitter, in *Systems of Rehearsal* (1992), compares the rehearsal techniques used by Peter Brook with those developed by Brecht, Stanislavsky and Grotowski, and he assesses Brook's debt to these practitioners. Rather than concentrate on any one process (for instance in the way that Selbourne does), Mitter shifts from one context to another in order to study how Brook's work is shaped and informed by these earlier directors. His sources include the writings of Brook, Stanislavsky, Brecht and Grotowski as well as interviews with Brook and actors. What is interesting about Mitter's work is that he very explicitly attempts to develop a method of writing about rehearsal that is somewhere between what he describes as 'exercises abstracted from the reality of rehearsal'[24] and rehearsal logs which 'tend to be far too embroiled in the day-to-day details of workshop to give a sufficiently substantial account of the principles and aspirations that underlie the work they discuss' (1992: 2).[25] He recognises the need to ground general reflections on rehearsal in some sort of tangible context as well as avoiding a cumbersome casebook that, while accurate and detailed, is not necessarily making any theoretical advance. A problem with Mitter's work is that he compares Brook's work with, for instance, Stanislavsky's practices without necessarily understanding each director within a socio-cultural and historical setting. 'Directing' was a very different endeavour in

[23] Two texts that do not concentrate on rehearsal but do offer productive ways to theorise actor practice include Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion* (1986) and Phillip Zarrilli's *Acting (Re)Considered* (1995). They have contributed extensively to my project by consciously interrogating the discourses surrounding Western acting practice and, in particular, the constructions of body and selfhood that are invoked by practitioners.
[24] He specifically cites Viola Spolin's *Improvisation for the Theatre* (1983).
[25] He specifically cites David Selbourne's casebook.

the early twentieth century. As Tiffany Stern writes, 'Nowhere is the tendency to conflate modern and past theatrical practice more marked than in the field of rehearsal' (2000: 3). Stern critiques those theatre historians and literary critics who impose on a past a mythical system of practice (3), and yet we might extend this to include writers who generalise about 'late twentieth century practice' without actually studying the specific, idiosyncratic practices themselves.

As I have suggested, there are a number of written accounts of directors' work in rehearsal. These come in the form of interview, directors' own documented reflections, the casebooks of writers such as Selbourne and Hiley, and Mitter's compare-and-contrast approach focussing on Brook and some earlier twentieth-century directors. Susan Letzler Cole's book *Directors in Rehearsal: A Hidden World* (1992) is a notable departure from these other writings. She not only concentrates on analysing rehearsal processes in and of themselves (rather than using them solely to further understand performance choices), but her research is based on having documented hours and hours of professional work. This is a significant shift away from Mitter's gathering of second-hand sources. As Cole argues, the only way to study professional rehearsals is to observe them (1992: 3).

Cole manages the difficult task of collapsing hundreds of hours of rehearsal documentation into approachable yet detailed chapters. The book is divided into ten chapters—one per production—and, as the title of the book suggests, Cole focuses on the working practices of directors. For each case study, she describes single moments from one rehearsal session as anchor points while she draws on other sessions from the same process in order to tease out themes. For instance, in relation to Elinor Renfield's direction of *The Cherry Orchard*, Cole writes: 'A touching rehearsal of a tiny dialogue between Anya and Dunyasha in act one illustrates the difficulty and delicacy of ensemble work in a Chekhovian scene of conversational bypass' (28). Like Selbourne and Hiley, Cole carefully takes the reader through some of the minutiae of rehearsal practice—a tiny direction, an actor's

glance—and in a self-reflexive turn, Cole is careful to point out how her accounts relate to each rehearsal process as a whole:

> The *work* of rehearsal work—what, in fact, often makes actors irritable and frustrated—is the forced enactment of the flow and the stoppages that are inherent in all creative activity. My own analysis of rehearsal temporarily "stops" a process whose stoppages can only be understood as part of a continuum (9).

Cole's second book, *Playwrights in Rehearsal: The Seduction of Company* (2001), follows a similar structure to her earlier work. However, instead of examining the director, she focuses on another central figure in theatre rehearsal. Investigating and documenting rehearsals that were attended (and in some cases directed) by eight American playwrights, Cole poses the question: 'Are the presence and the absence of the playwright, at different points in rehearsal, equally empowering for the company?' (2001: xiii).

It is possible to build on Cole's work in at least three ways. Firstly, as Cole herself suggests, limiting each production to only one chapter perhaps inadequately reflects the sort of time practitioners spent on rehearsals. A six-week process cannot be sufficiently discussed or analysed in twenty pages. This is linked to the fact that Cole did not attend every rehearsal session but, rather, dipped in and out of the processes. A more sustained research approach—one that involves a lengthy time spent with practitioners—might produce an account that deals with the 'flow' as well as the 'stoppages'. Secondly, by focussing on the directors' and playwrights' practices, the actors are often figured as passive agents in the rehearsal process. As mentioned in the prologue to this thesis, when she discusses the actors she often uses the characters' names rather than the actors' names, thereby suggesting a certain anonymity. This limited attention towards the actors is also due to the very pragmatic reality that, as a documenter, it is far easier to record verbal exchanges—words that can be recorded with notebook and pen—as opposed to physical happenings. Directors (and perhaps to a lesser extent playwrights) talk more and will

therefore be seen to be doing more in rehearsal. Describing the movement of actors is a difficult task, and, therefore, in Cole's accounts, the performers are sometimes represented as merely existing to fulfil the director's vision. This is invariably associated with the implicit theoretical framework Cole adopts—one where the actor is the subject of the director's gaze—which brings me to my third point. Cole is ambivalent about the extent to which her work is actively theorised. In the introduction to her earlier book, she begins to explore the various metaphors the practitioners used to refer to directing—father-figure, mother, ideal parent, teacher, ghost, invisible presence third eye, voyeur, ego or superego, leader of an expedition to another world, autocratic ship captain, puppet-master, sculptor/visual artist, midwife, lover, marriage partner, literary critic, trainer for athletic team, trustee of democratic spirit, psychoanalyst, listener, surrogate-audience, author, harrower/gardener, beholder, ironic recuperator of the maternal gaze (1992: 5)— and she decides that 'the maternal gaze' comes closest to being the most overarching trope (4). She continues by saying she will not use 'the gaze' as an organising principle, explaining that 'while this [decision] may result in some lack of theoretical rigor, it may at the same time protect against some of the dangers of theoretical rigor' (4). Cole may not wish to explicitly hang her rehearsal observations on a Lacanian framework, however she does this at least implicitly by not only drawing directly on Lacanian analysis (62), but also by comparing rehearsal work with psychoanalytic theory in general (32). Richard Trousdell, in a review of Cole's book, argues that she draws heavily on Lacan, and he summarises her work as follows: 'How directors see, how their seeing affects what they see, and how being seen seeing influences the work of theatre are the core objects of this study' (1993: 62). The problem with avoiding 'theoretical rigor', as Cole puts it, is that there is no onus on the writer to identify, and, perhaps more importantly, interrogate the chosen research methodology. This becomes problematic when the writer mistakes a lack of explicit theory as somehow producing a more neutral, less obstructed account. In her 2001 book, there is even less reflexivity. All research at least implicitly adopts a methodological approach (even if the writer believes s/he is being

'objective'), and a task of an academic is to be reflexive about their approach.

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All these accounts of practitioners' practices and rehearsal work provide numerous methodological insights. Practitioners reflecting on their own work may offer glimpses into working processes, but this does not necessarily enable them to outline the more common sense dimensions of rehearsal. Rehearsal observers need to be clear about their agendas—to glean information into performance choices? to study a high-profile director's work?—and, importantly, they need to question what this research offers and what its limitations might be. Overall, the issue is one of reflexivity: researchers must be willing to identify and interrogate their methodological approaches. Part Two of this chapter considers those writers who have begun to develop critical frameworks within which to study very specific rehearsal processes as they occur in time and place.

PART TWO
REHEARSAL RESEARCH: TRACING TRAJECTORIES

1.2.i Transactional Analysis: Theatre and Psychology

In the early 1970s, psychology-based research on theatre rehearsal emerged. At the time, cognitive-behaviourist psychology was a relatively recent research paradigm, and Bowling Green State University in Ohio, USA, founded a journal, *Empirical Research in Theatre,* that acted as a point of intersection between this new paradigm and theatre studies. In 1973, three academics, Roger Hite, Jackie Czerepinski and Dean Anderson, authored the paper 'Transactional Analysis: A New Perspective for the Theatre' that would influence developments in one area of rehearsal research for at least the following fifteen years. Borrowing transactional analysis theory—a

psychology paradigm predicated on the assumption that humans have a basic biological need to interact with other humans—these writers transposed the framework into a theatre studies context. In their paper, they suggest that transactional analysis might assist dramatic criticism because it might go some way not only in explaining character interaction in a play but also the playwright's 'ego states' (1973: 8) that may have prompted him (sic) to write the play in the first place. But the most productive contribution for the generation of future work concerned theories of rehearsal interaction between directors and actors. While the intersection of these two paradigms—theatre studies and this particular model of psychology—might initially seem appealing and may even seem an obvious research direction, the methodological implications need to be seriously reconsidered.

Hite, Czerepinski and Anderson's 'experiment' involved teaching a university group of directors and actors a basic understanding of transactional theory (through lectures, improvisations and discussions) which they then used to discuss the 'psychological and motivational aspects of the production' (13). This theory was also used to 'manage' the

> interpersonal transactions that occur between director and actors. If the director is aware of the ego state of his [sic] actors, he is in a better position to maintain complementary transactions and to avoid many personality clashes that frequently arise from the heat of rehearsals (14).

This thinking provided the groundwork for future studies, including Robert Porter's paper 'Analyzing Rehearsal Interaction' (1975), and Stratos E. Constantinidis' paper 'Rehearsal as a Subsystem: Transactional Analysis and Role Research' (1988) (see also Miller and Bahs 1974).

Drawing heavily on transactional analysis and on techniques widely used in education research, Porter offers a model of verbal interaction between actors and directors during rehearsal. His work is steeped in a number of explicit assumptions concerning actor/director roles and relations. These assumptions—based on the understanding that rehearsal is a

teaching/learning process—are outlined under what he terms 'A Rehearsal Paradigm':

> the director influences the actors in such a way as to effect a desired change in their behaviour'; 'the actor experiences a teaching force exerted through the manipulation of stimuli and reinforcements'; 'In setting the objectives for each rehearsal, in lecturing and giving directions, in soliciting actor opinions, in praising or criticizing, in accepting or rejecting actor ideas and feelings, the director is the key agent in the rehearsal drama (1975: 4).

He establishes a binary between what he understands as the restrictive director (adopting an autocratic style) and the permissive director (who 'encourages maximum freedom for exploration and self-discovery' (5)), and he investigates the effects of these two directing styles by developing a framework to study actor/director interaction: an Observational System of Rehearsal Interaction Categories (OSRIC) (see figure 1.1).

Porter provides summaries of the categories. For instance, 'Acceptance of Feeling' is 'when the director says he [sic] understands how the actor feels or implies that the actor has the right to express both positive and negative feelings... when the director expresses interest or concern for the emotional well-being of the actor.' 'Initiation' (a subcategory of 'Actor Response') is 'when the actor makes a statement or contributes an idea that is not called for by the director' (13). 'Other' includes 'Actor/Actor Discussion' ('problem-solving talk among actors under the director's supervision') and 'Silence or Irrelevant Behaviour' ('all non-functional periods of general talk or of silence which is unrelated to the purpose of rehearsal') (15). As in the earlier transactional analysis research, Porter uses a university group of actors and directors, although at no stage does he clarify who the participants are exactly or where the experiments were conducted. Porter trained rehearsal observers in OSRIC, and, during rehearsal, they coded interaction every three seconds.

DIRECTOR DISPLAY and FEEDBACK	**Inclusive Influence**	1. Acceptance of feeling
		2. Praise and encouragement
		3. Accepting ideas
		4. Asking questions
	Preclusive Influence	5. Lecture
		6. Giving directions
		7. Corrective feedback
		8. Criticizing or justifying authority
ACTOR RESPONSE	**Personal**	9. Acknowledgement
		10. Initiation
		11. Negative affect
		12. Positive affect
		13. Questions
	Performance	14. Directed rehearsal
OTHER		15. Actor/actor discussion
		16. Silence or irrelevant behaviour

figure 1.1, An Observational System of Rehearsal Interaction Categories (OSRIC)

The codes were used to produce a 'General Matrix Analysis' involving three indexes:

1. Interaction Index: the amount of director/actor interaction with the total time spent in the rehearsal session;
2. Director/Actor Ratio: the extent to which either dominated discussion;
3. Director Influence Ratio: 'This index is a precise measure of the extent to which any given director can be said to use a blend of the two styles [inclusive and preclusive directing]' (20).

In 1988, fifteen years after the original 'transactional analysis' article was published, Constantinidis wrote a paper investigating 'the director/actor interaction in order to understand the real leadership-style properties of the rehearsal process' and, secondly, 'the ways an actor carries out a role' (1988: 66). He understands the results as producing what he calls a 'subsystem' of rehearsal, where the 'logocentric' nature of what he sees as the 'traditional' model of rehearsal is challenged (64). Constantinidis draws on both Porter's work as well as Suzanne Trauth's paper (1980) in order to examine 'permissive and restrictive rehearsal communication systems in actor task involvement and rehearsal atmosphere' (1988: 67). Rather than conducting his own experiments as per Porter and Trauth, Constantinidis borrows their psychology-based frameworks and their research findings, and he collects accounts of rehearsals to hypothesise what might have been the 'transaction' characteristics of, for instance, Grotowski's rehearsals, Brook's rehearsals and rehearsals that actor and director, Joseph Chaikin, has been involved in. Constantinidis uses this same method to examine what he terms 'actor's role-acquisition strategies' (69), drawing on psychology-based research results (he cites Powers et al. 1980) in order to rethink the acting approaches expounded by Stanislavsky, Brecht, Meyerhold, Grotowski and Artaud.

The attraction these theatre academics had to cognitive-behaviourist research approaches is understandable: here was a model for empirical research that would produce reams and reams of seemingly hard data. The possibilities of experiments seemed limitless. However, these

methodologies are highly problematic, as the explicit teacher/student framework—with the all-knowing director and the infantilised actor—leaves no room for more nuanced interpretations of director/actor exchanges. Moreover, the 'subjects' become radically pathologised to the extent that experiments on rats are used as the basis of research designs. Keith A. Miller and Clarence W. Bahs, in their paper 'Director Expectancy and Actor Effectiveness' (1974), actually cite the following article: 'The Effect of Experimenter Bias on the Performance of the Albino Rat' (*Behavioural Science*, 1963, 8: 183-89). Divorced from any socio-cultural and historical context—we are not even given details about the participants—this research presumes the existence, and the quantifiability, of a universal human condition. This emphasis on what can be calculated or measured is reflected in the preoccupation with verbal interaction at the expense of everything else. Porter's work powerfully manifests this by including the oddly juxtaposed terms in one of his titles—'*Silent or Irrelevant* Behaviour'—and by limiting the coding categories to suit the academics' abilities to record 'interaction'. He writes: 'It was found that observer reliability fell off rapidly when the number of categories exceeded sixteen... therefore it seemed advisable to sacrifice sensitivity for accuracy' (1975: 127). This is an uncritical celebration of the measurability of human behaviour.

1.2.ii Semiotic and Post-Structuralist Approaches

For over twenty years, the Department of Performance Studies[26] at the University of Sydney has been committed to the documentation and analysis of professional theatre rehearsal. This is a notable departure from the psychology research which was based on experiments with university students. Practitioners—professional directors, performers, actors, designers, dramaturgs, writers, dancers—utilise the Department's studio and, in return, undergraduate students observe the work being carried out.

[26]First called *Theatre Workshop* before becoming *Theatre Studies Service Unit*, then the *Centre for Performance Studies*, and now *Department of Performance Studies*.

Honours and postgraduate students usually research professional practitioners working outside the academy within their typical rehearsal conditions. I have stressed the term *professional* in an effort to make the distinction between the above model and the one advocated in other universities whereby students are encouraged to create their own performances and analyse and theorise about their own process. The changing theoretical orientations of the work produced by the Department —notably those concerning semiotics, theories of textuality and authorship, and deconstructionist thinking—have been important in laying down the groundwork for this thesis.

When reflecting on much early research, Gay McAuley (1998a) writes that her preoccupation (and that of other academics in the department) focussed on studying the creative decisions that led to the final performance. That is, the research was product-focused. This is evident, for instance, in the material generated from *From Page to Stage* (McAuley, ed. 1987) where Kim Spinks' 'Rehearsal Casebook' article (11-32) is more concerned with the production than the rehearsal process. To an extent, this work intersects with those articles (discussed in Part One) produced by observers of rehearsal processes where documenting the rehearsals might clarify a production's style. However, the study of rehearsal at Sydney University has contributed significantly to the semiotic project both through its commitment to systematic analysis and through an emphasis on how practitioners construct 'signs' for an audience. Marion Potts' Masters thesis, *What Empty Space?: Text and Space in the Australian Mainstream Rehearsal Process* (1995) leans heavily on semiotic theory, as reflected in her opening line (a restating of Ubersfeld's well-known phrase): 'Theatre practitioners on the whole are natural semioticians' (1995: 1). Her primary concern is to study the semiotics of space and text in order to further understand how rehearsal is 'the vital generative force of theatre' (3-4), and she researches perceptions of text and perceptions of space, recruiting semiotics, literary criticism, and linguistics. The study revolves around a thick collection of rehearsal experiences, drawing on various processes in Sydney and

Melbourne. She emphasises the empirical research and critiques those semioticians whose 'semiotic study sky-rocketed leaving theatre, to a certain extent, earthbound' (4). On a larger scale, Gay McAuley, in *Space and Performance* (1999), draws on her many years of rehearsal observation to theorise the way that space is used as a signifier. (However, her project stretches beyond one of semiotics as she turns to phenomenology, critical ethnography and sociology in order to investigate how space functions in performance.) Her work in particular features throughout this thesis as I find ways to articulate how the various spaces (and places) operated during rehearsals.

Recently, post-structuralist theories of authorship and interpretation have been productive for theatre and performance studies' projects, and academics have, at least peripherally, addressed rehearsal. My research builds on the work of a number of writers on authorship and interpretation. In 1985, Rabkin argued that 'the question of textual interpretation is fundamental to *all* theatre representation.' At the same time, he argues, the modern debate on the notion of textuality—even though it derives from Saussure and is at least sixty years old—is rarely discussed with any critical rigor in a theatre context (143). In fact, in 1987 Holland suggested that interpretive issues have plagued theatre for a long time:

> The deconstruction of the writer, a process that literary criticism claimed to have invented a few years ago, appears instead as an inevitable concomitant and endemic feature of theatre—at least since the rise of the director, when the director as creator of the performance-text replaces the writer as creator of the play-text (1987: 215).

This view is supported by Bradby and Williams in their chapter 'The Rise of the Director' of *Directors' Theatre* (1988: 1-23) where they explore the director-as-author (they open the chapter with: 'The dominant creative force in today's theatre is the director' (1)). Since 1985, when Rabkin wrote his article, issues of interpretation and authorship in a performance context have become controversial areas of debate: a pioneering text is *Playwright Versus Director: Authorial Intentions and Performance Interpretations,*

edited by Jeane Luere in 1994. Luere maps out key theorists of authorship over the last fifty years, drawing, in particular, on Barthes and Foucault, and then he uses this theory as a backdrop to frame the remainder of the book. He includes remarks by playwrights and directors as well as five case studies where he draws on memoirs, biographies and interviews in order to study the playwright/director relationship in past productions. While this work doesn't concentrate on rehearsal, there are numerous anecdotes and reflections on rehearsal in the interviews as directors are asked how they work with playwrights, and playwrights are asked about their relationship with directors (see also Suchy 1991).

My research into theatre rehearsals contributes to the areas of authorship and interpretation in at least three ways. Firstly, as may be expected, performance theory debates over authorship focus almost solely on the relationship between the playwright and director. In my work, I expand this to include other creative agents in the production process (notably the actors). Secondly, I locate the debates within an empirical research context, for, as Born argues, 'while for some decades it has been an article of poststructuralist faith to interrogate the "author" as construct, this has not been supported by much empirical or historical research' (1995: 14).[27] Thirdly, I move past a reification of the individual artist, author or agent, and examine to what extent notions of 'individualism' and notions of a social collective operated during rehearsals. Foucault opens his famous essay, 'What is an Author?', in this way: 'The coming into being of the notion of "author" constitutes the privileged moment of *individualization* in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences' (1984: 101). However, the creative practice I studied not only involved discourses of 'the individual author', but also experiences that were framed as 'collective practice' when notions of 'individual' were somehow dissolved or suspended.

[27] Maria Shevtsova, writing about the sociology of the theatre (and, specifically, aspects of the North American model), points out that while dimensions of sociological methodology 'have eased the passage for the sociology of the arts as such, conversely, they have predetermined is trajectories, leaving little room for art works, which are unsuited to quantitative treatment' (1989a: 28).

After the intense concern with semiotics, more recent studies at the University of Sydney have seen post-structuralist theories contributing to the theoretical framework for rehearsal research. So, like the earlier work, this research was grounded in observing the practices of professional artists (thereby moving towards the sort of empirical research Born writes of). Terry Threadgold (1995, 1997) used the projects at the university to reflect on semiotic, feminist and deconstructionist positionings. She argues that rehearsal 'engages with the probabilistic making, transferring and discarding of meanings across a wide range of semiotic media' (1995: 176-7). It offers a rich site to explore the relations of the body to discourse and it makes visible 'the play between texts and contexts articulated in the postmodernist deconstruction of hierarchical models' (176-7).

Her paper (1995) discusses the Chekhov *Three Sisters* project at Sydney University's Centre for Performance Studies. She observed two short rehearsal periods where two directors with two different sets of actors were given one week to produce the same Chekhov scene. She points out that at one level you could produce an 'oppositional' account of the two processes: a realist, psychologised and narrativised reading practice, and a deconstructive practice. Yet Threadgold argues that both of the processes were forms of postmodernist practice, not polar opposites, despite the way they articulated themselves, since 'deconstructive postmodernist practice always reproduces and remakes its repressed, its other, the discourses of modernism, as it constitutes and makes itself' (179). In *Feminist Poetics* (1997), Threadgold draws on the transcript of a rehearsal of *Othello*, again produced at the Centre. This particular rehearsal session involved actors whispering into another actor's ears as s/he delivered the character's lines. Noticing the visible distress of the female actor (who became very emotional) and the measured response of the male actor, Threadgold suggests that rehearsal offers 'a place to read the disciplinary effects of patriarchal discourse on the bodies of masculine and feminine subjects' (1997: 129). Rather than concentrate on rehearsal as a performance-

generator, she figures it as a site to explore particular modernist and postmodernist discourses. This approach was also adopted by Kerrie Schaefer in her doctoral dissertation, *The Poaching of Postmodern Performance* (1999), where she uses de Certeau's analytic of 'readers as poachers' to account for the creative practice of a Sydney theatre collective, the Sydney Front. In particular, she focuses on the way that material was generated. As well as de Certeau's work, she draws on theories of intertextuality and (to a lesser extent) body praxis to provide a conceptual framework within which to articulate the Sydney Front's performance practice.

1.2.iii Ethnographic Orientations

Schaefer also contributes to the rehearsal studies project by emphasising some of the theoretical implications of researching the practices of professional practitioners in their own environment. This methodological shift has created enormous implications for what it is to do rehearsal research. In her thesis she is careful to include socio-cultural contexts by outlining the inception of the Sydney Front and the importance of their working place within the context of theatre-making in Sydney. This is where Schaefer has built from Potts' work. Potts' thesis is one of the first projects to explicitly theorise theatre rehearsal as it takes place in its own spatio-temporal, socio-cultural environment. Interestingly, however, Potts avoids tackling issues outside what she understands as the immediate meaning-making processes of the practitioners. She writes:

> The impossibility of an exhaustive study of something so closely connected to the wider world, and to the immeasurable influences of life, is perhaps worth accepting—and even celebrating as the source of those serendipitous elements which ensure that theatre does retain a touch of the unknowable, and a degree of magic (1995: 14).

Clearly she is implicitly acknowledging the limitations of semiotics and literary criticism for a study of rehearsal. What is needed is a methodology that allows for an interrogation of broader cultural discourses and

experiences—the *wider world*—as they are manifest in the theatre rehearsal process. Tiffany Stern, an historian and author of *Rehearsal From Shakespeare to Sheridan* (2000), is extremely aware of the centrality of these broader concerns. She constructs an historical account of English rehearsal practices from 1570-1780 by drawing on account books, prompt books, court records, academic records, overseas records, legal documents, plays-within-plays, letters, play prefaces, prologues and epilogues, actors' biographies, contemporary diaries, and newspapers (2000: 18). Stern's book is appealing, as she prefaces her writing by arguing that theatrical practice must be considered within specific socio-historical conditions. Performance Studies at Sydney University began asking these very questions within the context of contemporary rehearsal practice, and consequently turned to ethnographic paradigms.

This shift towards critical ethnography has been a gradual process. McAuley argues, 'When people speak of ethnography or anthropology in relation to theatre, they usually do so in the context of intercultural performance or studies of performance traditions from other cultures' (1999: 15). However, she suggests, ethnographic method is also productive in theorising one's "own" culture, and here she draws links between the figure of the cultural anthropologist and the academic observer in the rehearsal room (1998a). (In fact, Susan Letzler Cole also makes this link, comparing her own practice with sociological or anthropological observation (1992: 225).) McAuley addresses both the fieldwork phase and the writing up of research. She points out that rehearsal observers, like anthropologists, can be positioned by their hosts, they may be shown what hosts think they want to see, and they may be shown only what is thought to be appropriate to show an outsider (1998a: 77). The focus of her paper involves the writing up phase of fieldwork-based projects, and, in particular, the position of the academic-cum-author. Here she acknowledges the power relations inherent in any analysis, and that previous attempts by the Department at neutral and unobtrusive recording have not necessarily grappled honestly with such concerns. Kerrie Schaefer takes up this issue of 'authority' in her

doctoral thesis. She writes: 'this methodology is largely informed by critical discourse concerning the problem of ethnographic authority in the contemporary social sciences' (1999: 88) She invokes Trinh's (1991) notion of 'speaking to' subjects rather than 'speaking about' subjects where she foregrounds dialogue with the practitioners rather than understanding them as objects to study (which, for instance, was the orientation of the transactional analysis). Also, in the spirit of critiquing the 'objective observer', she attempts to provide a context for her research, briefly outlining her own initial questions when she set out to study the field. Like Schaefer, Russell Fewster is another student to graduate from the Department. His Masters' thesis builds on both McAuley's call for rethinking the position of the ethnographic 'author' as well as her preoccupation with *how* to document: notebook? sound recording? video?[28] Responding to McAuley's recognition of the difficulties in defining the boundaries of rehearsal—when the director first encounters the playtext? when the actors come together?—Fewster argues: 'Rehearsal [...] while seemingly isolated for independent study, needs to be viewed as intricately connected to and continuous with what went before—decisions made prior to rehearsal—and with what came after, the actual performance' (2001: 25). In particular, he understands the possible productiveness of the third phase of ethnography—reporting back to the subjects studied and gathering responses—and he approaches this by sharing some of his writing with a number of the actors. Here he is drawing on McAuley's suggestion that issues of power might be addressed when subjects are exposed to the research and their responses are recorded.

Here it is important to acknowledge how an ethnographic approach might differ from Richard Schechner's use of a specific area of anthropology to think about rehearsal. Schechner drew on Victor Turner's work on 'ritual'

[28] Documenters have used photography and video to record rehearsals. Selbourne and Cole include photographs, and the National Theatre in London published an entire book full of photos of rehearsals (see Hall 2001). DPS takes video recordings of all rehearsal processes that occur in the Department, however using these as a resource presents a whole separate issue. McAuley writes about the pragmatic and ethical issues surrounding editing 'the sheer bulk of material we have been producing' (1998: 82).

and 'social drama'[29] to argue that: 'When workshops and rehearsals are used together, they constitute a model of the ritual process' (1985: 21), and that what he terms 'restored behavior'—'organised sequences of events, scripted actions, known texts, scored movements'—is worked on during rehearsals (35-6). Here Schechner conceptualises the rehearsal process as a liminal period which involves rites of transition (21). While this thinking may be useful in understanding moments in theatre rehearsal processes, there are at least two ways to build on his work: firstly, Schechner is proposing a universal framework that might be applied to any rehearsals anywhere in the world, and instead it may be productive to concentrate on practices in their empirical immediacy; and secondly, this framework is decidedly functionalist where theatre rehearsal supposedly operates as a means for social affirmation or social change, and, rather than prematurely enlist rehearsal to a particular social cause, it would be productive to investigate how practitioners understand what it is that they do.

As will be developed in Part Three, a project of my thesis is to demonstrate how these borrowings—the primary insight from ethnography involving a researcher's 'self reflexive' turn (for instance, critiquing 'objective observation' and foregrounding dialogue with cultural participants)—might be expanded to include further aspects of ethnographic approaches.

PART THREE
(CLOSER) TOWARDS AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF REHEARSAL[30]

1.3.i Everyday Micropractices of Rehearsal

In this section, I concentrate on what is involved in studying and writing about the minutiae of rehearsal work. Some of the literature on rehearsal I

[29] Turner (1982) draws on Van Gennep's model of ritual—a tripartite model involving rites of separation, liminality, and reaggregation—to reflect on social dramas in pre-industrial and post-industrial societies.
[30] 'Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal' is the title of McAuley's paper, 1998.

reviewed in Part One dealt to an extent with the day-to-day detail of practitioners' working practices. In particular, Selbourne, Hiley, Sher and Cole all provided dense descriptions of rehearsal work. The challenge, however, is to develop a theoretical framework within which to organise and understand such work. The approach adopted by the psychology-inspired research—studies interested in the detail of rehearsal—was to rigorously document (some) verbal interaction and then quantify the data into a system of matrices. Aware of the problematics of this framework, I was for a time interested in whether a more qualitative approach to verbal exchanges in rehearsal might yield a productive analysis. I therefore turned to socio-linguistics, conversation analysis, and, specifically, the paradigm of 'codeswitching' as a possible means to understand some of the detail of rehearsal interaction. Below, I briefly sketch out the beginnings of a codeswitching analysis, some impasses I encountered, and my subsequent reorientation toward theoretical frameworks which were able to account for a broader range of rehearsal activity.

Codeswitching refers to 'the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode' (Heller 1988: 1), and I wondered whether this practice might relate to the way that the practitioners in rehearsal switched between operating within a frame of reality and one of fiction. Whereas ethnographic linguists might study bilingual and multilingual communities, I wanted to use codeswitching to explain how practitioners slipped so easily from being 'inside' the rehearsing of a scene (literally delivering the lines of the playscript), and being 'outside' it (analysing the scene and commenting on the fiction). The notion of 'code' was appealing because of its implicit secrecy: only the members of the group privy to the codes (in this case the playscript and the fiction they were building) can participate. For example, when we sat around the table at the beginning of rehearsals for *Season*, Denise (NOLA) commented on the playscript: 'I get the sense that the women have to revere the men. "I'd like to see a man crack a whip".' Denise firstly commented to the director about the playtext, and then quoted a line from the script. In quoting the line she was indeed

saying, 'Everyone think about the scene where my character says to her husband...'. As a way to understand Denise's comment, I recruited Blom and Gumperz's analytics of 'situational' and 'metaphorical' codeswitching (1972), and Scotton's concepts of 'marked' and 'unmarked' language choices during verbal communication (1988):

> Situational codeswitching assumes a direct relationship between language and the social situation' (Blom and Gumperz, 1972: 424), and it is 'rooted in a separation of activities (and associated role relationships), each of which is conventionally linked to the use of the languages or varieties in the community linguistic repertoire (Heller 1988: 5).

Denise's comment would be an instance of situational switching where the situation requires her to move from one 'language' to another. Scotton calls this an 'unmarked choice' (1988: 152). On the other hand, another actor, Kate Atcheson (MAVIS) switched between fiction and reality differently. When she was disappointed to discover that Mary-Anne could not be at the rehearsal to direct her birthing scene, and the stage manager asked her why she was disappointed, Kate quoted one of her character's lines: '"You wouldn't understand. No-one could understand who's never had a baby"'. This would be a metaphorical codeswitch, where she used a code out-of-context: when a familiar form (code) 'is employed in a context where it is not normal, it brings about some of the flavor of this original setting' (Blom and Gumperz 1972: 425). Kate did not need to quote the character MAVIS because of the situation (as in situational switching), instead she quite explicitly used the playtext in an unusual context. Scotton would refer to this as a 'marked choice' (1988: 154).

Initially, codeswitching was appealing as it provided a wealth of terminology that could be related to little scraps of rehearsal interaction. Being a researcher desperate to pin down and contain what had been a dense fieldwork experience, the socio-linguistic work—with its categories, terms, and careful analysis—provided some relief. However, I quickly encountered four major hurdles. Firstly, codeswitching operates as a binary where people switch between two discrete 'languages', and it therefore cannot

necessarily account for more fluid relationships. In rehearsal, the practitioners often seemed to inhabit in-between states—being in between 'character' and 'actor' and between 'fiction' and 'reality'[31]—and a codeswitching approach reduced the talk into a flip-flopping from one frame to another. Secondly, I reified 'codes' or 'frames' without explicating exactly what practitioners understood as 'fiction' or 'reality'; that is, these definitions were unproblematically imposed by me, the researcher, rather than coming out of the practitioners' own categorisation of what they understood themselves to be doing. Thirdly, by concentrating on verbal communication (and only some communication at that), the linguistic paradigm ignored the corporeality of fieldwork. The importance of bodies in places, and, in fact, of those exchanges that could not be accounted for by a taxonomy of categories, was effaced. And finally, codeswitching is unapologetically functionalist. As Heller writes, '[c]odeswitching is seen as a boundary-levelling or boundary-maintaining strategy' between interlocuters (1988: 1). Together with other linguistic theorists, she argues that codeswitching is used by subjects to experiment with social hierarchies. This approach prematurely imposed a specific meaning onto the social activity of rehearsal. It seemed reductive to understand the exchanges I documented as a negotiation of hierarchical relationships. As Jackson argues, 'human beings do not necessarily act from opinions or employ epistemological criteria in finding meaning for their actions' (1989: 126).

The above detour through an area of socio-linguistics led me and leads me into critical ethnography. Writing about ethnographic methodology, Okely reminds us of its unique capacity for 'graphic scrutiny' (1996: 17) and Geertz suggests that it is 'microscopic' (1973: 21). However, these two theorists are writing from a different perspective than the sort of micro analysis discussed thus far. They are in fact referring to the minutiae of living in its most thick sense. Geertz borrows Gilbert Ryle's notion to describe ethnography: 'an elaborate venture in [...] "thick description"' (6) which, for

[31] Richard Schechner might suggest this is where performers are 'not me' and 'not not me' (1985: 110). I develop this idea in Chapter Three.

Geertz, involves 'sorting out the structures of signification' (9) in any cultural setting. He argues:

> What the ethnographer is in fact faced with [...] is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he [sic] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render (10).

For Geertz, my enlisting of codeswitching in order to understand tiny verbal exchanges would be an impoverishment of the rehearsal processes: it would constitute a thin description. Rather than leaping to conclusions about what social activity 'means', Geertz advocates the importance of interpreting the interpretations of cultural participants. In this thesis, I draw on Geertz to inflect, among other areas, the performance semiotics project. As a means to describe the rehearsal work, I use frameworks of performance analysis—in particular, McAuley's writings (1999)—in order to approach how practitioners used the rehearsal space, how they moved and spoke in that space, and how certain design elements were developed (costume, set and props). I build on this framework by not only taking into account one set of interpretations ('the practitioners are semioticians constructing signs for an audience') but also by investigating how practitioners understood their own practices. Here is where discourse analysis is productive.

Foucault's concept of 'discourse' has been taken up by ethnographers and is similarly deployed in this thesis to understand some of the day-to-day interaction and practices of the practitioners. 'Discourse', in Foucault's sense, and in the way I use it in this thesis, refers to the connection between the regulation of bodies, the production of knowledges and the construction of subjectivities (Foucault 1977). Born (1995) describes the ethnographic material in her book about the Parisian music institute, IRCAM, as a study of Foucauldian micropractices in their empirical immediacy. Abu-Lughod and Lutz, in their anthology *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (1990), argue that the most productive analytical approach is to study discourses on

emotion within diverse ethnographic contexts. For these theorists, Foucault is central to their careful study of the minutiae of cultural participants' ways of living. Phillip Zarrilli (1995) draws on Foucault's analytic 'technologies of the self' in order to reflect on the discourses that circulate in actor training and the implicit theories of self that inform this practice. Jackson invokes this same analytic 'to focus on culturally conditioned modes of consciousness and body use' (1989: 120). Similarly, this thesis studies the discourses surrounding rehearsal, acting, directing, and producing, such as: the secrecy of the rehearsal room; the race against time; discovering the text; constructing a show; and 'feeling right' about a scene or a moment. Further to this, I interrogate some of the ways the 'selves' of practitioners are formed and recreated through such discourses.

Following phenomenological anthropology, this thesis builds on both a Foucauldian analysis and a Geertzian concern with signs to understand that the discourses circulating in rehearsals were not abstracted from experience. Jackson writes, 'I do not want to risk dissolving the lived experience of the subject into the anonymous field of discourse' (1989: 1), arguing that, for instance, the ways people talk, think and move are intimately related to how they really *feel*. When an actor clutches her heart and explains she's been exposed during an exercise in rehearsal, this is not an abstract trope or merely part of a discourse of self, but is a lived metaphor: the actor really experiences the sensation that the outer layers of her chest have been peeled back to reveal an inner core. Rather than metaphors 'expressing a concept in terms of a bodily image, they disclose an integral connection of the psychic and the physical' (Jackson 1989: 120).

Part of the project of my thesis is to understand that the micropractices and the discourses within which they are framed are also rooted in a phenomenological reality. However, these day-to-day working practices and discourses were also intimately connected to larger socio-cultural, institutional and historical contexts. The practitioners brought with them their previous experiences, and the theatre companies themselves had their own

histories and positionings within the Sydney theatre scene. Following Foucault, these micropractices were micropolitical, for it was through 'small' moments that the political was revealed (Born 1995: 25). This demands attention to the question of 'how to get from a collection of ethnographic miniatures [...] to wall-sized culturescapes' (Geertz 1973: 21).

1.3.ii Macro-Institutional Contexts

The *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals occurred within specific institutional contexts. For instance, New Theatre primarily operates on a volunteer basis and positions itself as foregrounding a leftist political agenda; Esoteric Entertainment paid the *Reg* actors the award wage and was careful not to demand overtime; and, in both processes, the practitioners' involvement was part of their larger career trajectories. In order to engage with the *Realpolitik* of production, I draw on Foucault's genealogical project as well as the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. In particular, I turn to Foucault's analytic of 'historical discursive formations' constituting artistic theories and practices, and their related social and institutional forms. In the case of New Theatre, Mardi Gras, and Esoteric Entertainment, I am careful to examine the (sometimes competing) histories of these organisations, and to question how some of the dominant standard narratives are lived by the practitioners as they rehearsed. However, these organisations were not solely constitutive of fixed structures of discourse but were dynamic sites involving dynamic relationships with social agents.

The two productions, *Season* and *Reg*, not only involved *making theatre* but *making theatre-making*: they were in a process of reproducing and to an extent creating what it meant to produce theatre. Recall Maxwell: they were 'making a real' (2003: 36). When the directors and actors carefully crafted scenes, they were not only creating 'theatre', they were producing a vision of what theatre (and theatre-making) *was*. This is a departure from Richard Schechner's argument that 'theater is both intentionally and non-consciously a paradigm of culture and culture-making' (1988: 179). While

this seems similar to the sort of argument advanced by Weber and Maxwell, Schechner is using theatre in a broad sense; that it incorporates those everyday performances of self.[32] He suggests that theatre shows us who we are and can be the basis of social binding or of challenging social rules and relationships (this thinking is coming out of Victor Turner's work on ritual and social drama). 'Culture-making' in the way it is used in this thesis and in the way the practitioners worked, is less about Schechner's notion of 'ritual' and more about an arena of competition where practitioners were in processes of stating (through their work) what should constitute 'real' rehearsals.

Here is where Bourdieu's work is productive. The socio-cultural sphere informing such practices constitutes, for Bourdieu, the 'field' of activity. According to Wacquant, Bourdieu's sociology

> explodes the vacuous notion of "society" and replaces it with those of field and social space. For him, a differentiated society is [...] an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of "play" that cannot be collapsed under an overall societal logic [...] [E]ach field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles. These principles delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the position they occupy in that space, either to change or to preserve its boundaries and form (1992: 16-7).

In Bourdieu's terms, the two groups—*Season* at New Theatre and *Reg* through Mardi Gras and a new theatre group (Esoteric Entertainment)—might be understood as being part of a semi-autonomous field of Sydney theatre.[33] The groups occupied different positions in Sydney theatre: New Theatre is partially preoccupied with 'community based' concerns, and the *Reg* group—a newly established theatre group—was part of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (although, as I will explore in Chapter Four, these are problematic categorisations). They were part of an arena of 'making theatre' that was also about *making* theatre-making; about

[32] Here Schechner is drawing directly on Goffman's work *The Performance of Self in Everyday Life* (1956).
[33] 'Semi-autonomous' in the sense that society is not made up of discrete areas. However, practitioners themselves spoke specifically about something called 'Sydney theatre' or 'theatre in Sydney'. This is investigated in Chapter Four.

having the power to state what making theatre *is*, or *should be*; about preserving or changing the field's 'boundaries and form'. The *Season* and *Reg* groups were caught up in struggles to determine what constituted 'capital' within the Sydney theatre field and how that capital should be distributed.[34] In studying what he terms 'the field of cultural production' in France, Bourdieu (1993) argued that this field was based on the accruing of cultural rather than economic capital. In my study, very specific logics operated within (or to *form* and *sustain*) the theatre-making field in Sydney, most notably the struggles to label and accrue forms of cultural capital. For instance, 'theatre-making' for the New Theatre practitioners was (partly) about solidarity and 'egalitarianism'. Theatre-making for the *Reg* practitioners was (partly) about producing high-cultural artistic product. The two groups were caught up in (symbolic) struggles over the perception of the theatre field. As Bourdieu writes, 'the objects of the social world can be perceived and expressed in a variety of ways.. [and this uncertainty] provides a base for symbolic struggles over the power to produce and impose the legitimate vision of the world' (1990b: 133).

In the rehearsals I studied, the practical activity of theatre-making was associated with the position that these two theatre groups occupied in the field of theatre-making in Sydney. As Bourdieu argues, the symbolic struggles in the social world are played out in (and through) agents. The two sets of objective relations—the 'distribution of material resources' and the 'systems of classifications' (Wacquant 1992: 7)—are associated with what Bourdieu calls the 'habitus': 'the mental and bodily schemata that function as *symbolic* templates for the practical activities—conduct, thoughts, feelings, and judgements—of social agents' (7). In *Season* and *Reg*, the practitioners' practices were part of a 'habitus' which in turn related to broader social, cultural and institutional concerns of theatre-making in Sydney. I write 'related to' rather than, for example, 'determined by' in order

[34] For Bourdieu, the structures of the social universe, or 'social space', 'exist twice: in the "objectivity of the first order" constituted by the *distribution of material* resources and means of appropriation of socially scarce goods and values [...]; and in the "objectivity of the second order", in the form of systems of *classification*' (Wacquant 1992: 7).

to leave room for the possibility of social agents' dynamism. The practitioners were not merely 'expressing' the logics of social structures, but were caught up in making and continually (re)making the theatre field. Furthermore, my study is not only concerned with the institutional struggles of the *Season* and *Reg* groups as collectives. Bourdieu makes the point that social agents may be individuals, groups or institutions (1993: 29), and part of my thesis concerns how *individuals* approached each production as part of a career-building strategy: that is, their labour might be understood not only in terms of the groups negotiating symbolic space, but also in terms of their own struggles as practitioners in a field where employment is precarious.

Until now, I have referred to 'social agents' or 'cultural participants', and, in the above section, I refer to them doing 'practical activities'; that is, in part, 'bodies doing things'. We must, therefore, turn to notions of embodiment in order to further elucidate rehearsal practice.

1.3.iii Embodiment

The term 'embodiment', as adopted by critical ethnography, concerns the bodily dimension of human subjectivity. This theme stems from European phenomenology, and, in particular, the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962). He distinguishes between the physiological body (or the 'objective' body) and the 'phenomenal' body which is not simply *a* body but *our* bodies as we experience them. Of course, we can experience our bodies as physiological entities, however this is unusual. As Drew Leder (1990) suggests, most of the time our bodies are absent to us; in our getting-on-with-our-lives we 'forget' our bodies are there until something goes wrong, either through illness or injury.

There are at least two key areas concerning embodiment that have come to be central to this thesis: firstly, that ethnographic writing must reflect the shared place and time spent with the groups studied; and, secondly, that,

for the social agents, knowledge is not only manifested propositionally but also in the form of embodied knowledge.

1.3.iii (a) Placial-Temporal Contexts

The idea that the writing up of research must be continually grounded in spatio-temporal contexts owes much to the thinking of Edward Casey and Johannes Fabian. By investigating intersections between philosophy and geography, Casey suggests that, as human beings, we are grounded in 'place' rather than the more abstract and commonly invoked notion of 'space'. He argues: 'we are always already in place, never not emplaced in one way or another' (1996: 17). Places, or what Casey terms 'placial phenomena',[35] are central to cultures. For instance, the theatre and rehearsal places where the *Season* and *Reg* practitioners worked were intimately connected to the experiences of those practitioners and the kinds of work they generated. Casey points out that 'the abiding emplacement of cultural practices has often gone unacknowledged' (33), and a project of my research is to investigate how the places of rehearsal and performance related to the way bodies worked: where were rehearsals located? how were the rooms organised? what were some of the histories of these places? And how did practitioners engage with them? Furthermore, as Casey suggests, implicit in any discussion of 'place' are concepts of 'time'.

Johannes Fabian suggests that the material for anthropology is events rather than things and must therefore reflect the passing of time (1990: 12).[36] This analytic is especially productive for theatre rehearsal whose very trajectory involves a distinct process of creation. Susan Letzler Cole's collection of observations begins to tackle this issue through her discussion of rehearsal as a 'stop/start' process, thereby conveying a sense of what

[35] Casey argues that 'placial phenomena such as location and situation belong to the region of Place' (1996: 31).

[36] This emphasis on a cotemporal relationship between the researcher and social agents is 'a strategy for bringing back the body-in-time in ethnographic discourse' (Conquergood 1991: 182); it displaces notions of ethnography as a 'collection of artefacts' and replaces it with 'a repetition of performances' (Fabian 1990: 12).

Simon Callow describes as the 'halting' nature of rehearsals (1984: 162). However, as previously mentioned, reducing each process to one tight chapter is a radical departure from the long hours and days of work. The casebooks by Selbourne and Hiley are extremely sensitive to temporality, but, again, they do not constitute analyses. In the *Season* and *Reg* processes, there seemed to be both a distinct compression and stretching of time. Sometimes the work crept along, and the practitioners became visibly irritated with the lethargic pace, and at other times everyone's adrenaline was racing. Overall, both rehearsal processes operated under enormous time pressures, and this impacted significantly on the sort of research I was doing as there was no slow time or lazy reflection where I might encourage practitioners to reflect on their work. Even the short breaks during each rehearsal session did not offer appropriate interview time for me, as, due to the intense schedules, people looked exhausted and just wanted to be left alone. For instance, Tony Knight would retire alone and read the paper. He worked at such a fast pace, he seemed to need these times of quiet to regather himself, and I never felt an opportunity to approach him. Similarly, when a lunch break was called, the actors would quickly leave the room to run personal errands, and at the end of the day I felt distinctly uncomfortable about following practitioners out of the rehearsal room door with a notepad and pen and a barrage of questions. The interactions I did encounter were when the practitioners voluntarily approached me to chat. Moreover, unlike a 'traditional' ethnographer, with months and months of days and nights with the social agents, my fieldwork began and ended with the rehearsal clock. This was especially foregrounded on one instance when Tony said to Peter, "Do it like we said on the phone last night". Here my encounter with rehearsals was revealed as partial. In this way, perhaps the absence of interviews, and my focus on the rhythms of practice, exemplifies Fabian's call for co-temporality as my work reveals the practitioners' intense engagement with time. It was difficult for me to conduct any sort of interviews during rehearsals, and this was not only due to time constraints but also because, in performance circles, the genre of 'interview' (in the publicity sense) generally takes place after

opening night. It would have been unusual for the practitioners to comment on the rehearsal process during rehearsals.[37]

The emphasis on shared time with social agents has its own implications when actually writing up research. Over the years, some critical ethnography, or 'meta-anthropology',[38] has been specifically interested in the practice of writing, and John Davis urges ethnographers to consider the use of tenses. In particular, he questions that work that unproblematically positions itself as being in 'the ethnographic present'. He argues that present tenses are used so variously (1992: 205) that writers will often lose sight of which mode they are in, the result being that rhetoric can take over (212). This critique is a reminder of some of the ways in which anthropology as a discipline has shifted,[39] particularly in contemporary ethnography's emphasis on speaking to social agents rather than 'objectively' speaking about them. Following Davis, my fieldwork accounts are almost always in past tense, as I intend not only to locate the theatre practitioners in time and place—late 1990s rehearsal practice in Sydney, Australia—but also my own writing: this thesis itself belongs to a particular period.

1.3.iii (b) Embodied Knowledge

I write of bodies being emplaced and being part of, or contributing to, temporal flows. But what did these bodies do exactly? One of the

[37] This is an appeal of Cole's work—in particular her second book—where she manages to gather dozens of interviews with practitioners over the weeks of rehearsal. 'At hours anywhere from 11am to 2am, actors, designers, dramaturgs, stage managers, directors, and playwrights talked with me—in rehearsal rooms or theater lobbies, on stairways and fire escapes, in Fornes's [one of the playwright/director's] car looking for a parking space in the East Village, on the side-walk in front of the newly built Signature Theatre during a smoking break, at the windy corner of West Fifty-Ninth Street and Tenth Avenue, in the unisex bathroom of the Women's Project and Productions offices, on the wide front porch of a farmhouse in the hills of western Massachusetts' (2001: xiv).

[38] Davis (1992: 205) quotes Rabinow's (1986: 43) use of 'meta-anthropologists' to describe textualist critics preoccupied with reflecting on different forms of ethnographic writing.

[39] Davis argues that the way that some pre-1960s anthropological works used present tenses was intimately connected to their colonialist preoccupations. Their writing was partly answering the question 'what on earth are these people like?' (1992: 212), and using present tenses avoided specifying time and place (that is, 'these people always have been and always will be like this'). A past tense account 'would have been inapt as

characteristics of the rehearsals was the profound physicality of the practitioners, and a project of this thesis has been to document, analyse and theorise their work: to engage, in part, with the notion of 'embodied knowledge'. During a rehearsal, knowledge is not only manifest in the dramaturgy of the playtext, or in a director's direction to actors, it is also manifest in the practitioners' physical articulation of professional experience. McAuley provides a cogent example in her observation of rehearsals for *Phaedre* during a workshop at Sydney University (with professional practitioners). The actor, Gillian Jones, had the line "I see him, touch him, and my heart... a reef...". McAuley noticed that:

> Gillian's movement [around the stationary actor, John Howard] seemed to be a kind of restless tide, swirling and breaking [...] *The actors never articulated the connection in any discussions* [my emphasis]. What is, however, incontrovertible is that they made brilliant sense of that rather obscure line in their movements. Gillian Jones interrupted her restless circling, moved in towards John Howard, caressed his arm fleetingly and turned aside, repelled by the massive solidity of his partly averted body. The image in the text became luminously clear: Hippolytus is the reef on which Phaedra is floundering (1989: 127).

The above account reveals an actor's embodied knowledge being articulated physically rather than verbally. This concept is especially salient in a rehearsal environment where, as I have already suggested, actors do not necessarily talk as much as directors, and yet what they contribute to a production physically is a form of knowledge. (Of course, directors also offer embodied knowledges and I have been careful to document Mary-Anne and Tony's physical presence and their movements in the rehearsal rooms.) Maxwell refers to this as 'professional craft knowledge' which he specifically applies to actor training in Australia. Drawing on the research developed by Higgs and Titchen (1995), Maxwell recognises actors' ensemble work as involving 'highly skilled practitioners collectively developing and exchanging new skills, new practices' (2001: 102). This embodied knowledge is different from propositional knowledge, which is more abstracted. Michael Jackson calls for a reconstitution of our notion of knowledge 'as something

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a persuasive device for the part of the audience which could send in troops, or refrain from doing so' (212).

urgently of and for the world rather than something about the world' (1996: 37), and actors' work in rehearsals is often just that: a physical manifestation of years of professional experience involving very practical knowledge. This paradigm intersects with Bourdieu's concept of the 'habitus' with its emphasis on patterns of practical activity and habitual body sets (Jackson 1989: 119): there is a learnt knowing that practitioners bring to rehearsal from years of training, watching other practitioners work, as well as exposure to performance discourses in the mass media, etc.[40]

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So to the story of *Season* and *Reg*: Chapter Two introduces the places where rehearsals occurred, including the rehearsal rooms, the theatre buildings, and their location in Sydney. Then it turns to rehearsal scheduling and the particular rhythms of rehearsal practice. In this way, the chapter is initially concerned with spaces, places and time. The last section maps out a preliminary division and categorisation of the rehearsal work itself—how, expressly, the practitioners began to approach their practice, and, importantly, what they understood that practice to be. In many ways, Chapter Two lays out what Phillip Zarrilli might refer to as the 'literal arenas'[41] of rehearsal work.

Chapter Three turns to two dominant discursive tropes the practitioners used to describe their work, namely 'discovery' and 'making meaning'. It investigates how a discourse of 'discovery' was linked to an idea of remaining faithful to the playwright, and to an idea of actors' psychological discovery of themselves. Then it addresses the second set of discourses—those involving 'making meaning'—and investigates how

[40] Zarrilli makes this point in his acting anthology (1995: 2).
[41] In his ethnography of Kalarippayattu practices in Southern India, Zarrilli suggests that the martial art might be considered as a 'complex nexus of four interactive areas': the literal arenas, the social arena, the arenas of cultural production, and the arena of experience and self-formation (1998: 9). In this way, 'literal arenas' refers to the very immediate practices themselves and where/how they are located in place/time.

these sets of metaphors got played out in directors' directions and in actors' embodiments.

Chapter Four examines the broader socio-historical contexts of theatre-making in Sydney, particularly the competition for 'capital' between various institutions. It looks at how New Theatre, Newtown Theatre and Esoteric Entertainment participated in legitimising strategies to assert that their own practices—their own institutions—were what theatre was really about. I not only consider this on a larger organisation level, but on an individual one as well, since practitioners sought to secure further employment.

The final chapter—Chapter Five—understands the two rehearsal processes at the level of embodiment, where the practitioners' work operated in terms of particular embodied states. Specifically, it investigates those moments in rehearsal where, according to the practitioners, a scene or moment 'worked' or not. Something was felt that enabled practitioners to say in rehearsal, "We got that moment right".

chapter two

Rehearsal Spaces, Schedules, Bodies and Places: Some Literal Arenas of Rehearsal Work

2.0 Introduction

The rehearsals occurred in particular places and were caught up in very specific temporal flows. These contexts not only shaped practitioners experiences but also some of the work that was generated: they directly and indirectly affected the working practices. Theatre practitioners and performance studies academics alike regularly use the term 'space' to refer to performance venues. In the *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals, practitioners referred to theatre and rehearsal 'spaces', however these 'spaces' were, and are indeed, first 'places'. They are not, as Edward Casey would argue, 'some empty and innocent spatial spread[s], waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render [them] placeful' (1996: 14). Academics developing tools for performance analysis have suggested that the location of a theatre, and its style and design, will inform framings for audiences (see, for instance, Carlson 1989). McAuley (1999), drawing on Carlson and others, builds on this work by arguing that venues carry their own framings for practitioners as well. She suggests this is not only the case for performance places but for rehearsal places also. In her writing on theatre buildings, she spends time discussing back stage and rehearsal areas, pointing out that:

> The nature of the rehearsal space, its level of comfort or discomfort, warmth, and the facilities provided, are a further dimension of the physical framing of the practitioners' experience [...] The location of the rehearsal space in the city, ease of access by public transport, and security after dark are other features that can weigh heavily on the

> people obliged to work there, and it must be acknowledged that actors frequently put up with physical conditions that would provoke strike action in other workplaces (1999: 71).

Part One of this chapter introduces the two venues and the rehearsal rooms used for *Season* and *Reg*. Then it interrogates the practitioners' relationships with the histories of these places, before concentrating on the way that practitioners actively engaged with the places during their day to day work.

Just as the specific rehearsal places informed the practitioners' experiences, so too temporal concerns impacted on their work. Part Two of this chapter begins elucidating how the practitioners segmented and organised the playscripts, how rehearsals were scheduled, and how the dramaturgy of the playscripts informed the organisation of rehearsal times: literally the comings and goings of practitioners. This section is primarily concerned with the carving up of time, the regulation and rhythm of scheduling, and the implications this had for some of the meanings that were generated. It is important to point out that my documentation of both processes began with the actors' first appearance at rehearsals. This is to distinguish rehearsals from the pre-production phase of the performance sequence. In mainstream rehearsal practice, rehearsals are generally juxtaposed to a pre-production phase, and the first day of rehearsals is marked by the arrival of the actors. Pre-production can be understood as a preparation period geared for their arrival, with deadlines (most notably the design) met by this time (see also Potts 1995). A study of the designer in rehearsal, for instance, would mean documenting the processes much earlier. (And it is crucial to point out here that the production design is fixed before the actors arrive: that is, actors will work within very set parameters rather than being able to inform the design through their practice.)[42] The 'main players', according to my area of documentation, were the actors and directors. In this way I was less exposed to the production

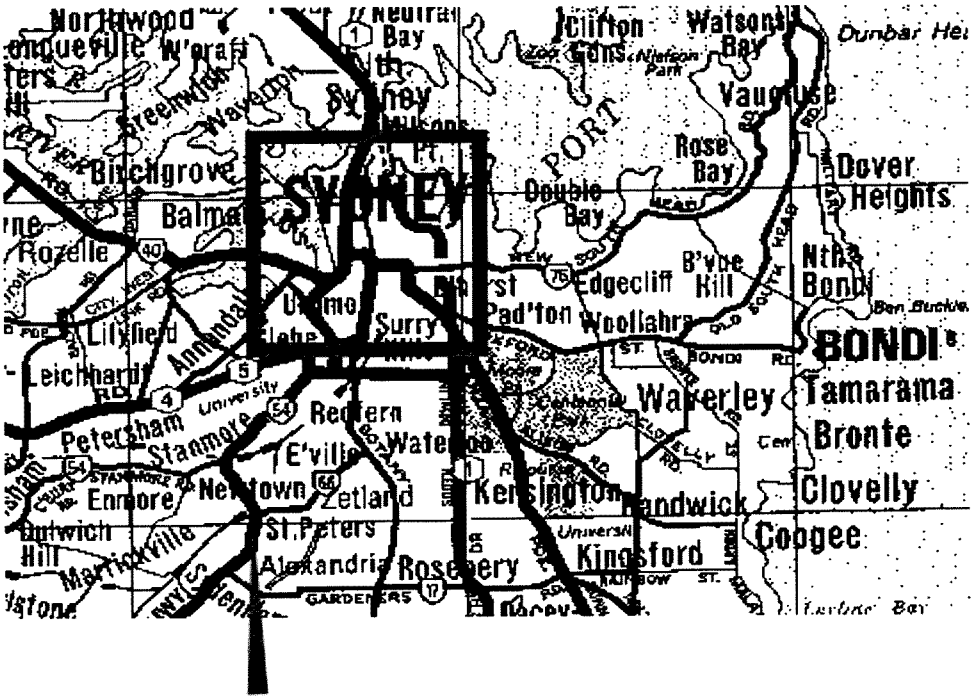
[42] As a counterpoint to this practice, the Cheek By Jowl theatre company rehearse for 6 or 7 weeks during which time Nick Ormerod designs the show. Director Declan Donnellan explains that the design '"grows organically from within the rehearsal period"' (1996: 83).

business—design meetings, etc.—unless the directors and actors were present.[43] This is distinct, say, from Jim Hiley's preoccupation with the pre-production phase of rehearsal. While pre-production is fairly open-ended in time, the rehearsal phase is limited. My documenting of the *Season* and *Reg* processes meant very specific hours over a number of weeks as opposed to a more fluid time where the director and designer mull over ideas.

When working on scenes in the rehearsal room, practitioners either sat at the table or worked in the floor space. Part Three examines what it meant to 'work at the table' or 'on the floor', a distinction articulated by the practitioners themselves. The rehearsal rooms for both *Season* and *Reg* had a masking-taped area, a mocked-up area of the stage space: the stage dimensions were literally taped out onto the floorboards of the *Season* room and the tight pile carpet of the *Reg* one. And these areas were marked out to face the rehearsal room door: anyone entering was confronted face to face with a scene in rehearsal. (I sometimes wondered if the practitioners were simulating performance conditions by positioning the rehearsal room door—a passage for potential spectators—in front of them.) Both processes had at least one table placed between the 'stage' area and the rehearsal room entrance, and it was at these tables where initial discussions about the play took place. These two domains—tablework and floorwork—were subject to, and in turn informed, some of the placial-temporal settings. For instance, the table/floor distinction not only presented a radical spatial binary, but also had temporal implications: what was time spent at the table as opposed to time on the floor?

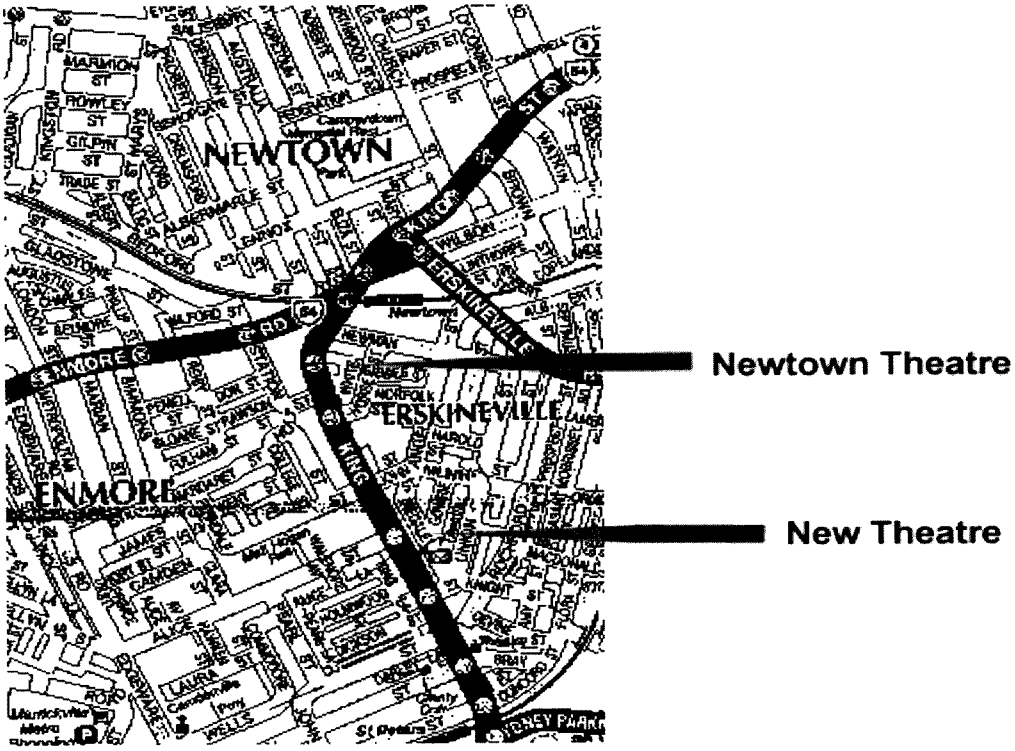
[43] Also, I was never informed of when these meetings occurred (they sometimes seemed spontaneously arranged) and at the time I did not have the confidence to invite myself.

figure 2.1



Newtown's proximity to the Sydney Central Business District

figure 2.2



PART ONE
LOCATION OF REHEARSALS: VENUE SPACES AND LOCAL PLACES

2.1.i Newtown Places: The Theatres and Rehearsal Rooms

Shaun Gurton, an Australian theatre designer, argues that 'Venues are everything [...] the venue controls what you are doing' (1992: 137). This being the case, where were these venues? What were their interiors like? And what were their relationships to the rehearsal places? Both of the processes I documented took place in Newtown, an inner-western Sydney suburb just outside the CBD. Newtown is one of five suburbs to skirt the University of Sydney's main campus, and, over the past decade, it has undergone a radical transformation with select areas becoming increasingly gentrified. This is manifest, for instance, in a recent move to have King Street—Newtown's main artery—placed on the State Heritage List.[44] *Season* was both rehearsed and performed at the New Theatre, located at 542 King Street, the less dense and less developed end of King Street (the street is informally divided by the Enmore Road intersection outside the train station). Unlike the top end, which is closer to the CBD, back-to-back with cafes, Thai restaurants, and a careful mix of retro and designer clothing stores, the bottom end is poorly lit at night and has a lower profile. And, unlike the top end with its regular flow of buses up and down Enmore Road and then onto King, this bottom end is more difficult to access: the station is 8-10 minutes walk down the road, and the trains are irregular, particularly at night. McAuley recognises that a theatre's 'surrounding buildings and the activities associated with them [...] add a further dimension to the framing function performed by the building' (1999: 45), and the same may be said of the section of road itself where, for instance, poor lighting and few(er) transport opportunities will impact on the experience of both audiences *and* practitioners. The foyer of New Theatre fronts onto King Street and its walls are plastered with posters from previous productions. The male rest room is in this foyer area, however the

[44]The article, 'King Street heads for the hall of fame warts and all' by Geraldine O'Brien, appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2002 (1 May) 5.

female one is upstairs—you literally have to enter the theatre to use the bathroom—so, along with other women, I have often enjoyed a privileged peek at a production's set and staging before the audience is ushered in. The theatre's capacity is 160, the seats look, and feel, like heavy old cinema seats, and they remain in a solid block so the aisles only feature on the two sides. The seating tiers down towards an end stage which is quite wide and deep (it was once considered 'one of Sydney's biggest stages' (Milliss 1992: 12)).

It is rare in Sydney that a cast rehearses *at* the venue. To access backstage and the rehearsal room of New Theatre, one must either walk through the back of the stage inside the theatre or enter around the left side of the building. There is one dressing room directly backstage and the rehearsal room is upstairs. During rehearsals, the cast gradually became familiar with the different pockets of the building—the dressing room, the two backstage entrances, the kitchenette—and it was not unusual to find a group of two, three, four people 'hanging out' in various areas. The rehearsal room itself was sparse, with high ceilings and long drapes hanging down over the windows, and drapes covering the wall-long mirror at one end. There was a noticeboard by the door advertising previous New Theatre productions. A 1970s orange sofa (a relic from someone's loungeroom?) sat up against one wall, an old dark wooden piano sat against another, and blue plastic chairs were stacked in columns, with a few scattered to the sides. The place felt like a community hall, where previous occupants abandoned odd items in corners of the room. As will be explored throughout the thesis, this particular inhabiting of place was intimately connected with the histories the practitioners had with the New Theatre building.

Unlike *Season* which was produced specifically for the New Theatre group *at* the New Theatre, the producers of *Reg* had to shop around for a venue. However, 'shop around' is an inappropriate metaphor for it suggests the power lies with the consumer hunting for the best deal. The reality is that

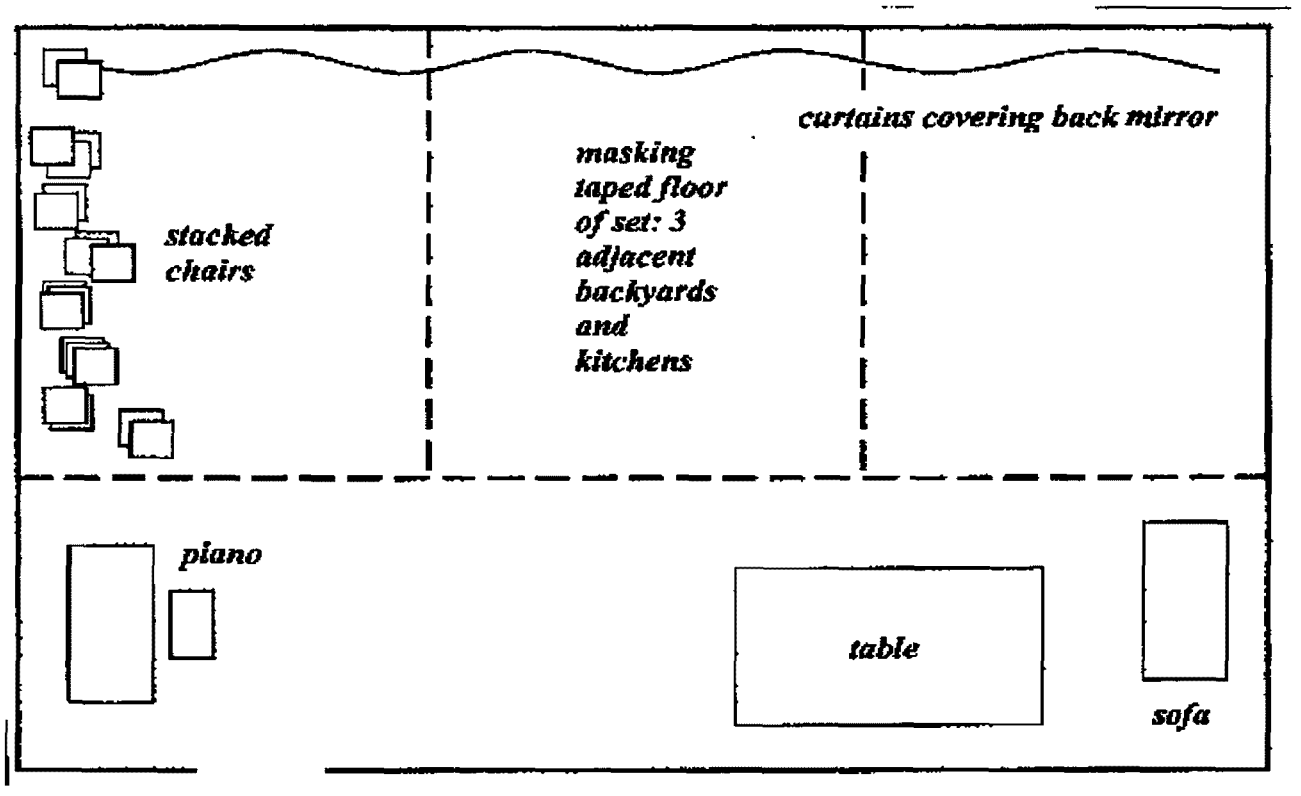


figure 2.3, rehearsal room for ***Season***

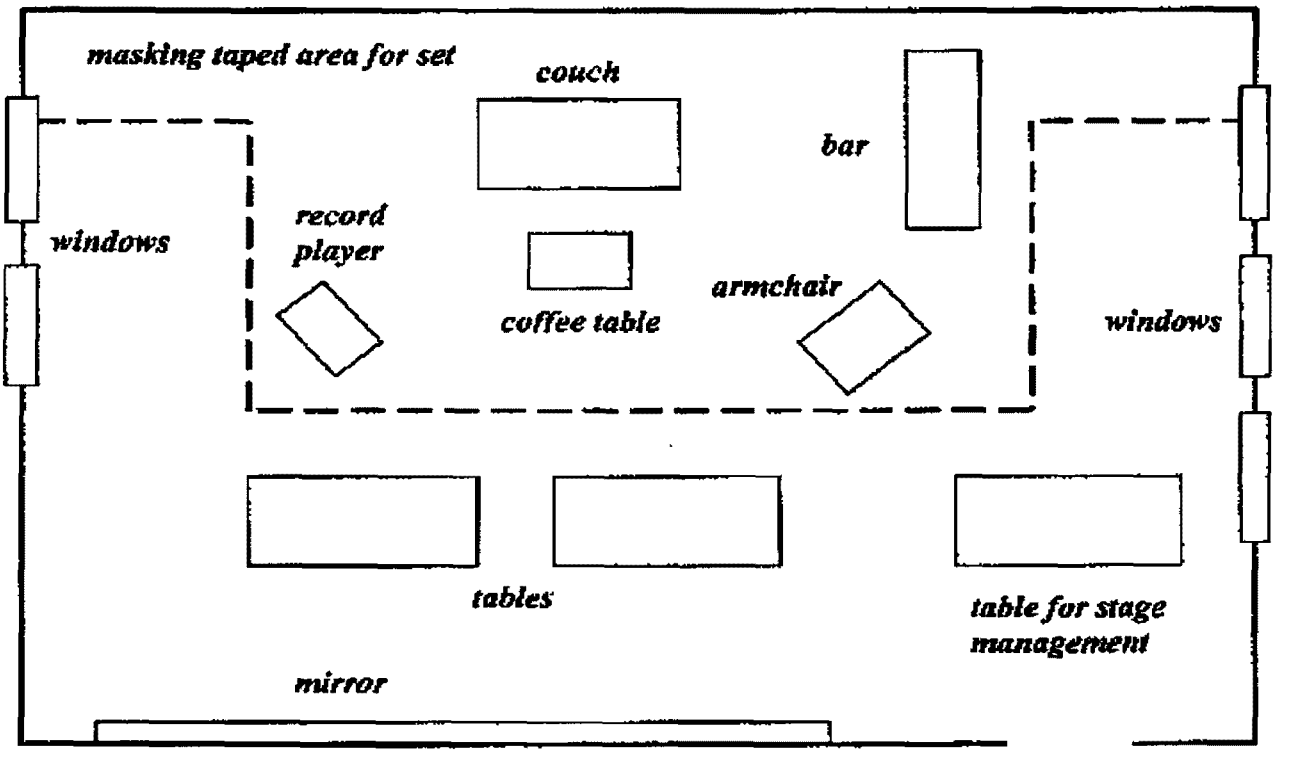


figure 2.4, rehearsal room for ***Reg***

there are not many theatre spaces in Sydney. As Gurton explains, 'You can't go out in the market place and say "This is the play and we should be doing it in this particular venue"' (1992: 137). The *Reg* producers had hoped to secure Upstairs Belvoir Street as a venue (in their mission statement[45] they describe it as 'prestigious' and 'centrally located'), and they were therefore disappointed when they lost the bid for this space. *Reg* was *not* performed at Belvoir, but at St George's Hall in Newtown. The hall was renamed 'Newtown Theatre' in 1996 when venue manager, Mark Cleary, bought it from the Department of Education and reopened it as a performance space. The Newtown Theatre, 354 King Street, is a block from Newtown Station and is at the edge of the more cafe populated strip of King Street at the intersection of Enmore Road (a busy intersection with pubs on every corner). Built in 1894, and originally named 'St George's Hall', it has been used for various functions, from concerts to roller-skating. It is a large, grand, white, Victorian building (Cleary himself settled on the term 'grand' when I asked him to describe the space) with a high doorway fronting onto the street. Through this doorway one must scale a staircase (with heavy, stately banisters) to reach the landing that takes you into the hall. The actual foyer area (a plush space with high windows, carpeted floors and huge rest rooms) is another floor up and can be accessed from one of two smaller staircases opposite either side of the hall's entrance. The hall itself is cavernous, with polished floorboards, ornate ceiling design (including a dome skylight) and a proscenium arch stage at the very end (equipped with heavy deep teal curtains). There is no fixed seating, and, for the *Reg* production, Cleary had rostra built which can be used in a flexible seating arrangement. According to Cleary, the hall seats around 220. It costs $3,500 per week to hire as a venue (Cleary is proud that the price has remained unchanged for six years).[46]

[45]The mission statement was formulated to approach potential sponsors and, as will be examined in Chapter 4, the *Reg* producers managed to secure a number of sponsorship deals.

[46] As a comparison, the Sydney Theatre Company hires out its Wharf 2 venue (also a capacity of 200) for $6,650 per week.

The *Reg* practitioners rehearsed in a large classroom of the Newtown Performing Arts High School.[47] The School is just next door to the theatre. However, because they rehearsed in school holidays, the front gates of the playground were permanently locked, so we all continually traipsed through Corelli's Cafe—a tiny space fronting King Street, and a space running adjacent to, and almost a part of, the theatre itself—in order to access the school grounds. The classroom was on the second floor of an old building, and, ascending the stairs, we walked past teenage artwork on the walls and the familiar smell of school days (this always partly involves the aroma of squashed banana). The room itself was light and airy with high arch windows offering views spanning the north, east and west. There were mirrors at one end, and a collection of school furniture directly in front. This space felt actively used and engaged with.

So, to sum up the discussion so far, rehearsals were emplaced, and these places could not be entirely separated from the theatre spaces where the productions would eventually be performed: throughout the processes, practitioners were continually reminded of the transference of the show. On one level, each process was geared towards performing elsewhere: the rehearsal rooms had mocked-up stage dimensions where the practitioners worked, dimensions that were representative of the theatre spaces. Moreover, the rehearsals took place in close proximity to the theatre spaces: the *Season* cast rehearsed upstairs from the theatre downstairs, and the *Reg* cast were not only able to see the Newtown Theatre from the high windows of the classroom, but they virtually used the theatre-building as a passage way to exit the school grounds. On another level, the rehearsal venues enjoyed more than an indexical relationship to the theatres and their stages. It is to this area I now turn.

[47]Cleary has an arrangement with the Department of Education to use the classroom space.

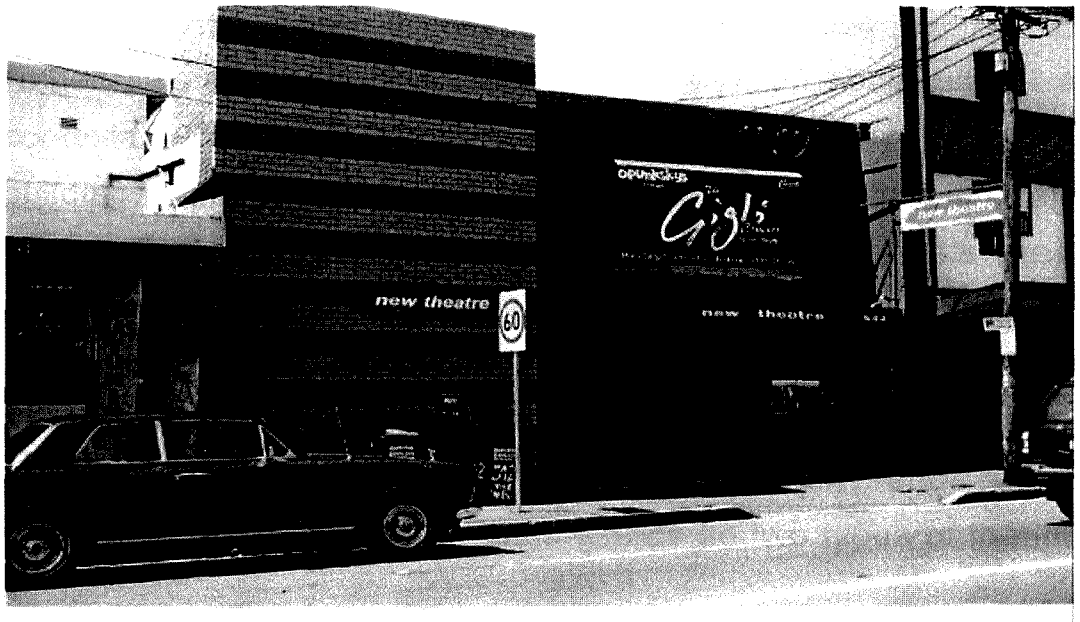


figure 2.5, New Theatre on King Street, (photograph: Anna Lise Phillips)

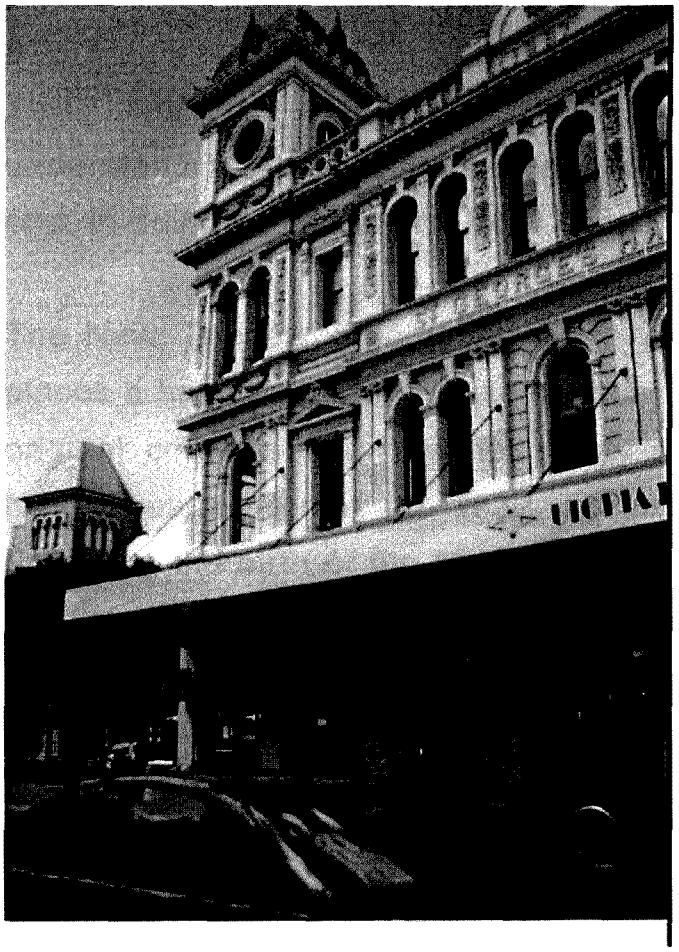


figure 2.6, Newtown Theatre (formerly St Georges Hall) on King Street, with Newtown Performing Arts High School in the background (left), (photograph: Anna Lise Phillips).

2.1.ii Histories, Geographies, Shelters and Edifices

Rehearsals and performances take place within sociocultural and historical contexts. Carlson (1989) and McAuley (1999) argue that theatre buildings—the audience arrangement, the foyers, the physical appearance, the location within a city—are all aspects of an audience's meaning-making experience. And, as I suggested earlier, the same may be said for practitioners. McAuley makes the point that theatres carry histories and framings.[48] In her project to explore how audiences and practitioners position these buildings socially and culturally, she draws on Vitez's distinction between what he understands as two types of theatre building:

> ..the shelter and the edifice. In a theatre-shelter you can construct whatever kind of spaces you like, while a theatre-edifice imposes from the outset a certain kind of mise en scène... The edifice says "I am a theatre", while the shelter points up the transitory nature of all codes of representation (in McAuley 1999: 38).

This distinction—between shelter and edifice—provides a means to understand the respective histories of New Theatre and Newtown Theatre, and, in doing so, to rethink fixed concepts of 'established' theatre places.

The New Theatre organisation has a history with respect to the various places it has occupied. 'Found' places will carry with them hangovers of the original contexts; they are not empty spaces waiting to be filled.[49] Sydney New Theatre formed in 1932 against the backdrop of the depression. Following the birth of the New Theatre movement in America—a movement initially chiefly concerned with agit prop sketches—amateur Workers' Theatre groups emerged in various Australian capitals: 'As in America, their first plays were short, locally written agit prop numbers [...] presented in their clubrooms as well as at factory gates, at street corners and at Labor Party and Communist Party branch meetings' (Millis 1992: 2). In the early 1950s,

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[48]She draws on sociologist Erving Goffman's work on frame analysis (1974).

[49]By way of a corollary, Peck, reviewing Peter Brook's *The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theater*, critiques Brook's 'dogged insistence of an "empty space" as a spur to the theatrical imagination [as it] elides Brook's power to decide where that empty space is and what goes in it. Brook's theatre, Bouffes de Nord, may be a big empty room, but it is also the gutted remains of a 19th-century opera house transformed into a functioning theatre by the immense resources of capital that his reputation garners' (1997: 172-3).

an organisation called 'New Theatre Australia' was formed to link all the State branches, but, after a number of years, the Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth groups disbanded leaving only Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle. The Sydney branch started out in the CBD, 'in premises formerly occupied by the Australian Seaman's Union' (3); then, having spent years at a second site in the city, it moved to St Peter's Lane near Kings Cross, using a former indoor car park as a theatre space. In 1973 Sydney New Theatre moved to King Street, Newtown. The building was initially a factory, and 'members, unions and friends transformed it into a modern 160-seat "little theatre"' (12). The New Theatre building has a history with respect to its previous configuration—a factory—where, in the remapping and reinscription, there are echoes of the old place.

New Theatre carries a history of place *and* histories of previous productions. The *Season* cast rehearsed upstairs while *Hamlet* performed in the theatre downstairs. This juxtaposition between a production in process and a production in performance meant that the *Season* practitioners were surrounded by the immediate reality of the theatre machine as well as the long history and tradition of New Theatre in Sydney. The insides of the theatre display this history with posters of previous productions covering much of the foyer walls and the rehearsal room, and odd props scattered around. McAuley argues that, 'a given venue can come to seem causally connected to a particular kind of performance' (1999: 42), and this is not only the case for audiences but for practitioners also. Theatre-makers know that, in New Theatre, with a history in left-wing politics, they can expect particular kinds of productions. Leigh Rowney, president of New Theatre in 1998, relates a conversation he had with one of the Theatre's playreaders who said, "This is the latest Arthur Miller [play] that I saw in London. Are the rights available? We've got to do it. It is a New Theatre piece". Further to Carlson who argues that we must study all dimensions of a theatre place in order to understand how an audience makes meaning, Schaefer suggests that it is worth examining the kinds of meanings and values that performance practitioners 'have literally in-corporated in their decision to

affiliate themselves to one particular kind of theatre or performance space rather than another' (1999: 3). A number of the actors in *Season* had had a long history with New Theatre and those same actors were active in the actors' union, the MEAA.[50]

New Theatre occupies a previously used place (in this case, a factory) and enjoys a complex history (both in a working class context and as a site of prolific theatre-making). As a 'found' space, the venue has something powerful in common with other Sydney theatre spaces. Almost all the theatres in Sydney are 'found' spaces—spaces never intentionally built for performance but since reinscribed—and this informs a large part of cultural memory as stories circulate about the reinventing of place; theatre practice is grounded in 'authentic' settings such as defunct warehouses, factories, pub spaces, club-rooms, cafes. The Sydney Theatre Company (state-subsidised theatre) is located at a converted finger Wharf under the Harbour Bridge. Olb, quite consciously foregrounding the radical transformation of 'place', writes: 'In the once defunct wharf, which Evan Williams (director of NSW Ministry Office for the Arts) remembers as derelict and covered in pigeon droppings, the Sydney Theatre Company's whole process for theatrical production is now housed' (1989: 17). Belvoir Street Theatre, housing another high-profile performance company (Company B, commonly considered as an alternative to the Sydney Theatre Company), was originally a factory for producing Cerebos salt and Fountain tomato sauce (Radic 1991: 129). One of the most important theatre buildings in Sydney, The Stables, had been a stables, and was the headquarters of a cab company when, in 1970, it was converted into a tiny theatre (Radic 1991: 69). Folklore describes a bunch of university students transforming the space over a weekend.[51] The Ensemble Theatre in Kirribilli (Sydney's Lower North Shore) is a refurbished boatshed, while Marion Street Theatre (Sydney's Upper North Shore) was an Old Soldiers Memorial Hall. The

[50]The Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance
[51]This theatre space is so important to theatre-makers that one actor-producer, Paul Barry said recently that when he was notified at not being granted The Stables as a location for his co-operative production, he 'didn't want it at a theatre at all'. Subsequently, he is producing the show at a local pub/bar space.

Performance Space in Redfern (inner-city) was originally used as a transport union headquarters and dance hall (Schaefer 1999: 12).

Here is where Vitez's distinction becomes interesting. As an initial analysis, we might understand these 'found' spaces as theatre shelters, as places where 'you can construct whatever kind of spaces you like'. Neither New Theatre nor any of the other buildings listed above seem, overtly, to be edifice-like and imposing. However, their histories have institutionalised these 'found' spaces so that what were originally unimposing places of possibility are now places firmly positioned within theatre-making in Sydney. New Theatre, occupying what was union headquarters and then a factory, is now an established site which produces very particular sets of shows. Vitez describes the theatre-edifice as imposing 'a certain kind of mise en scène' but, in many ways, all the 'found' places in Sydney have come to be known for the type of theatre (even including, to some degree, the design) that is produced there. These 'found spaces' might be understood as a dialogue between 'shelter' and 'edifice'. Similarly, Newtown Theatre *looks* like a theatre-edifice in that, as it was originally a town hall, it is large and grand, with an ornate design. In Vitez's terms, it says "I am a theatre" (or at least "I am an important building"). However, it is not fixed and established like many of the other Sydney theatre venues. Rather than imposing a mise en scène, the actual theatre space is an enormous hall with flexible seating, so that, even with a proscenium arch down one end, theatre groups very frequently use varied audience arrangements. Also, and perhaps more importantly, this venue does not, as yet, have a history as a performance place. It does not carry the echoes of decades of theatre work. While the producers of *Season* invoked New Theatre history to advertise the location of their production, the *Reg* producers used 'comfort' and geographic centrality. The media release for *Reg* writes that the show is performing at 'the refurbished Newtown Theatre, located in the heart of Sydney's thriving inner west.' McAuley, following Marvin Carlson's argument that theatres are 'placed' in relation to the centre and periphery of an urban environment, observes: 'As cities grow and develop, locations that were once peripheral

may become central' (1999: 45). In an effort to recognise Newtown as a rapidly developing urban centre, the *Reg* producers aggressively positioned the theatre (and therefore the show) 'at the heart' of a 'thriving' population. There were two reasons for this choice of framing by the *Reg* producers: firstly, Newtown Theatre had only been operating as a theatre for just over a year and was therefore unknown to most audiences (and practitioners) as it did not have a performance history; secondly, *Reg* was produced for Mardi Gras and it was likely to attract tourists from interstate and overseas—spectators unfamiliar with Sydney—and therefore foregrounding the comfort and centrality of the venue was a priority.

2.1.iii Bodies in Rehearsal Places

Having introduced the venues and some of their histories, what was it like to work in the rehearsal rooms on a daily basis? Like the theatre spaces, the rehearsal spaces carried their own framings, and especially compelling were the ways in which the practitioners engaged with the spaces during rehearsal time. As Casey suggests, '[i]t is by bodies that places become cultural in character' (1996: 34). *Season* rehearsals took place over seven weeks from May to June, late autumn and winter. Because New Theatre operates on a semi-professional basis, rehearsal hours are week nights and Saturdays, so the majority of the work happened at night, often until 10:30pm. The room was extremely cold, with no heating whatsoever, and the high ceilings did nothing to contain any warmth that may have been generated by moving, *working*, bodies in the room.[52] In rehearsal breaks people would huddle together smoking in the back entrance to the theatre (they couldn't bear to expose their entire bodies to the cold outside so they remained in the doorway), or clustered in the tiny kitchenette area making tea and coffee. Around 10:30pm, as people left to travel home, there was often an air of exhaustion and, while everyone car-pooled where they could, there was always a group of us who walked up a deserted King Street and

[52] The less than comfortable conditions of New Theatre were brought home to spectators one evening during a performance of *Season* when rain began leaking into the auditorium.

waited for the train (my trip own home on public transport would usually take an hour). I could not help but think of those actors who would get little sleep before rising the next morning for a full-time 9am to 5pm, Monday-Friday job. This production took extraordinary commitment and dedication.

The *Reg* rehearsals took place six months later, in the middle of summer. The production was fully professional (in that everyone was paid at least the award wage)[53] and actors rehearsed Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. While people were paid, they were not paid for long. Budgetary restrictions meant that the production could only afford three weeks rehearsal time, and, as will be examined over the course of this thesis, the practitioners worked at a remarkably fast pace. Like the *Season* process, the *Reg* rehearsal experience affected people. Sometimes the movement in the room seemed dictated by the King Street noise below: the adrenaline of Newtown-by-day pumped into these rehearsing bodies. The room was large enough in which to rehearse actors but not large enough for extra production business. For a time, Murray (designer) took costume fittings in a cramped corner until the producers secured a second classroom opposite. The overwhelming heat also took its toll. The classroom was not airconditioned, prompting Tony (director) to say on one 32 degree afternoon: "Let's be absolutely brilliant so we can fuck off because it's too hot to rehearse". The fictional location for *Reg* is England at night, and it often felt ridiculous to be rehearsing such a context in a Sydney summer climate.

Moreover, these places were responsible for some of the creative work that took place, as the rehearsal rooms themselves offered ideas for embodiment. McAuley points out that the rehearsal space 'is likely to imprint aspects of its own reality on both the fictional world that is being created and even on the physical reality of the set' (1999: 74). A dominant feature of the classroom where *Reg* rehearsed was the high ceiling and the huge arched windows with views across the south-west of Sydney. The skies on the January Summer days were screamingly blue, and whenever there was a

[53] See Chapter Four for these production details and a discussion of 'professionalism'.

break, or when actors weren't directly required on set, people stood at these windows and gazed out. It was no surprise, then, when Sean asked Tony if he could change his physical movement on stage "because I think I get up to look out the window". So, from then on, at that moment in Act Two, Sean/ERIC rose from the couch and came forward to stare out of a fictional window.

One final observation I would make here is that both the *Season* and *Reg* processes took place literally behind locked doors. 'The stage door is the physical manifestation of the demarcation between the world at large and the "secret kingdom" of the theatre practitioners, between public and private, between outside and inside' (McAuley 1999: 67). As I pointed out earlier, in order to access the *Season* rehearsal room at the New Theatre, we had to venture down the dark, narrow side of the building to the stage door, an alleyway so tight that bystanders could be fooled into imagining that figures disappeared into nothingness. McAuley points out that the reality of the backstage area is usually bleak, with stage doors themselves sometimes reminiscent of unmarked doors to warehouses or factories (67), and this was the experience during the *Season* process. Once we reached the New Theatre stage door, we had to knock to be allowed in, and it always seemed like a while before we could tell if someone had heard us upstairs and if they were journeying down to open the door. The experience—on cold nights, in a dark passage way, facing a locked door—reminded me of an early twentieth-century speak-easy: only a privileged few knew the location, and only the further privileged were able to gain access. The *Reg* experience was again a locked door affair, however the context was quite different. Rehearsing on hot days with the classroom windows wide open and the King Street traffic and bustle as a backdrop, there was no point in anyone knocking at the huge school building door downstairs. Instead, whenever anyone wanted to be let into the building, they stood at the bottom in the playground and yelled up to our windows so that someone could go downstairs and unlock the door. For some reason I found it amusing when, hearing shouts from below, a number of us would go to the window and

hang our upper bodies out to converse with this visitor in the playground. Not only do the details of this interface between the public space and the inner sphere remind us of the conditions that practitioners face, but they also point to rehearsals as a private, secret domain. This issue in particular will resurface later when I study the paradigm of 'risk-taking' and 'pushing boundaries', where the rehearsal room as a site of intimate knowledge and experience might be mapped onto the actor's self, itself a site of potential layered intimacy.

Implicit in my discussion so far is that rehearsal conditions are not only affected by places but also by *time*. I have written of rehearsal hours, working paces, and the pumping of traffic. Part Two examines more closely how temporal contexts contributed to production constraints, to meaning-making, and to the rhythm of working practice.

PART TWO
REHEARSAL STRUCTURES, SCHEDULING PERFORMERS, AND INTRODUCING 'THE PULSES'

2.2.i Dramaturgies, Rehearsal Schedules, and Performance Choices

The rehearsals I documented treated the playtext as a completed structure, which, as McAuley writes, 'has to be broken down and reassembled' (1999: 140). The practitioners carved up the playscripts in particular ways and, as will be explored in this section, this had enormous implications beyond simply how the scenes would be constructed for performance. In the two processes, the scripts' dramaturgies largely informed the scheduling of actors' rehearsals, and this scheduling in turn was responsible for some of the meanings that were eventually generated in performance.

The playscript of *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (TSAS) was written by Patrick White in 1962 and is set in the fictional suburb of Sarsaparilla in Sydney. It revolves around three families living next door to one another in Mildred

Street; the play follows the Knotts, the Pogsons and the Boyles as the men go to work and return from work, the women do daily chores, and the young people wonder what they will do with their lives. Subtitled 'A charade of suburbia', the play is a departure from naturalism in that it uses a heightened poetic style. However, as Akerholt suggests, TSAS 'is generally regarded as Patrick White's most accessible play' (1995: 519).

The script is divided into two equal Acts. White refers to them as 'Acts' and the *Season* practitioners—in both rehearsals and eventually in the program notes for audience—understood the two halves of the show in this way; in the performance there was a fifteen-minute interval marking this division. The playtext consists of sixteen characters, and interactions on the whole are extremely brief; it is rare that a section of script involves only two or three people without numerous interruptions from other characters. In fact, 'scene division' in the script was so unclear dramaturgically that, in the first rehearsal, Mary-Anne sat with her cast and went through the entire text providing everyone with *her* scene division: the cast and crew drew lines through their scripts as she broke down the play for them. McAuley argues that all performance is necessarily structured in some way and 'the connection between segmentation and meaning is of central importance at all stages of the creative process' (1999: 127). She not only observes segmentation from an audience perspective, but also from practitioners' practice: how do artists structure their work? She proposes four levels of segmentation, two macro and two micro: the macro units (in her terms, levels 1 and 2) are usually based on the playwright's structuring of the dramatic material 'so that the actors who are working with text, [...] are essentially involved at this stage of the process in exploring, interpreting, and appropriating a dramatic structure' (161), while the micro units (levels 3 and 4) are concerned with the detailed work between actors and directors in rehearsal. For the purposes of this section—a section interested in rehearsal schedules—I am especially concerned with levels 1 and 2 of McAuley's division, levels concerned with, in this context, acts and scenes. Level 2 units, McAuley writes, 'are constructed essentially along the lines of

the neoclassical scene, on the basis of actorial presence' (161), that is, on the basis of actors' entrances and exits. The units at this level of segmentation are most commonly referred to as 'episodes' or 'scenes' (162). TSAS is unusual in this way as scene-division is not stipulated by clean breaks in the text and not immediately obvious through entrance and exit patterns, and it became dramaturgically important for Mary-Anne and the actors to segment the script themselves. Mary-Anne did use characters' entrances and exits to organise the scenes, but it was a matter of choosing which characters and when. For instance, she identified 28 scenes for Act 1 and 22 for Act 2, which is an enormous number of units. There were numerous occasions when she could have run several scenes together into larger sections, however keeping each segment small and tight was a priority. For instance, the first few scenes were divided as follows (note that the plot synopsis is my own):[54]

SCENE 1 (2 pages of script)
PLOT: GIRLIE searches for her daughter, PIPPY, while PIPPY and her friend DEEDRE play under the house.
ACTORS REQUIRED: Lyn, Jacqui and Imara.

SCENE 2 (4.5 pages of script)
PLOT: HARRY cooks breakfast for his pregnant wife, MAVIS. PIPPY and DEEDRE discuss the dogs mating in the street. CLIVE eats his breakfast. NOLA explains about the dogs to PIPPY and DEEDRE. MAVIS complains about her lack of sleep. GIRLIE chides PIPPY. PIPPY and DEEDRE exit under the house. GIRLIE, CLIVE and NOLA individually reminisce about their past.
ACTORS REQUIRED: Ben, Kate, Jacqui, Imara, Peter, Denise and Lyn.

SCENE 3 (1.5 pages of script)
PLOT: GIRLIE serves JUDY breakfast. CLIVE leaves for work. ROY eats breakfast with MAVIS. HARRY leaves for work.
ACTORS REQUIRED: Gab, Lyn, Peter, Steve, Kate and Ben.

This tight segmentation—some scenes only a page or so—meant that in the first few weeks 60-90 minutes were allocated for each rehearsal slot.

[54] See appendix 3 and appendix 12 for full plot synopsis of both plays.

The *Reg* process approached the playscript segmentation differently, which would, in turn, have quite different implications for rehearsal scheduling. *My Night With Reg* (MNWR) was written by Kevin Elyot in 1994 and is set in an apartment in contemporary London. It follows the story of six gay men—five in their late 30s and one 18 year-old—as they negotiate relationships, friendships and AIDS. Unlike TSAS, the writing is extremely naturalistic. The playscript is divided into three equal sections which Elyot refers to as 'scenes': the three scenes of the play. However, in rehearsals the practitioners used the term 'act' instead of 'scene'. For instance, Tony asked 'What is this Act about?', while 'scene' tended to refer to smaller sections of the script and the process, sections McAuley describes in her Level Two stage. In the *Reg* program notes, however, the setting of the fiction is listed in the format of three 'scenes' rather than 'acts'. MNWR is a much shorter script than TSAS, and, while not explicitly stated by Elyot, the use of 'scene' suggested that it is a one act play: one act made up of three scenes. In this way, no interval is indicated in the script, and in performance the show ran straight through without a break. The scene division was marked by lights dimming and music playing (devices specified in the script). For the purposes of this thesis, I have adopted the practitioners' use of the term 'act' to describe Elyot's 'scene', while 'scene' is reserved for smaller structural units. While the *Season* process relied heavily on (fifty) neat scene divisions, the *Reg* practitioners did not feel compelled to segment the script in this way. Based on the understanding of a scene as consisting of a change in actorial presence, usually dictated by an entrance or exit, I identified nineteen sections in the playtext. However, this division was not explicitly acknowledged during rehearsals, and the term 'scene' was rarely used. Instead, an entire day—10am to 5pm—was dedicated to one act, so that all actors for any given act were called to rehearse for that day. There appeared to be two reasons for this: firstly, the rehearsal period itself was so truncated (even in Australia, three weeks is unusually tight) that the practitioners wanted to concentrate on working very quickly; and, secondly, each act (or 'scene' for Elyot) was reasonably short (the eventual running

time for the entire production was ninety minutes). It is quite usual to acknowledge the link between the playscript and the mise en scène: the dramaturgy of the text informs how scenes are constructed. However, the segmentation on *Season* and *Reg* had further implications.

In both processes, the rhythm of the schedule seemed to reflect the dramaturgy of the texts. TSAS, with its fifty scenes (as segmented by Mary-Anne), and with its 16 characters (with no doubling of actors), meant that the scheduling was tight and turn-over was extremely rapid: a group of three or four actors might be called in for a one hour rehearsal slot, and, at the 8pm change-over time, another four actors were waiting 'in the wings' to come in for their 60 or 90 minutes. In this way, there was often a sense of hovering—almost like a relay team—as actors waited for their cues to begin rehearsals. Actors would sometimes arrive early to rehearse their scene, and in these cases there was an unusual inhabiting of the rehearsal room as they parked themselves in places not inscribed as areas of working practice: for instance, they slumped on the old orange sofa in the corner, or tried to balance on the stack of plastic chairs shoved against the left wall, or they would crouch on the floor. I felt their compulsion to explore every part of the room. But, because the room was so cavernous, and because they would explore these places alone (I rarely encountered people grouped together), and because these silent observers were only present for a number of minutes before it was their turn to rehearse, it was reasonably easy to forget they were there. On the other hand, the *Reg* scheduling went for entire days, with all cast members called to rehearse each specific act. Actors would arrive at 10am, filing in and dumping bags on the floor, prepared for a full day's work. The result was that most of the actors were present most of the time, thereby creating a constant makeshift audience. The *Reg* actors mostly sat at the desks and watched the rehearsing scene. In this way they helped form what looked like an audition panel: those rehearsing in the stage area constantly confronted a row of bodies behind tables. Sometimes one of the actors might sit at the side of the room, watching the rehearsal from the flanked aisle areas, and because the

production was to be mounted on a thrust stage, they were still very much present to the actors onstage. The shape and structure of the playscripts very directly affected the practitioners' working rhythms: the stream of characters coming and going in White's play was also manifest in the rehearsal hours; the longer one-on-one scenes in the short acts of Elyot's script saw actors sit and watch one another work.

The rehearsal scheduling, this particular rhythm, affected the generation of meaning in the practitioners' creative practice. In the *Season* process, the coming and going of actors, and the rapid shifts in the rehearsing of scenes—sometimes only 30 minutes per scene—prepared the actors for the fast scene changes in performance. The rhythm, encountered and repeated over seven weeks, was sedimented in actors' bodies. In the *Reg* process, with all the onlookers, it was not surprising Tony discussed 'the audience' from the start. The production was to be mounted on a thrust stage in performance, and during rehearsals actors observing from 'offstage' would sit either at the front or to the sides of the space. This allowed Tony and the actors onstage to develop an awareness of performer/audience proxemics (and, here, spatial as well as temporal considerations come to the fore). At one point, Tony didn't like Steven sitting on the couch: "If it was a proscenium arch I'd say fine... but I need to keep it active". The actors themselves were also aware of the thrust setting. For instance, when Peter sat to the left of the room, the left side of the thrust stage, Graham (JOHN) had no hesitation in moving downstage left and turning around to face upstage on the diagonal thereby opening himself up to the audience sitting stage right of the thrust: Peter's presence signalled the prospective audience for Graham. This makeshift audience, usually on all three sides of the 'stage', provided a constant reminder of the performance configuration. This 'audience' also became almost test spectators for Tony, particularly in funny moments or in emotional, cathartic moments. For instance, when a number of us responded with smiles and laughter to Anthony Phelan's portrayal of his character BENNY, Tony interrupted the run-through and told Anthony, "Don't ever move on a laugh

line". Similarly, actors were encouraged to keep particular creative decisions if those decisions had elicited a (desirable) response from the people watching. The director and actors began to shape the work according to some of the responses from the onlookers.

2.2.ii Spending Time: Rehearsal 'On the Pulses'

Having examined the segmentation of the playscripts and the rehearsal scheduling, I now wish to write about the *time* spent in rehearsals: specifically, time spent on acts and scenes. This is not only with respect to the breakdown of hours and minutes, but how time was experienced by the practitioners and for me as an observer. I am, in Turner's terms, beginning to understand (or experience) fieldwork 'on the pulses' (in Conquergood 1991: 187). Here Turner is referring to researchers being sensitive to the ebb and flow of a given community's practices; being aware of the rhythms and the pace. For instance, researching theatre rehearsals as opposed to other fieldwork contexts is unusual due to the extraordinary time constraints: rehearsals took place in limited time frameworks. The *Season* production was semi-professional in that, while none of the actors (or crew) were paid, almost all were professional performers: practitioners with agents in 'the industry'[55] trying to make a living *as actors*. The time constraints operating in this process revolved around accommodating other work commitments (for many, these were 'day jobs'); hence the decision to rehearse week nights and Saturdays. The concept of 'spending time' had quite literal manifestations for the *Reg* process: the practitioners were all paid—this was a fully professional production—so the old adage 'time is money' was especially salient; there was no financial room for overtime so Tony worked them very quickly. Both processes had definite temporal shapes. On a macro-level—'macro' both in McAuley's sense concerning 'act' and 'scene' segmentation and in the looser sense of the broad shape of production—both processes shifted from a place of lengthy reflection

[55] I use a term like 'the industry' advisedly. Practitioners slipped between 'the industry', 'the scene', 'the community' and, in Chapter Four, I will be examining the implications of such tropes.

(where there was 'all the time in the world' to ponder on the work) towards a rapidly paced tempo (the experience of 'time running out'): the processes began in a slower state and, by tech-week, sped up to an urgent pitch. However, the sense of time—the *pulses*—was markedly different for each process. In *Season*, there was a slow, careful build; an even acceleration. In *Reg*, however, this temporal shape was quite markedly compressed: the whole experience was much faster so that the speeding up—the reflection to the rapid pacing—happened within a shorter period.

These tempos—the slow build versus the concertina—were manifest in bodies. Jackson, tracing the etymology of the term 'time', explains that 'even the most abstract words often refer us to the body. Our word *time* is from the Latin *tempus*, originally denoting a "stretch", and cognate with *tempora*, "temples of the head"—perhaps because the skin stretches and corrugates here as one grows older' (1989: 142-3). In *Reg*, Peter not only played DANIEL, he also co-produced the production, and this double-role, under some pressured time constraints, saw particular body manifestations. Rehearsal work for Peter encompassed performing onstage *and* being active in producing the show, and often one 'role' informed the other. During one rehearsal, he was onstage playing DANIEL, using a camp fast-talking delivery in his husky smoker's voice. When the moment came for Peter to exit the stage (DANIEL leaves to catch a plane), he turned and strode upstage left, a giant-stepped stride using his knees to propel himself forward. As he left the stage space during this *Reg* scene, he grabbed his mobile phone and began dialling a number, still striding, and exited the rehearsal room door with the same gait and the same rhythm of movement (the pace of Peter's DANIEL, and the pace of the producer-walk and the producer-dialling-a-mobile were identical). I later discovered that the phone call was to the printers concerning the production programme lay-out. Here the rapid tempo of production radically informed bodily practice.

Over seven weeks, the *Season* process saw approximately 140 hours of rehearsal time (not including dress rehearsals): around twenty hours every

week until week 7, which saw thirty hours. Over three-and-a-half weeks, the *Reg* process saw approximately 110 hours of rehearsal time, and these hours were evenly distributed throughout (unlike the *Season* process where the final week had a fifty percent increase in rehearsal time). While the *Reg* process felt like a compressed version of the *Season* time frame, and while the *Reg* rehearsal time was literally thirty hours shorter than the *Season* working hours, the *Reg* practitioners did not, technically, have to 'work faster' than their *Season* counterparts. The eventual running time for *Reg* was only 90 minutes whereas *Season* was 150 minutes: MNWR is a significantly shorter play than TSAS. So, in fact, an examination of the ratios between rehearsal hours and script lengths reveals that the *Reg* practitioners had comparatively longer time to rehearse than the *Season* practitioners. In that case, how might we account for the somewhat contradictory experience of time?

One way to understand this experience is by considering how each process related 'working on scenes' to the broader frame of the production as a whole. The *Season* process built from a 'parts to whole' trajectory where the practitioners worked with small sections of the script for weeks and weeks without any concrete sense of how or where such sections related to the production in its entirety. There were two basic reasons for this: the short rehearsal sessions meant that only small segments could be rehearsed in any one session; and the large size of the cast (along with the rapid entrance and exit patterns for the characters) meant that actors were only called in to rehearse their own scene(s). The effect was one of dislocation. On the other hand, the *Reg* process moved quite fluidly between working on small parts and then conceptualising the whole show: there was a smooth shifting from part to whole to part to whole. This was due to the full-day rehearsal sessions where large chunks of the script were worked through. Equally, the smaller number of actors onstage for longer periods of time meant that the practitioners were exposed to whole arcs of the production. The *Season* scheduling operated in such a way that it took just over four weeks (part time) to visit each of the fifty scenes once: the practitioners

literally did not even cover the whole playtext until a month into rehearsals. However, the *Reg* process was organised so that the entire script was discussed on the first day of the rehearsals, and, by day four, each scene had been specifically worked on. A second reason explaining why *Season* felt like a longer rehearsal process is that while the actual contact hours were comparatively shorter than in *Reg*, they were stretched over seven weeks. 'Rehearsing the show' did not start and stop with the schedule; practitioners had time to learn lines, to mull over ideas, to integrate work. The process stayed with us all—we lived with the work—for twice as long as the *Reg* practitioners did with their process.

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So far, this chapter has explored the practitioners' relationships with spaces, places, and temporal constraints. The choice of place, and the organisation of time, not only affected some of the meanings that were generated, but also the experiences of the practitioners as they worked to create the shows. When describing the two rehearsal processes I have used general, and perhaps indiscriminatory, terms like 'working on' scenes, or 'working through' or 'covering' or 'rehearsing' scenes, and yet what did this entail exactly? While the rehearsal practices in *Season* and *Reg* involved many overlaps, the details of the work were, to some degree, unique to each process. The notion of 'rehearsing scenes' was not only specific to either *Season* or *Reg*, but also specific to where such rehearsals occurred within the time frame of each process: 'working on' a scene on Day One of rehearsals constituted a very different set of practices than visiting that scene in the days before opening night. It is to these rehearsal practices, in all their diversity, that I now turn.

PART THREE
BEING 'AT THE TABLE' AND 'ON THE FLOOR': FROM GENRES TO WORKING PRACTICES

2.3.i Table-Work: Script Analysis, Micro-Segmentation, and Towards an Embodiment of Character

For both *Season* and *Reg* practitioners, table-work involved script analysis with an emphasis on discussing themes of the play and characters' psychologies, histories and their relationships with other characters. This work also included further segmenting the playscript into smaller rehearsable sections. Importantly, during both processes, there was no sense that the actors were somehow disembodied or disengaged from physicality while sitting down for discussion. During *Season* rehearsals, actors would arrive for their scene and immediately sit at the table, before reading through the relevant section. It was important that each actor understand what was motivating their characters at any given moment: what was their objective in the scene? During an early rehearsal for *Season*, Lyn (GIRLIE), Jacqui (PIPPY) and Mary-Anne sat around the table and discussed the characters:

Lyn: 'NOLA is a loose woman, I'm [GIRLIE] a tight woman.'
Mary-Anne (director): 'What wrecked it [GIRLIE and CLIVE'S marriage]?'
Lyn: 'They don't have anything in common.'
Jacqui (to Lyn): 'You're [GIRLIE'S] not mean... but just in that suburban sense.'
Lyn: 'I'm [GIRLIE'S] mean because I don't know any better.'
Mary-Anne: 'She's [GIRLIE'S] not mean in that she's not malicious.'
Jacqui (to Lyn): 'Do you think MAVIS will end up like you [GIRLIE]?'
Lyn: 'I don't know. What do you think? [...] Last night, as I was washing up, I realised how I [GIRLIE/Lyn?] wipe down the bench seven thousand times a day.'

Throughout these discussions, actors would scrawl on their scripts, building a profile for their characters. At the first *Reg* rehearsal, the practitioners gathered around the small school table and began reading through the script in a stop/start fashion, pausing to discuss characters and relationships.

Steven: 'GUY was able to co-ordinate and direct a production [of *The Bacchae*]'
Tony (director, to Steven): 'Who do you think is most academic?'
Steven: 'I s'pose it's me [GUY].'
Tony: 'Yes. It's definitely you [GUY]'.

The practitioners used the time at the table to further segment the playscript into pieces smaller than scenes in order to shape the drama. But, while the *Season* practitioners were implicit in their structuring, the *Reg* practitioners very explicitly divided the script. As has been already noted, the *Season* script was broken down into small scenes, thereby creating a tight rehearsal schedule. While the division of the script into scenes was dictated by Mary-Anne, further segmentation into smaller pieces of action was negotiated with the actors. McAuley describes this Level 3 segmentation as 'microstructuring', which is substantially the work of directors and actors in rehearsal:

> Many terms exist to name the units that are being constructed and manipulated (beat, idea, unit of action, action, sense block) and this in itself indicates that the processes involved are reasonably well understood, even codified, although they may not have yet been theorized with any precision (1999: 163).

Interestingly, during the *Season* process, these smaller units of action were never named and never even explicitly recognised. Unlike some practice (namely the *Reg* process) which identifies these sub-segments, Mary-Anne and the actors seemed to skirt around ever drawing these divisions. This was possibly because so many of the scenes were so short (sometimes a page of script) and the practitioners concentrated on the psychology of the characters and interactions—work that would of course, on the floor, subtly inform the scene's shape—rather than explicitly dividing the scene.

During *Reg*, the stop/start process of reading through the script at the table was also used to clarify the beats in each exchange. So, in McAuley's terms, while Level 2 segmentation was not foregrounded ('scenes' were not articulated as such), Level 3 was. 'Beats', as commonly used in theatre

practice, are understood as 'units of action' and further determine the dramaturgical shape of each scene in performance. So in the *Reg* process, the practitioners went through their scripts finding a consensus as to where the beats fell and drew lines between dialogue as a means to signify this segmentation. Tony moved through the script quickly and each beat tended to fall after every few pages. For instance, he suggested that the first beat of the playscript ended once JOHN and GUY say 'Cheers!' and drink; that is, two-and-a-half pages into the script. Until this point (according to Tony) GUY and JOHN exchange initial introductions and GUY busies himself getting JOHN a drink, and it isn't until 'Cheers!' that the two men are really confronted with one another. Tony wanted the scene to 'drive all the way' to that point so that the action would build and the audience would be finally confronted with the fact that these two old friends are alone together. In this way, beats were very much informed by what was understood as the psychology of each exchange between characters.

For the *Reg* practitioners, dividing the script into beats was not always straightforward. The playwright Kevin Elyot uses the term 'beat' in his script: sporadically, '*Beat*' is included in italics, as with stage directions. For instance, the section below is an early exchange between GUY and JOHN:

GUY: So, what have you been up to?
JOHN: In what way?
GUY: Any way, really.
JOHN: Travelled a bit. Hung around a bit. Fuck-all, actually. And you?
GUY: Oh, plodding along... as you do...

Beat

JOHN: I was thinking.. on my way over...
GUY: Yes?
JOHN: That play we did for DramSoc...
GUY: "The Bacchae"?
JOHN: Yes.

Some confusion arose in the cast because a *Beat* of Elyot's coincided with what Tony suggested was the end of (his) second beat and the beginning of the third. Here we saw two dramaturgies in action: the practitioners imposed a shape onto a script already shaped. Tony's argument was that Elyot's beats were actually pauses; that is, whenever Elyot used the term *Beat* he was suggesting that, in performance, the actors pause for a 'beat'. So the practitioners' 'beats' were entirely different divisions. At one stage in the process, Graham questioned Tony's use of the terms 'beat' and 'pause', asking for the distinction:

Graham (to Tony): 'How does a pause differ from a beat?'
Tony: 'A pause is longer'.

Here Tony referred to the fact that pauses (or Elyot's *beats*) required the actors to take a moment—to take a beat *temporally*—however his own use of 'beat' referred to the change of direction in a scene, or the change of action, and this was (overtly) based on psychology. It seemed that Tony wanted his use of the term 'beat' to do more than simply denote a pause in the drama. (Of course, pauses themselves are not divorced from the psychological shape of a scene, however Tony felt that a pause did not necessarily denote a change of direction in a scene.)[56]

This table time was very reminiscent of high school English Literature classes, as practitioners worked to make (or, in their terms, 'reveal') meanings in the text. However, unlike a Literature tradition—one that, traditionally, invokes a mind/body split, privileging the mind (active) over the body (passive)—these practitioners had, to some extent, already begun to

[56] Why is a rhythmical term, *beat*, used for segmenting a script? There is at least one myth surrounding the origin of the term 'beat', a myth I heard numerous times when acting myself. According to this tale, 'beat' derives from Stanislavsky's term 'bit'—that the playscript must be divided into 'bits' by the practitioners before being able to fully construct the shape of the drama—but somewhere in translation from Russian to English, 'bit' became 'beat', and, although this mistranslation was discovered, 'beat' remained. Aside from challenging the veracity of this story, the musical analogy, the *rhythmic* analogy, is compelling for practitioners who work to construct, however implicit, particular tempos for their scenes. The fact that Tony could state categorically that a pause is longer than a beat signals this very idea. And the fact that he wanted the scene to 'drive all the way through' to the (*his*) first beat, overtly suggests a particular tempo.

perform their characters. Even during these initial readings of the script, the beginnings of 'character' were quite obvious in both processes; practitioners did not wait until they were up on the floor to start performing their roles, instead very visible, recognisable character traits were apparent even whilst seated, and this was clear from the very start of rehearsals. At the first *Season* sit-down reading, Denise (NOLA) and Mark (MASSON) sat next to one another and, even with scripts in hands, they managed to make significant eye contact in their scenes together. And from the start Mark threw his head back during particular line deliveries, an action he continued to use throughout rehearsals and into performance.

2.3.ii Arranging the Tables

If the practitioners were physically engaged in character during table-work, where and how were they sitting exactly? The arrangement of the table/ floor relationship, the nature of the table (can it accommodate everyone?) is indicative of, and affected, the work done in rehearsals. While both processes used tables and marked out stage areas, how these places were activated and inscribed by each group of practitioners differed enormously. In the New Theatre rehearsal room, the table was set apart as much as possible from the stage space, sitting in the far right of the room upon entering, nestled in the corner (see figure 2.3). The table itself was long and deep, like a large dinner table, and it could usually accommodate all the actors and crew rehearsing any relevant scene, seating up to ten people. The two stage managers, the assistant director and myself remained seated at the table even once the actors were on the floor. Mary-Anne, on the other hand, dragged a chair over to the stage area and sat down: this would be her sitting place for the remainder of the rehearsals. Interestingly, her chair was in between the table and the 'stage': she was literally an embodiment of the page to stage trajectory, and she would interrupt the rehearsing scene in order to shape it. In the *Reg* room, four school desks were pushed together in two pairs, thereby creating separate long, narrow tables which faced the stage area (see figure 2.4). They were

not unlike auditioners', panellist or interviewer tables. The only time the cast ever worked at these tables was at the first rehearsal when nine of us huddled awkwardly around a couple of the desks. There was no room to spread out scripts and take notes, and the effect was one of a temporary space: we would be sitting here only for a moment. For the remainder of the process, the cast were on the floor and Tony, the stage managers, myself and (often) Peter would sit behind the desks. Tony positioned himself in the gap between the two tables and would move in and out of the stage space constantly.

In this way, the *Season* practice valorised or foregrounded table-work far more than the *Reg* rehearsals did. The large dinner table-style arrangement in the *Season* process, where everyone could gather comfortably to take notes, created a permanent space for seated reflection and discussion. The narrow school tables in the *Reg* room—tables pushed together specifically for that rehearsal only—created the sense of fleeting practice in this mode: we were barely accommodated and there was no effort made to arrange anything more comfortable or lasting. This was reflected in the time allocated for the table work. Overall, one third of the *Season* rehearsal hours were spent in table-discussion, whereas the *Reg* practitioners only spent four (of their 110) hours working in this way. For the *Season* group, table-work was understood as a time for careful script and character analysis, work that must occur prior to being 'on the floor': these practitioners 'understood' the scene as much as possible before attempting to work in stage space. However, for the *Reg* group, table-time constituted a brief gathering to skim through beat-division and to make provisional comments about characters. These practitioners felt an urgency to work in the floor space. The different weighting of table and floor work must not be understood as a radical discrepancy regarding script discussion. As we shall see, just because the *Reg* practitioners spent comparatively more time 'on the floor' by no means meant that they somehow talked less about the characters and meanings.

2.3.iii Floor work: Blocking and Rehearsal Modes

After discussion of the scene at the table, Mary-Anne was usually heard saying "Do you want to put it on the floor?" She was referring to beginning to block the action. The term 'blocking' is a familiar part of theatre rehearsals, and both Potts (1995) and McAuley (1999) have described this mode of rehearsal. Potts writes:

> This is the first time the three dimensional space becomes activated by the actors: the play is tackled scene by scene with a view to 'moving' it or taking it 'onto the floor'. From the chairs in which they [the practitioners] have been sitting, they move to the 'mark-up' which in floor-tape, sets the boundaries of the stage-space and those features of the set that will affect the actors' movements and the spatialisation of the play (1995: 94).

McAuley describes blocking as being 'concerned essentially with the construction of moves and groupings and with the placing of the action' (1999: 105); it is 'the construction of the physical manifestation [of the segmentation of the action or narrative]' (164). In the *Season* rehearsals, the stage area for the actors had been marked out with masking tape, including important design elements, in this case the three smaller spaces for the three kitchens of the three adjacent houses. The actors would move through the scene, paying close attention to the stage directions. From the first *Reg* rehearsal, the space had been divided as follows: on the floor, masking tape mapped out the dramatic world (in this case, GUY'S loungeroom), all the furniture was ready (a lounge-setting, coffee table, a bar, a record player station), and props were in place (a bowl of nuts, telephone, drinking glasses, even GUY'S knitting). Facing the set—outside the taped boundary—were the two long tables. When we all first entered the room, the actors moved straight to sit at these tables, however Tony interrupted them by saying "No, we'll be on the floor". He had decided that the first read-through would take place in the stage space and it would be a moved reading; that is, the actors moved about the set, with scripts in hands, observing the stage directions. In fact, after the first walk-through, Peter said to me "It feels good to claim the space", as if he needed to inscribe the

stage immediately. So, unlike *Season*, the actors were in the space *moving* before any kind of table discussion. And while initially each *Season* session opened with time spent at the table, the *Reg* practitioners were to work 'on the floor' for the remaining few weeks; once the first sit down read-through, character discussion and beat clarification took place, the actors never worked at the table again. Instead, Tony was keen to block the performance as quickly as possible. McAuley notes that blocking is 'fundamental to the creation of theatrical meaning' (105) and this is not only the case for the spectators watching a performance but also for the practitioners in rehearsal: the act of blocking is essential in determining further meanings.

Once initial discussions had taken place at the table, the practitioners spent remaining rehearsals on the floor developing the performance by concentrating on the minutiae of delivery right through to the broader shape of the production. In both processes, floor-work involved three identifiable modes of practice: discussion on set; stop/start work; and running scenes. Each of these modes had such different qualities about them, most notably different tempos. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there was always a distinct sense of building from a slower reflection on set through to the more fluid, pumping, full running of scenes. These three modes are best understood as a continuum rather than exclusive categories, as practitioners moved along, between and through different practices.

2.3.iii (a) Prolonged Discussion on Set

Practitioners would sometimes sit down on the set to discuss the shape of a scene. This occurred mostly after the run of a scene; that is, the directors and actors had worked through a scene on the set and, once they reached the end, the performers would usually sit down in the stage area on the couch, the chairs or on the floor (I even recall Sean and Anthony lying on the floor at various times). Here they would all reflect on the scene, and Tony or Mary-Anne would ask questions to draw out further clarification from the actors as to what the scene was 'about'. It was always interesting to see the

space being used in this way. At these times the practitioners were very much outside and separate from the fiction they were developing. This mode—discussion on set—was especially central for the *Reg* practitioners as they had spent so little time at the table. Just as 'table-work' should not imply that the actors were somehow disembodied, so too, floor-work did not always involve *movement*. The *Reg* practitioners in particular did not hesitate to sit down on set and have a chat.

2.3.iii (b) Stop/Start Work

The mode of stopping and starting was perhaps the most common during rehearsals. As mentioned in Chapter One, Susan Letzler Cole writes extensively about the stop/start process in rehearsals, as the director and actors run tiny fragments of action, constantly interrupting themselves in order to shape particular moments. In the rehearsals I observed, this process could range from an almost agonisingly slow analysis of a few lines—stopping and starting the run of fragments—right through to what Tony described as 'fine-tuning' sections, where he might interject with tiny suggestions (for instance, directing Steven to 'tweak' a line), almost not interrupting the work at all, as actors were running scenes more fluidly. Often directors would ask actors to 'run' a scene and I would assume that the work might be presented uninterrupted. However, usually Mary-Anne, Tony or even the actors themselves would stop the scene part-way through to shape it, to ask questions, etc. This idea—stop and start—was actually articulated by the *Season* practitioners, whose rehearsal schedule literally included the term 'stop n start' to describe the 'Act 1' and 'Act 2' rehearsals that took place in some sessions.

2.3.iii (c) Running Scenes

I have described the third mode as 'running scenes', and this metaphor was articulated by the practitioners themselves: I would hear "Let's run that scene" or "Let's run that section again". This trope, *running*, aptly describes

this work, as actors would perform an entire section without stopping and the feeling in the room was always one of rapid movement, especially after the more laborious stop/start process. However, the uninterrupted 'running' of scenes (and then Acts) was quite rare and really only apparent in the last week of production (in fact, both Potts (1995) and Hertzberg (1998), who write about rehearsal, discuss 'running' as part of the final stages of the process). It is also during this mode that actors might experiment with deliveries on the fly in the middle of a scene, as if the momentum of movement and shape offered openings for various performative choices. I use the term 'choices' but this suggests individual agency, and sometimes something bigger seemed at work, as if the scene itself demanded particular performances from the actors. For instance, the first run of Act One for *Season* involved the entire cast, and this impacted on the actors' performances. Lyn, playing GIRLIE, who, throughout the show, operated from the centre of the stage, was exposed for the first time to the full comings and goings of the other actors around her. She was at the centre of a whirlwind of activity, and she became part of these rhythms. The bustling and the screeching voice Lyn had developed in earlier rehearsals was massaged here by the movements and deliveries from the other actors, giving the sense that Lyn was caught up in something bigger than herself.

For the actors, this floorwork involved a profound degree of physicality and, as the following section suggests, a very intimate relationship with the segmentation of the playscript.

2.3.iv Embodied Segmentation

While table work involved further segmentation of the playscript—implicit for the *Season* practitioners, explicit for the *Reg* practitioners—the work on the floor saw an *embodied* segmentation. Once they were in the space moving around, actors (with directors) began articulating divisions that may or may not have been apparent when sitting down. During one of the first rehearsals for Act One of *Reg*, Graham (JOHN) and Steven (GUY) worked

hard to 'drive' the action through to the end of the first beat. As mentioned earlier, the scene opens with these two old friends seeing one another for the first time in nine years. Tony had suggested that the first beat ended once the two men, with drinks in hands, say 'Cheers'; that is, two-and-a-half pages into the script. The second beat starts with Steven (GUY) telling Graham (JOHN) that their friend, DANIEL, won't be joining them for dinner. This is significant, because, unbeknownst to GUY, JOHN is having an affair with DANIEL'S lover, REG, and he already knows DANIEL will be absent (in fact, that's why he came to dinner in the first place). Tony's segmentation of the script—his holding off from a beat change until this point—would emphasise this drama. The rehearsal for this section began with Graham and Steven standing opposite one another downstage. The subsequent exchange, the dialogue comprising the first beat, was delivered extremely quickly. This was aided by the lines themselves, which were short, sometimes indicating one actor to cut off another actor mid-stream. For instance, below is a small exchange from the first beat:

JOHN: You look well.
GUY: Do I?
JOHN: Yes.
GUY: I've been to Lanzarote.
JOHN: Oh
GUY: You look well too.
JOHN: Thanks.
GUY: You don't look a day older.
JOHN: Well—
GUY: You don't. Honestly. You're just the same.

The dialogue itself complemented, or perhaps even informed, the practitioners' choice for a fast delivery. For most of the first beat, Graham stood awkwardly onstage, looking around the space, suggesting JOHN'S hesitancy. Steven, on the other hand, faced Graham, almost standing on his tippy toes ready to fly in any direction. And then, one-and-a-half pages into the play, when GUY offers JOHN a drink and proceeds to the drinks' table, Steven shot off from his precarious position in the middle of the stage,

almost like a catapult suspended for too long, and headed upstage left to the kitchen bench to make two vodkas. (From the start of the *Reg* rehearsals, all props were in place, ready for the actors to begin accommodating them immediately. So, in this case, a bottle of water and two glasses were waiting for Steven to use.) When Steven returned with the glasses, and handed one to Graham, they said 'Cheers!' awkwardly, Steven tentatively moving his body forward to the other actor in order to clink drinks. Their drinking provided the first silence of the scene, and the actors took a moment here to breathe and to change the direction of the scene. Steven turned away from Graham slightly, bowed his head and said 'I've got a bit of bad news actually', the first line of the next beat. Here was an instance where the explicit segmentation at the table was articulated physically by the actors. They embodied this division through the rhythm (in this case the *speed*) of the dialogue, through movement, and even through the distribution of body weight: It was not until 'Cheers'—the end of the first beat—that Steven settled into a standing position more permanent than a suspended projectile.

On the floor, segmentation other than 'beats'—a segmentation even more refined—was also developed, again both implicitly and explicitly. In the above example, Steven worked hard to shift his energy for the start of the second beat. Tony told him to 'tweak' the line 'I've got a bit of bad news actually', so Steven delivered it with his face slightly scrunched, slowing the pace, and over-articulating the words. And he turned his face and body away from Graham, looking down into his vodka. McAuley describes this as 'fourth level' segmentation: There are no terms in common for these units, for '[a]t this level of the performance [or rehearsal] the actors work in detail with minute fragments of bodily behaviour, emotion, thought, impulse, energy, speech' (1999: 164). Tony would use phrases such as "Tweak that line", "Earn that pause", or "Sharpen that moment". Similarly, Mary-Anne would describe these as 'moments', and she was often heard saying "that moment needs to be bigger". Interestingly, in both the processes, the actors

knew exactly what the directors were referring to and could manipulate their performance accordingly.

2.3.v Genres, Discourses and Embodied Doings

The *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals constituted a variety of performance practices in creating the productions. How might we understand this work? How did the practitioners understand these different labours? Is it possible to conceive of them under a single collection of practices? Some of the practices outlined in Part One were what many performance academics (and most theatre practitioners) would doubtless describe as 'Stanislavskian' or 'Stanislavskian-derived'. I begin with Stanislavsky because my understanding of the work in the two rehearsal processes was heavily influenced by what I thought acting was.[57] a rigorous process of finding characters' psychologies, subtexts, their motivations and objectives, their emotional topographies, all the while carefully dividing the script into tiny fragments before running these sections together. The *Reg* practitioners' division of the script into beats and Steven's subsequent embodiment of that first beat are recognisably Stanislavskian. Stanislavsky's definition of acting as creating the 'inner life of a human spirit' (1937: 14)—a plausible, psychologised person—informed both of the rehearsal processes. Similarly, his careful work concerning script segmentation—beginning with his famous analogy between a playscript and a turkey (where segmenting a script without dividing it into scenes and then smaller units is like trying to eat an entire turkey without carving it (111-112))—was implicit and explicit throughout *Season* and *Reg.* And Steven's embodiment of this beat division might be understood as Stanislavksky's concept of the importance of 'living the part inwardly' and then giving the actor's experience 'an external embodiment' (14).

[57]This observation of my own framings of the rehearsals was clarified for me upon reading Lewis' work where he acknowledges that his understanding of Brazilian *capoeira* was influenced by what he thought it was (1995: 222).

A large body of work has been written on the area of acting practice under the umbrella of 'Stanislavsky' and, to a lesser extent, his disciples (for example, Strasberg, Mamet). That is, writers write about and theorise acting within one or more of these categories or within the categories of other great twentieth-century theorists of acting. In fact, it is not unusual to find books with chapter headings 'Stanislavsky', 'Grotowski' and 'Brecht'. Examples include Mitter's book, *Systems of Rehearsal* (1992), where he studied to what extent these three theorists can be found in Peter Brook's rehearsal work; Colin Counsell's *Signs of Performance* (1996); Auslander's *From Acting to Performance* (1997) which covers modern theories of acting; and Meyer-Dinkgräfe's *Approaches to Acting* (2001). The publishers of the 1988 edition of *An Actor Prepares* make the substantial claim, 'No-one has had a greater influence on acting as we know it than Stanislavski [sic].[58] His "system"—or interpretations of it—has become the central force determining almost every performance we see on stage or screen' (reprint 1988, back cover blurb, first published 1937). So, over the last twenty years, much writing has been published about Stanislavsky and his 'System' of acting. Writers have studied his books, and, recently, theorists such as Auslander (1995) and Copeland (1990) have enlisted deconstructionist thinking in order to critique Stanislavsky's model of acting. Important as this work may be, these theorists are interrogating a set of writings rather than a set of doings. In their writing, there is a distinct absence of real actors involved in real practices, doings that do not simply fall into a single, neat overarching theory of acting. Even Mitter, who claims to study rehearsal—surely a paradigm of practice par excellence—did not attend the sessions, but rather drew on interviews with Brook, Brook's writings, and newspaper reviews of the productions. By looking for 'Stanislavsky' in Brook's work—by searching for evidence that might confirm a theory—he put the horse before the cart, so to speak. The title, *Systems of Rehearsal*, in itself invokes such a fixedness.

[58] 'Stanislavsky' is often spelt using an 'i'—'Stanislavski'—however this a Polish rather than a Russian spelling.

However, in my project to describe and conceptualise the rehearsals I studied, a labelling of either rehearsal process as categorically 'Stanislavskian' (or, for that matter, 'Grotowskian' or 'Strasbergian' or 'Mametesque') became immediately problematic. Firstly, the practices I encountered were incomplete and partial; not stable, bounded and reified as a label might suggest. Secondly, in rehearsals practitioners engaged in work that fell outside such a label, and the act of labelling would in fact efface such work. The caveat revealed itself: the practices I documented were *doings*. As Zarrilli argues, 'practices are not things, but an active, embodied doing' (1998: 5). My fieldwork research led me to rethink taken-for-granted genre categories such as 'Stanislavskian'. Once practitioners' doings became the focus of the project, conceptualising practices in terms of distinct genres was potentially disrupted. Here Briggs and Bauman's work (1992) on genre terms is especially salient. Lewis summarises their argument:

> If a speaker or writer wishes to create the sense of an ordered universe of clearly bounded generic terms, the strategy is to minimize these gaps, linking groups of utterances or texts clearly together into a genre set. The opposite strategy is to maximise such gaps, creating a world of genre ambiguity or heterogeneity in which a given discourse token doesn't quite fit a genre category or fits several at once (1995: 223).

My project has led me to maximise gaps and blur genre boundaries: the rehearsals did not manifest a distinct, contained, completed approach to acting, rather the practices were unstable and often incomplete. Maxwell makes the important point that, while

> Stanislavski [sic] claimed to be creating a rational **system** of acting [his research] did not [...] proceed propositionally but as **practice**. The theoretical grounds of his work were neither rigorous nor explicit, but articulated as quasi-scientifically informed common sense. His books (written as afterthoughts to subsidize his later work) have recourse to homey, anecdotal examples to support his assertions (2001: 103).

Sets of practices outlined by Stanislavsky—practices themselves written as afterthoughts—got taken up in the contemporary rehearsals I studied in very particular ways. For instance, the *Reg* practitioners did not divide the whole

script into beats—they literally got half-way through before time ran out in the rehearsal session—and while nothing was explicitly articulated, there was an assumption that the remaining divisions might take place on the floor. Similarly, while the *Season* practitioners spent time 'discovering' their characters, the labour was not one of a careful, systematic building, but instead manifested as dynamic discussions full of half-asked questions and incomplete thoughts. Moreover, in the rehearsals there were practices that fell outside any sense of 'Stanislavskian'. When Steven rehearsed the first section of *Reg*, various practices operated. Through discussions with Tony, he created GUY'S internal state as 'nervous'; he contextualised this within what had been decided as GUY'S overall psychology; in order to embody the beat-division, he tried to find those (internal) parts of himself that become nervous in particular situations (how and where does he 'feel' nervous?); and he allowed this internal state to inform his bodily movements and vocal delivery. However, his labour also involved interpreting and responding to Tony's direction to 'tweak' a line: Steven immediately manipulated his physicality accordingly. The diverse practices in *Season* and *Reg* included: creating histories and psychologies of characters and their relationships (for instance, taking lines from the playscript and creating backstories for the characters); dividing the script based on these interactions; allowing the psychologies to inform embodiment; shaping movement and vocal delivery from directors' directions; allowing costume, stage design, props, lights and music to inform embodiment; allowing the characteristics of the rehearsal room to inform embodiment.

In an effort to engage with the rehearsal work, I have had to move away from reducing it to labels or genres and instead understand it in its own empirical immediacy. As Bourdieu argues: 'We need to cease thinking in the logic of first beginnings' (1980: 264), where we search for a *creator* of practice—in my case, 'the' acting theory—and instead turn our attention to practices as they occur in lived bodies. A productive approach is to interpret the practitioners' own interpretations of what they were doing; that is, to

understand their work on their own terms. When the practitioners were discussing the playscript, or doing stop/start work, or running scenes, they did not invoke 'Stanislavsky' or any other theorist. Rather, they framed these practices in part as a process of 'discovery' (unearthing meanings in the playscript and discovering characters), or part of the theatre pragmatics of making-meanings for an audience. When Steven responded to Tony's direction to 'tweak a line', this was not understood as 'discovering the meaning in the playscript' but instead constructing, or *making*, meaning. Zarrilli argues that 'a practice is not a discourse, but implicit in any practice are one or more discourses and perhaps paradigms through which the experience of practice might be reflected upon and possibly explained' (1998: 5). In the *Season* and *Reg* processes, the experience of practice was understood as either a process of 'discovery' or one of 'meaning-making pragmatics', and there were times when the practices seemed to be partly one and partly the other: that is, there was a continual negotiation from one discourse to another. I now turn to these practices and the discourses with which they were framed.

chapter three

Opening Pandora's Box: Rehearsal Practice as 'discovery' and the 'E.M.Forster Muddle'

3.0 Introduction

The acting practices in *Season* and *Reg* were often framed through a discourse of 'discovery' and its associated tropes. Specifically, there were two separate but linked ideas: 'discovering meaning in the text' which was bound up with remaining faithful to the playwright's work;[59] and 'discovering people', which constituted psychological excavations where the job of the practitioners was to uncover the underlying subconscious of the characters. 'Finding the playwright's meaning' was how rehearsal practice began at the table and, in both processes, the scripts were treated as sites of autonomous facts that simply had to be unearthed.[60] The sense of fixed meanings was partially due to the *Season* and *Reg* practitioners' particular approach towards the playtexts. In both processes, the entire script was read through at the start of rehearsals, including all the stage directions for the actors, and this immediately suggested a particular performance practice in terms of how the playtext would be used. The script was treated

[59] Potts recognised the rhetoric of 'discovering the meaning' in the range of rehearsal processes she studied in Sydney and Melbourne in the early 1990s. She devotes a section of her thesis to examining what she identifies as seven linked discourses concerning interpretation and authorship in theatre rehearsals. These include: serving the play; not imposing a meaning on the text; discovering the playwright's intentions; contacting the playwright's impulse; allowing the play to speak through you; the director getting inside the playwright's head; and having the playwright being proud of the theatre practitioners (1995: 22-40).

[60] Potts, locating what she calls key 'rehearsal paradigms', explains that during the initial read-through of the playscript and the subsequent discussion, 'questions get asked which make a frame-work of enquiry for the weeks to come. Discussion might be as broad as the overall themes of the play or as specific as the interpretation of a single line' (1995: 94).

as a given, and with that came a lot of already-fixed decisions: *this* is the story we are telling; *this* is what will be enacted and *this* is what will be recounted; *this* is the number of entrances and exits, and *these* characters enter and exit from these places; *this* is how the characters are to move; and *these* are the sound effects. In rehearsals, 'finding the meaning' became distinctly connected with 'discovering character', where actors searched for psychologies of roles that they understood as being explicit and implicit in the playscript. Moreover, this subsequently became an exercise of self-excavation as actors slipped between analysing their characters and analysing themselves.

However, the practitioners not only operated within a paradigm of 'discovery' but also within a very pragmatic idea that they were constructing a performance. As they rehearsed, the practitioners worked on physical movements and sequences, they manipulated their vocal deliveries, and they co-ordinated elements of production such as props, costumes and music. Sometimes, I heard metaphors of 'tweaking' lines, of 'shaping' exchanges, and of 'driving scenes through'. These discourses and practices were not couched as finding the playwright's intentions or uncovering people's psychologies but were understood as constructing meaning. The *Reg* practitioners in particular often understood themselves as agents of meaning-making rather than, for instance, purely vessels for Elyot's text. This 'making meaning' discourse departed from the notion of an inward psychological state for the actor or for the character: the practitioners did not focus on internal states but rather shaped external characteristics that they expected would be interpreted by an audience.

The following work is a departure from that scholarship which seeks to understand all practitioners' practices in terms of a semiotic framework. As mentioned in Chapter One, earlier writing on rehearsal leant on semiotic theory: Potts, drawing on Ubersfeld, describes theatre practitioners as 'natural semioticians' (1995: 1); Threadgold conceptualises rehearsal as involving the 'making, transferring and discarding of meanings across a

wide range of semiotic media' (1995: 176). Performance semiotics is only one quite limited theoretical paradigm within which to describe practitioners' practices and audience spectatorship. By resting on a semiotic analysis of *Season* and *Reg*, my project would ignore many other dimensions to the rehearsal processes. For instance, the practitioners themselves—particularly the *Season* group—would not make sense of their work in terms of creating sign-systems. Instead of approaching theatre rehearsal as a semiotic playground where practitioners are always in a state of meaning-making, my work focuses on how the practitioners themselves framed their own work. In *Season* and *Reg* the directors and actors slipped between discourses of 'discovery' and ideas about putting the show together, and it is their categorisations that structure the subsequent analysis.

PART ONE
FIDELITY TO THE PLAYWRIGHT AND DISCOVERING CHARACTER

3.1.i The Playwright's Dialogue

Throughout rehearsals, the practitioners were careful to deliver all the lines of the playtexts as accurately as possible, and they meticulously observed any directions (for instance, movement or gesture) indicated within the dialogue: the two groups framed this as remaining loyal to the playwright's work. In McAuley's work on spatial indicators in playtexts, she begins by dividing a playscript into dialogue and stage directions: she quotes Ingarden's distinction between primary text and secondary text (in McAuley 1999: 221), and she cites Aston and Savona's use of 'intra-dialogic' directions and 'extra-dialogic' directions (in McAuley 1999: 223) to refer to physicalisations suggested within the dialogue and outside the dialogue. However she further nuances this division, arguing that '[o]bservation of rehearsal process suggests that the most practical categorization of this information concerns the degree of precision (or constraint) involved' (223-4); that is, McAuley is preoccupied with how practitioners engage with the texts, what aspects of the playscripts they find most compelling and what

aspects (or directions) they ignore. She describes intra-dialogic information both at an explicit level where a given action is clearly indicated, where the words would be nonsense if unaccompanied by the physical manifestation, and a second order or category which 'exists within the dialogue when a move or action is implied but not specified or made explicit' (25). In both the *Season* and *Reg* processes, the practitioners rigorously followed the actual delivery of the dialogue, the explicit physicalisations suggested within the lines, and a more implicit movement also.

Below is an exchange from a *Season* rehearsal where two actors, Mick and Lyn, responded to White's use of the term 'Pffh' in the script:

Denise (as NOLA to Mick as ERNIE): 'Pffh!'
Mick: 'Don't call me a poof!' (everyone laughed)
Lyn: 'There's a lot of those "Pffh!"s but I've changed them'.
Mary-Anne: 'Don't think I haven't noticed'.

The actors felt it inappropriate to deliver 'Pffh!' to a late 1990s audience who would be likely to hear 'Poof!' (a derogatory term for a homosexual man). However, Mary-Anne was adamant that they deliver the line exactly. Later, when the stage manager corrected Denise on some of her lines, Mary-Anne laughed, "We'll do the *play* now". Remaining 'loyal' to White's playtext was at the forefront of Mary-Anne's mind rather than, for instance, explicitly understanding the work within contemporary Sydney. While the *Reg* practitioners held similar attitudes towards the playscript, they were also aware that some English colloquialisms might be lost on an Australian audience. So, having been granted permission from Elyot, the following terms were altered: 'Single gas ring' became 'Bunsen burner'; 'Crufts' was lengthened to become 'Crufts Dog Show'. One actor sought clarification as to why the colloquialisms would be changed and yet English accents would still be adopted. The producer explained, "Because it's about English class structure". The accents were not negotiable because they were understood as crucial to the (fixed) meaning of the play. Interestingly, many of the Australian terms were replaced by the English colloquialisms once the

practitioners began working in the theatre. During a tech run I suddenly noticed that the actors referred to 'Single gas ring' and 'Crufts', and I did not discover why this happened (did the decision come from Elyot or from someone else?).

The following *Reg* example suggests the potential awkwardness involved when practitioners feel they need to alter 'the playwright's' dialogue. During one rehearsal, Tony interrupted the run and said to everyone (he seemed to say it to no one in particular), "I know this is terrible, but when Kevin arrives I'm going to tell him that we need a line [for Steven/GUY]. Steven needs something". The section of script which Tony referred to is in Act Two as GUY hosts the wake after REG'S funeral. DANIEL, JOHN, BERNIE and BENNY are onstage. GUY is in the (offstage) kitchen:

DANIEL and JOHN disengage as BERNIE enters with an air freshener.

BERNIE: It's quite a spread, I must say! I don't know about you boys, but I could eat a scabby horse, as my Aunt Jean used to say. She was Scottish.

He starts spraying.

BENNY: What the fuck are you doing?

BERNIE: Smells like an ashtray in here.

BENNY: Smells like a brothel now.

The doorbell rings.

DANIEL: I'm off.

[GUY: I'll be with you in a moment.]

BERNIE: You should eat something, you know. Keep your strength up.

DANIEL: Later, maybe. Thanks.

He kisses BERNIE then BENNY.

Thank you.

BENNY: See you.

DANIEL kisses JOHN.

DANIEL: Bye, darling.

JOHN: Bye.

GUY leads ERIC in, who's carrying a bottle of wine.

BENNY: Hello, Eric.

ERIC: Hello

DANIEL: I'm off.

He kisses GUY, as JOHN goes into the garden.

GUY: I'll see you out.

DANIEL: Don't bother. Thank you.
GUY: We'll talk later.
DANIEL: Yeah.
He exits

Tony's comment, "We need a line for GUY", refers to the fact that, in this production, Steven needed to cross the stage, from the (offstage) kitchen to the (offstage) front hallway, in order to answer the door and usher ERIC in (see the section in bold type; the added line is shown in parentheses). Tony and the production designer placed the kitchen offstage left, the front door offstage right and the conservatory at the back of the stage leading into offstage, thereby ruling out the chance of a backstage cross:[61] how could Steven/GUY get from his kitchen to his front door with the spatial organisation the way it was without crossing onstage? Tony's concern was that as Steven/GUY had to come onstage to answer the door, he would see that Peter/DANIEL was going to leave, and he would say something. In the play, REG is DANIEL'S partner, and the object for the other characters, since DANIEL'S arrival, is to nurture him. According to the practitioners, DANIEL'S leaving would not go unnoticed by GUY. Prior to Tony's comment, when the actors had been running the scene, Steven (playing GUY) walked through the lounge area and on seeing Peter/DANIEL move to leave, he turned to him with his hands up. Steven's movement and Peter's response (a hesitant nod) looked awkward, and the actors seemed lost as to how to handle this exchange. Tony decided to give Steven/GUY a line to Peter/DANIEL, but he would cut it if Elyot didn't want it. Steven/GUY would now say, 'I'll be right with you', and continue to move through the loungeroom to answer the front door. For Tony, it was 'terrible' that Steven/GUY needed the extra line because until this moment, the script had been treated as a fixed, whole, complete entity that held all the answers if only a director and actors knew where and how to look. To suggest that the playscript was somehow incomplete, or that it may not provide what was

[61]See Fitzpatrick (1989) who elucidates the importance and function of offstage place. He describes a 'backstage cross' as when an actor exits one side of the stage (exiting to a fictional offstage) but then enters from the other side of the stage (entering from a different fictional offstage) and therefore the audience is to believe that the character changed locations offstage by the actor crossing the stage from backstage.

needed for this particular production, was a transgression, and the extra line a potential incursion. Tony decided to include the line 'I'll be right with you in a moment'; however the line was cut before the first performance. So, although the actors had rehearsed with the line for weeks, they were willing to let it go once Elyot arrived. As with the English colloquialisms suddenly reappearing in the production, so this line did not feature during a tech run and I did not discover whose decision this was.

3.1.ii The Playwright's Stage Directions

As with the dialogue, the practitioners observed all stage directions meticulously and, again, this was couched in terms of the playwright's ownership of the work. Building on Aston and Savona's term 'extra-dialogic' to refer to stage directions, McAuley suggests two levels of explicitness in terms of the way that practitioners engage with this mode of the playtext. The primary level involves characters' entrances and exits, and McAuley argues that these directions are compelling for practitioners and serve to regulate the coming and going of characters and their configuration onstage. The secondary level involves directions for movement within the space and 'business' such as 'he sits with coffee'. She argues that these directions are frequently ignored by practitioners, 'doubtless because [they seem] to relate so strongly to a particular mise en scène' (1999: 224). In both the *Season* and *Reg* processes, practitioners rigorously observed all the directions, both primary *and* secondary.

The practitioners physically manifested all entrance and exit patterns in White's and Elyot's texts. This was most notable when the actors first entered the stage space: they would wait in the wings with scripts in hands until the direction 'S/He enters'. Similarly they would exit with the stage direction. Not once throughout either process did the practitioners depart from this practice, and this practice was never explicitly articulated; the directors and actors took up positions once the layout of the set was clarified (a layout decided in the pre-production phase). It is for this reason

that, during *Reg*, Steven's crossing onstage (as discussed in the previous section) was an unusual disruption.

The practitioners in both processes not only observed the entrances and exits but also the blocking and gesture within the stage space. While McAuley suggests that these secondary directions are frequently ignored by practitioners, the *Season* and *Reg* directors and actors articulated them rigorously. For instance, below is a short exchange from scene 17 of TSAS:

MASSON: *(to Roy)* That little sheila might come round if you treated 'er rough, Jack. With some women you gotta be unkind, so as they can act kind.
ROY: *(irritated)* Does it always take you so long to get anywhere?
MASSON: *(laughing, rolling a cigarette)* I like to take me time. Look around. Have a yarn. There's time enough for everything.

The seven actors for the scene—Mark, Steve, Stephen, Lyn, Gab, Jacqui and Peter—were all on the floor beginning to block through the action. Because there were so many people onstage, with a number of separate conversations occurring between characters, the practitioners were conscious of ensuring that each exchange was sharp and clear. When Steve (ROY) and Mark (MASSON) performed the small section quoted above, the tone of their delivery sounded straight and a little flat, and Mary-Anne felt the relationship between the two men was ambiguous. As a means to give the exchange some dramatical shape, she said to Mark, "Give him [Steve/ROY] that laugh. Patrick [White] has given you a laugh and rolling a cigarette". Here Mary-Anne pointed to the secondary stage directions, reminding the actor to use what the playwright had given him. From then on Mark quite deliberately threw his head back, laughing as he delivered the line 'I like to take me time', and the action of taking out tobacco and rolling a cigarette literally made him take his time with the rest of the line: 'Look around. Have a yarn. There's time enough for everything.' Similarly, during *Reg*, Tony was almost mechanical in observing Elyot's directions. Below is a small section from MNWR after GUY suggests to JOHN that REG (JOHN'S lover) was having an affair:

GUY: No-one!

JOHN pours a scotch [which, in the production, became vodka]

I'm sorry... It's not my place...

He gulps it down

I just didn't like the way he treated you - both of you. That's all.

JOHN pours another.

You just can't carry on like that.

He gulps it down

This is the wrong time. We really shouldn't be talking about it.

As Steven (GUY) and Graham (JOHN) ran this section, the relationship between Graham/JOHN's drinking and Steven/GUY's lines was quite fluid: Graham sipped or gulped the vodka differently each time they ran those lines, and it seemed as if he was allowing Steven's delivery to determine how he drank. However, during one rehearsal, Tony said to Graham: "Clock these", reiterating Elyot's stage directions that JOHN pours, gulps, pours, and gulps after specific lines of GUY's. This was in fact a direction for both Graham *and* Steven to build a rhythm where Steven's lines are interspersed with Graham's pouring and gulping. So, while Graham had interpreted the stage directions loosely, Tony urged him to 'clock' them, to register them with mechanical precision.

However, a successful mapping of a playwright's stage direction onto a production was not always so clear. During a *Reg* rehearsal, Graham (JOHN) spoke with Tony about the small section of script they had just rehearsed:

Graham: 'I didn't go to the bar. I have been, but I didn't this time.'
Tony: 'I think you should.'
Graham: 'It's not scripted.'
Tony: 'Really?'

Apparent in this brief exchange was, firstly, Graham's decision to stop going to the bar because it was not scripted, and secondly, Tony's surprise that what worked for him creatively was actually a departure from the scripted

directions. Tony spent most of the time meticulously observing the stage directions, however there were still struggles over ideas about authorship. Below is a section from my fieldwork notes:

The practitioners are rehearsing the final section of Act 1 of *Reg*. At a point in the unrevised script, GUY is offstage in the kitchen banging the pots and pans while two characters converse onstage. Tony is unsure whether to keep the crashing noise.
Peter: 'I don't want to overstep the mark, but Kevin did say "You are using the revised script, aren't you..."' [the noise effect is not in the latest edition].
Tony: 'But it's such a good joke... We can afford to keep just one [of the crashing noises].'
Peter explains that he would like to ask Elyot, and says that he'll fax him.
Tony: 'I don't want to lose it.'
Peter: 'But it's *his* play.'
In the end, Tony decides to keep two of the three crashing noise effects.

The above interaction perfectly demonstrates the fraught nature of authorship in the theatre: Elyot had supplied them with a revised script thereby effectively effacing his 'original' work (and in the same stroke entirely problematising the notion of the 'authentic script'); Tony tried to enforce his creative decision as director; and Peter bracketed off his actor-role for a moment and assumed producer-status, not only positioning himself as the mediator between the playwright and the production ('I'll fax him'), but also becoming Elyot's advocate: "It's *his* play".

3.1.iii Discovering Character

Under the more general rubric of 'discovery', a cluster of three metaphors stood out as key acting discourses. These revolved around psychological depth, emotionality, and believability: the practitioners were finding out about the 'people' in the playtexts. As Hertzberg noted in his study of rehearsal, 'the script was increasingly being used as evidence for the reality of people who appear in it [...] They were people who had patterns running through their lives' (1998: 14). So, in the *Season* example cited in Chapter Two, Lyn was encouraged to think about: why GIRLIE and CLIVE'S marriage is

'wrecked'; whether GIRLIE is mean or not; whether MAVIS will end up like her. In this way, 'certain ontological claims [were] being made' (Hertzberg 1998: 15), betrayed by the invoking of 'is' or 'has': GIRLIE and CLIVE'S marriage *is* wrecked; GIRLIE *is* mean. Similarly, during the *Reg* process, Tony asked the actors questions about characters: "Who do you think is most academic?" There was an urgency in the reading practice to build knowledge, so much so that during one *Season* rehearsal, Denise became frustrated at the limits of the playtext in terms of information given: "We don't know how it [NOLA and ERN'S relationship] has been before [the start of the play]. I mean, we can talk about it but we don't know".[62] Notions of discovery were manifest in understandings of 'subtext': finding out what was going on behind or underneath the words spoken in the playtext. For instance, during a discussion concerning Act Two of *Reg*, Tony asked Steven whether his character, GUY, knows he is HIV positive. Tony added, "I'm opening Pandora's Box because it's not mentioned in the script". This metaphor—Pandora's Box—is potent, and in this context it betrayed a particular attitude to the 'unearthing' of the characters from the script: that the script was a concrete container that held layers and layers of (perhaps 'dark') characters' subtexts.

The practitioners figured characters as whole people with histories and complex psychological layers. These characters had motivations, drives and subconscious desires. During a *Reg* rehearsal for the second Act, Tony and all the actors worked laboriously to co-ordinate the blocking onstage for Sean (ERIC'S) entry. Tony was especially aware of where and to whom lines were delivered. The following passage is from the playscript:

BENNY: (*going to the drinks table*) What do you fancy Eric?
ERIC: Dunno. Coke?
BENNY: Have something stronger! What about a scotch?
BERNIE: Eric's allowed to have a soft drink if he wanted, Benny.

[62]As a counter-point to the above practice, Schaefer, studying the rehearsal practice of *form-based* performance work, quotes one of the performers from The Sydney Front, John Baylis: 'We're not interested in psychological through lines. A lot of actors who come through the classic method or Stanislavskian training get very precious about through

ERIC: Alright. With Coke in it.
BENNY: (*pouring*) This'll put hair on your chest. Or maybe you don't need it.
ERIC: Someone's parked outside without a permit.
BERNIE: It doesn't apply after six.
GUY: You're not a policeman yet.

The actors moved through the scene in a stop/start fashion, with interruptions coming from Tony and the actors themselves as they sought clarity for the blocking and the 'meaning behind' particular lines. Tony, referring to Sean's (ERIC'S) line 'Someone's parked outside without a permit', said to Sean: "That line needs to go to GUY. It's been two years so you've (ERIC'S) got more confidence, and I think it's come from GUY". Tony was giving Sean what he saw as the subtext underscoring ERIC'S line. ERIC is eighteen years old in the first Act (the other men are in their thirties and forties) and he is twenty in the second Act. Tony was not only keen to establish this shift in maturity but also the *cause* of the shift: GUY. And Tony suggested that having Sean deliver the 'permit' line to Steven/GUY—a line potentially quite bold (seen by GUY'S response)—we (the audience) will notice the change in their relationship. However, Tony was not only telling Sean to say the line to Steven, he was also suggesting to him the 'layers' of ERIC. ERIC has a history—he has built a friendship with GUY over the two years since the last Act—and he has a complex psychology—he is real person with a growing confidence and sense of himself. This notion of a deeper subtext, a deeper psychology, was also very present in the *Season* rehearsals. For instance, the table-talk revolved around beginning to 'find' the layers of all the characters: Someone said of the character NOLA "She's tough" and Mary-Anne replied "She's a marshmallow underneath". Here NOLA is figured as a whole person with a hard exterior and a soft, vulnerable interior. As Mary-Anne said during one rehearsal, "There are things at stake here. Maybe we won't find what they are tonight, but there are things at stake".

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lines and allowing something to grow organically' (1999: 162).

Practitioners not only discussed psychological histories of characters but physiological histories also. It was 10am on a Saturday morning, two days after the initial read-through of *Season*, and Mary-Anne (D) , Pete (AD), Rebecca (SM), Lyn, Jacqui, Peter and Imara were gathered around the table in the rehearsal room ready to begin work on the first scene. With scripts and pens in hands, these practitioners were immersed in finding out as much as they could about the characters. Twenty minutes into the discussion, Lyn said "NOLA is a loose woman, I'm (GIRLIE'S) a tight woman". With each statement, the others in the room fell silently reflective, disagreed, or sought further clarification. I got the sense that this discovering might be an endless journey. One hour and twenty minutes into this rehearsal, Peter turned to Lyn and asked "Has GIRLIE had a hysterectomy?" Lyn's response—a thoughtful pause—was quickly interrupted by other actors moving to the table for the next scene (further discussion was often sacrificed for the rapid rehearsal turn-around). Not only were explicit body metaphors invoked—NOLA'S loose while GIRLIE'S tight (a distinct sexual reference)—but physiological histories as well: nothing in the script explicitly suggested that GIRLIE might have had a hysterectomy and yet the practitioners felt it appropriate to unearth (or *create*) a physiological past.

This, in turn, informed bodily practice through actors' movements and embodying of character. For instance, Lyn played GIRLIE in a tight manner: she took tiny steps and all her physical gestures were rigid and constrained. When she swept the kitchen she never allowed the broom to complete a full arc, and instead sort of dug at the floor, and her vocal delivery was a strained screeching. Denise, on the other hand, played NOLA with a lot of fluidity: at times she swooned around the stage, her gestures, particularly her arms, forming balletic paths through the air. There was certainly a looseness to her. Interestingly, this link between what was said at the table and the physical embodiment of character was not made explicit here: GIRLIE'S tightness and NOLA'S looseness and the bodily manifestation by

Lyn and Denise were never referenced and I always wondered if the actors were consciously 'performing' what had been 'discovered' sitting down.

As well as ideas of 'psychology', it was important that the performers understand the underlying emotion of their characters at any given moment. During an early rehearsal for *Season*, Steve (ROY) wanted to discuss one of HARRY'S lines about ROY:

MAVIS: Education. Ah, it's lovely! You ought to be proud, Roy, to be a teacher.
ROY: (*sitting down at table, where MAVIS serves him with breakfast*) This teacher won't be one any longer than he can help it.
MAVIS: If Mum and Dad weren't gone, it'd break their hearts!
HARRY: (*patting ROY on back*) It's the intellectual liver. (*Concentrating on his wife*) Look after yourself, Mave. Everything that Sister tell you, dear. It's the pre-natal care that counts.

Steve picked up on HARRY'S line 'the intellectual liver' and asked Mary-Anne, "Do you think I'm (ROY'S) angry? I (Steve) think that they [the other characters] think I'm (ROY'S) angry." Steve was compelled to locate and describe an emotion for ROY, thereby forming an emotional topography. Overall, the directors would often try to draw out a character's emotional state from the actors. At the first read-through of *Reg*, Tony asked Graham, Anthony, Jonathon and Steven how they were *feeling* at the start of Act Two (the scene being at GUY'S apartment directly after REG'S funeral). Of course, he was in fact asking how the *characters* were feeling. Anthony responded immediately: "I (Anthony) think I'm (BENNY) feeling morose and I (BENNY) don't feel like talking." In these cases, it was understood that locating the character's emotions verbally , at the start of rehearsals, would necessarily result in a full embodiment of the role: that, in fact, embodiment was impossible without a cognitive understanding of the character's emotional journey throughout the playscript. In Anthony's case, he had to find a reason why BENNY'S lines are so short and direct: he is feeling morose.

During rehearsals, the discussions of psychology and emotion manifested a preoccupation with uncovering believable characters that were whole people and that the audience would identify as being internally consistent: their journey through the play should mirror that of a real person. At the first rehearsal of Scene 24 for *Season*, the practitioners sat around the table and read-through the script before discussion began. During the read-through, Lyn delivered a couple of GIRLIE'S lines with screeching hysteria:

GIRLIE: Tap's... stuck! It's the washer... the thread... or some blessed thing. I asked Mr Pogson...

As Mary-Anne, Lyn, Kate, Mark and Denise began examining the script and characters, Lyn, almost in an effort to explain the outburst, said "There was something the other day where I shouted a line and thought I'd be pulled back, but I thought she'd [GIRLIE] *do* that." Lyn was referring to an earlier rehearsal where she expected Mary-Anne might question her line delivery, and, at this rehearsal for Scene 24, her reasoning behind playing GIRLIE with such force is because GIRLIE would *do* that: this is what a *person* like GIRLIE would *do*.

3.1.iv Character Discovery and Self-Examination

The practitioners' conceptualisation of characters as real, plausible, psychologised people manifested an ambiguous relationship between actor and character. Consider the following two examples (previously cited) from *Season* and *Reg* respectively:

Lyn: 'NOLA is a loose woman, I'm [GIRLIE] a tight woman.'
Mary-Anne (director): 'What wrecked it [GIRLIE and CLIVE'S marriage]?'
Lyn: 'They don't have anything in common.'
Jacqui (to Lyn): 'You're [GIRLIE'S] not mean... but just in that suburban sense.'
Lyn: 'I'm [GIRLIE'S] mean because I don't know any better.'
Mary-Anne: 'She's [GIRLIE'S] not mean in that she's not malicious.'
Jacqui (to Lyn): 'Do you think MAVIS will end up like you [GIRLIE]?'

Lyn: 'I don't know. What do you think? [...] Last night, as I was washing up, I realised how I [GIRLIE/Lyn?] wipe down the bench seven thousand times a day.'

Steven: 'GUY was able to co-ordinate and direct a production [of *The Bacchae*]'
Tony (director, to Steven): 'Who do you think is most academic?'
Steven: 'I s'pose it's me [GUY].'
Tony: 'Yes. It's definitely you [GUY]'.

There are at least four important factors working here. Firstly, actors slipped between using first person and third person pronouns when referring to their characters (I use the possessive "their" because actors commonly referred to 'my character' or 'your character'). In the *Season* example, Lyn repeatedly referred to herself as GIRLIE, indicated by the use of 'I': "I'm a tight woman". However, when Mary-Anne asked her what wrecked the marriage, Lyn invoked 'they' ("They don't have anything in common"); that is, the third person plural. Similarly, in the *Reg* example, Steven referred to GUY ("GUY was to able to..") in the third person, and then answers Tony's question as GUY in the first person ("I s'pose it's me").

Secondly, the practitioners would slip between modes when referring to one another. Jacqui addressed Lyn as GIRLIE ("You're not mean") while Mary-Anne used the third person ("She's not mean"). Tony addressed Steven as GUY in the second person (..."definitely you"..). The result was that the table talk was littered with multiple personae—'I's, 'you's, 'she's, 'they's were thrown around—and it often felt as if there were dozens of people being discussed at any given time.

Thirdly, while the practitioners moved between different modes, they never seemed confused as to who was being addressed and who was being spoken about at any given moment. So, although actors did not adopt any performance traits when they referred to characters in the first person (they did not effect a change in their behaviours to suggest that they were now in quotation marks), there was rarely an urgency amongst the group to make explicit who was being referenced.

And, lastly, the pronoun-slipping only occurred at the start of the two processes when practitioners rehearsed at the table. When working on the floor, only the first person and second person pronouns and plurals were used when referring to characters, so 'I's and 'you's were heard repeatedly, whereas 'he's, 'she's and 'they's disappeared.

The practitioners did not seek clarification as to who was being referred to—Steven or GUY? They did not seem concerned to ascertain whether the 'I' was the actor or the character. Instead, there was in fact no compulsion to separate the two: the practitioners were comfortable with the idea that the relationship between actor and character might exist as blurred. For example, Lyn's comment "Last night, as I was washing up, I realised how I [Lyn/GIRLIE?] wipe down the bench seven thousand times a day" was ambiguous: who was this last 'I' referring to? (Of course, it was further complicated by the split subjectivity of the previous two pronouns: "as I was washing up I realised".) The point here is that the practitioners did not ask Lyn to clarify her comment as, according to them, it was natural for there to be a fluid relationship between actor and character. Sometimes the actors quite pointedly collapsed their characters into themselves. When Kate discussed a scene involving her character, MAVIS, she said "Maybe I'm just seeing this as Mavis.. Maybe I [Kate] *am* Mavis...". Similarly, in a later rehearsal, Lyn said of her character, "I mean, GIRLIE'S just like me [Lyn]".

This became even more pronounced once the actors were in the stage space as an idea of character moved away from lines in the script and towards a spatio-temporal embodied reality. Threadgold, in her observations of a rehearsal for *Othello* (again, a project at CPS), noticed the actors shifting between first and third person. She writes:

> The rehearsal situation typically involves an apparent, and linguistically (often pronomically) and corporeally marked, split subjectivity—where the actor's role as character and as self/actor are explicitly 'spoken'/'written' and performed differently and in intersecting ways. The same body speaks/performs both in different languages, with

> different bodily hexis, simultaneously, and frequently one merges into the other (1997: 129).

The above examples of Kate and Lyn's comments in *Season* certainly approach what Threadgold would call a merging of actor and character—where, in these cases, the actors question whether they in fact are their characters. Overall, the relationship of actors to their characters was both a merging—a trope suggesting two discrete entities dissolving into one another—and it also involved the existence of an in-between place where it was unnecessary and undesirable to locate specific subjectivities. For Richard Schechner, this is when the performer goes through a phase of experiencing a 'not-not-me', where '"me" and "not me", the performer and the thing to be performed, are transformed into "not me... not not "me"' (1985: 110). In short, the same language and the same process used to analyse characters was used to analyse the actors as well, and this language and process constituted a psychoanalytic approach. This collapsing of character examination and self-examination[63] is summed up by the actor (and director), Joseph Chaikin, as he is 'forced to explore both his and his character's personalities since "there's a perplexity about who [I am]—I don't know exactly"' (Kellman 1976: 21).

The practitioners were often unclear as to whose psychology was being investigated. When actor Simon Callow wrote, '[u]nquestionably, rehearsals must be an emotional business' (1995: 161), he was referring to the experience of actors, not the emotions of the character. This notion of the emotional actor saturates theatre and rehearsal literature. Edward Gordon Craig suggested that actors were not artists but were 'slaves of emotion' (in Bharucha 1993: 17); director Declan Donnellan explains that he spends time in rehearsals trying to cure actors' fear (1996: 86); director Toby Robertson talks of increasing the actors' confidence (1964: 180); and in the

[63]This notion has been very explicitly taken up by a prominent Australian drama school. At The Victorian College of the Arts there is an acting component titled 'Discovering the Self'.

New Theatre membership booklet,[64] suggestions on how to conduct oneself backstage include 'if [an actor] is emotionally upset, make sure you are not the cause'. In the rehearsals I studied, the practitioners worked within a paradigm of acting where characters were whole people whose lives have an emotional shape. But in the developing of a character's emotions, actors' emotions were also (often implicitly) referenced, accessed or called upon. This was most apparent during rehearsals of what were understood to be delicate scenes, where a section of the playscript was deemed to be potentially emotionally confronting or difficult for the actors involved. The scene during *Season* rehearsals where this was especially significant involved a slow seduction between Denise (NOLA) and Mark (MASSON). In White's playtext this is the only scene involving sexual intimacy between two characters. Consider the following account from my rehearsal notes:

The scene at the end of Act One was referred to by the practitioners as 'the seduction' or 'the betrayal'. In the fiction, Denise (NOLA, married to ERNIE) and Mark (MASSON, ERN'S best mate) kiss onstage and have sex in the localised fictional offstage.[65] After a table discussion, the actors moved to the floor. Mary-Anne sat on a chair just in front of the taped stage, and everyone else remained at the table watching the actors. Denise forgot a line, picked up her script, and asked Mark "Can you just give me that [cue] again.." Mark (in character and starting from the requested cue) replied "'My trouble is..'" and then interrupted himself, looking down at his script because he'd lost his line, "What's my trouble?".[66] In the stage directions, *MASSON goes towards her, takes her bare arm, examining it as though it were an inanimate object*, and instead of doing this, Mark

[64] The membership booklet is an eight-page document that is handed out to new members once they join the theatre. It outlines the sort of 'standards' that the organisation expects. See appendix 6 for cover page.

[65] See Fitzpatrick (1989) for a discussion of the relationship between onstage and offstage worlds, and, in particular, the localised and offstage. He suggests that there exists a continuum between localised and unlocalised offstage places, and that playwrights manipulate this for dramatic effect. 'Localised' refers to the here and now—another part of the house, for instance—whereas 'unlocalised' might refer to somewhere far away or somewhere not exactly specified.

[66] Lindy Davies, an Australian theatre director, has developed the practice of pinning the script up around the rehearsal room walls so that the actors glance up whenever they need a line, and McAuley suggests that the actors are, therefore, 'thus physically liberated from the constraints of holding a script as well as from the subliminal influences of the printed page' (1999: 232). When I encountered some of Davies' rehearsals, she had projected the script (via an overhead projector) and the text literally loomed over the rehearsal space. Instead of a sense of liberation, I could not help but wonder if the actors felt constrained.

jokingly extended his hand for a shake, and he and Denise continued the scene. Only a matter of seconds later, Mark put his hand on Denise's waist instead of following the direction, *He takes her breasts and begins to fondle them*, and the two actors hugged awkwardly and kissed lightly on the mouth. Earlier in the rehearsal, when around the table, Mary-Anne reassured Mark and Denise that they could decide 'when the grinding [kissing] could start in rehearsals'. At the end of the scene, when the two actors exited upstage to the fictional offstage, Mary-Anne walked into the stage area and quietly told Denise and Mark that they would spend some time getting the scene comfortable for them.

Rehearsal notes from the ***Season*** *process*
Kate Rossmanith, 1997

The initial rehearsal of this scene was treated with a great deal of reverence, particularly by Mary-Anne, who described the scene as 'the big one' as we all sat around the table to analyse the script, and who quietly offered the actors 'help' in the form of locating a point in the script when the possibility of infidelity would surface thereby providing the actors with a psychological motive. At the end of the rehearsal she reassured the actors that *they* could decide how quickly or slowly they wanted to move into the kiss: she was careful not to put pressure on them. The notion of the 'emotionally fragile actor' seemed to result from the practitioners' particular approach to acting, one where there is a radical collapsing of character and actor. While, during the above rehearsal, this was primarily manifest as a joke, the attitude was still present: Denise was concerned her daughter might be unnerved seeing her so sexually intertwined, and Rebecca asked Denise whether her husband might want to sit in on rehearsals to chaperone the intimacy. There was little sense here that the actors were very much separate from any character construction. Similarly, the *Reg* playscript also included a scene that was approached cautiously by the practitioners. Tony ensured that rehearsals for the scene between Graham and Sean—a scene where there is nudity and physical closeness between a man (JOHN) and a teenage boy (ERIC)—were closed altogether. It was suggested that I didn't attend, and

other crew stayed away also. It was not until tech-week that I first watched Act Three.[67]

As actors worked to create believable characters, it became important for them to be 'truthful', to be able to perform from a 'true place' within themselves. During a *Reg* rehearsal for the opening scene between Steven (GUY) and Graham (JOHN), Tony picked up on one of Steven's lines. The section of dialogue is as follows:

GUY: I've got a bit of bad news, actually.
JOHN: Have you?
GUY: I'm afraid Daniel had to cry off at the last minute. I'd have let you know, but as it seemed unlikely you were going to come...
JOHN: It's okay. I know.
GUY: Do you?
JOHN: I bumped into Reg last night. At a film.
GUY: Oh.

Tony directed Steven to "Boost up" the line 'Do you?'. This is an example of the minutiae of rehearsal work, the fine level of detail that practitioners focus on, the Level 4 segmentation that McAuley describes where performers work with tiny fragments of speech and bodily behaviour (1999: 164). Tony was asking Steven to invest more energy into the delivery, to make the line more loaded. Steven tried this as they ran that section once more, however he quickly interrupted himself, saying "That was so false": the line did not sound 'truthful', coming from neither a 'true' character nor from a 'true place' in Steven. Zarrilli points out that implicit in the discourse of believability is a collapsing of character with performer: the performer must be performing his or her truth (1995: 9-10). This underscored both rehearsal processes.

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[67] Paradoxically, throughout both processes, the actors' emotions were both things to

So far this chapter has concentrated on how a discourse of discovery was used to frame particular rehearsal practices, and how this partly involved a very ambiguous and fluid relationship between ideas about 'actors' and 'characters'. When Schechner writes of 'not not me' he is drawing on Victor Turner's concept of 'ritual' to suggest that the performer enters a liminal phase of the rehearsal process in order for this change to occur (1985: 110; see also Turner 1982: 93). While the notion of 'not not me' is productive in understanding how the actors, at times, conceptualised their experience of what they were doing, it would be a mistake to approach the *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals as liminal phases of a ritual process. These rehearsals were not pure sites of transitions and in-between places in the sense that Turner and Schechner might understand them. As will be argued in the following chapter, the discovery discourse was operating within several socio-historical and institutional contexts. Moreover, the performers—particularly the *Reg* group—were not always operating within a framework of 'discovery' where they excavated existing meanings in the script and deep within themselves. Instead, their discourses and practices were dynamic, they moved in and out of ideas of finding meanings. Specifically, sometimes they understood their work not as a deep psychologised process of discovery but as very pragmatic process of constructing meanings. This is a departure from those ideas concerning actors' embodiments of plausible, whole people; ideas that are more closely connected to what Roach summarises as a Stanislavskian approach to 'physical actions': 'every thought and feeling is connected to a physical action, [...] mind is merely the subjective aspect of the objective process called body' (1985: 213). In *Season* and *Reg*, the discourses and practices surrounding the construction of meaning were quite separate from any psychologised process or any notion of showing forth the playwright's intentions.

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cope with as well as things to coax out. They were both sites of shame and valorisation.

PART TWO
'IT'S A REAL E.M.FORSTER MUDDLE': MAKING MEANING IN REHEARSAL

3.2.i Side-Coaching and Actor Embodiment

From the first rehearsal, the *Reg* process involved a very explicit discourse of 'making meaning' or 'making a show' and this was manifest in the way that Tony would make brief suggestions to the actors from just outside the stage space as they were stopping and starting scenes. These exchanges were distinctly reminiscent of a sports coach operating from the sideline, particularly since the directions concerned physicality. On the second day of rehearsals, as the actors were in the stage space working on the first scene, Tony very explicitly began to block the actors' movements and gestures. He placed Sean (ERIC) upstage centre to be painting the wall; he told Graham not to hug the furniture (a term he used referring to an actor who stood too close to a piece of furniture thereby allowing the decor—instead of the actor—to pull the audience's focus); he told Steven to 'claim the stage'; he suggested Steven try coming around the other side of the couch on a particular delivery. In fact, Tony often encouraged actors to think less about the 'internal' state of the character/actor and concentrate on the external:

Steven (about GUY): 'So I'm fidgety.'
Tony: 'Yes. All you need to do is shift your weight.' (He demonstrates shifting weight from one foot to the other).

Here Tony was less concerned about how this physicality might alter the inner workings of the actor, and more about how this movement might look to observers: that observers would understand GUY as fidgety.

Tony not only suggested general blocking but very specific embodiments and deliveries. He suggested particular gaits, and at one point he took Graham's place on the stage and began pacing with his head down: "Do you want to try it on this level", he suggested to Graham. When Graham embodied that way of moving, other shifts took place also: he used less eye

contact with Steven (GUY) and took large strides across the stage. Immediately I could not help but understand Graham (JOHN) as brooding. Tony also suggested postures, and he said to Sean "The body doesn't speak when you're slouched on the arm [of the couch]". Sean shifted his position and suddenly he (ERIC) seemed more engaged in the action. Tony even suggested deliveries: (to Steven) "'*He's dead*'. Don't shorten it. Extend the vowels". Tony wanted Steven to extend the vowels on '*He's dead*', because, firstly, the lengthened line sounded more camp (a characteristic of GUY'S according to the practitioners), and, secondly, Tony was concerned that the audience may not hear the line. At a later rehearsal, during a run-through when Graham (JOHN) and Sean (ERIC) were unsure how to react to Steven's (GUY'S) banging of pots and pans, they stood staring at one another. Tony, from the 'sideline', said "Smile" and the two actors grinned at each other: from my perspective it looked remarkably like a puppeteer pulling strings. During another part of Act One, Tony crept into the stage space while Peter delivered DANIEL'S lines, and he whispered "Stiller, stiller. It's got to be much stiller". Immediately, without even stopping to explicitly register the direction, Peter stopped gesturing so much, shifted his bodyweight to the lower part of his body, and reduced the pitch-range of his voice.

Tony not only used explicit directions for physical manipulation but also references to other texts and genres: he invoked intertextual material in order to shape scenes. Tony said: (of the acting) "It really has to have that [Noel] Coward style"; (to Jonathon about a passage) "Try that part evangelical... It's as if he's been reading Shirley MacLaine or something"; (regarding Steven (GUY'S) and Graham (JOHN'S) muddling over the glasses) "It's a real E.M. Forster muddle"; (about Sean standing naked) "It's a very *Death in Venice* moment". Interestingly, Tony never needed to expand on what he meant exactly by this invoking of particular texts. There was an implicit understanding and shared cultural knowledge amongst the group which allowed Tony to use these shorthand directions. So when Jonathon delivered his lines in a Shirley MacLaine style, they were slower and

measured and slightly sing-songy (the effect sounded patronising). And when Steven and Graham muddled in an E.M. Forster way, the exchange was physically heightened (the gestures more pronounced, almost jerky) and there were a lot of awkward smiles. The other area of intertextuality[68] concerned 'gay-ness'. Tony (to Peter about DANIEL and JOHN): "You two are brothers; [of DANIEL and GUY] you two are sisters." Then Tony looked at me and smiled, "Sometimes fag-talk works", referring to the specificities of gay relationships. At another rehearsal, Tony told Peter to "Queen it" on a particular line. And he told Steven "Really play up the drama-queen issue of *'I've got a bit of bad news actually'*." Steven (apologising for laughing) said "Sorry Graham, I haven't played such a queen for so long". Again, there was no need to expand on what 'queen' was. The actors had a shared understanding, and they would deliver their lines with elongated vowels, sliding registers, and over-articulated facial gestures.

The term 'side-coaching' suggests a certain agency and manipulation on the part of the director. However, in the *Reg* rehearsals, the actors were responsible for suggesting and shaping the embodiments of characters and, therefore, the subsequent meanings that might be generated: they were not merely balls of clay waiting to be moulded. McAuley, writing about the creativity of actors, notes that:

> A well-known designer, speaking to students about his work [...] referred to the "creative people" in the production; when pressed to elaborate, he specified these as the director, the designer, and the composer, and explicitly excluded the performers from this group (1999: 85).

Following McAuley's examination of actors as active agents, the *Reg* actors' interpretations were always so rich in that, on registering a few words of Tony's, they manipulated movement, gesture, pace, eye-contact, facial expression, and vocal delivery (pitch, register, rhythm, breath). Two metaphors Tony often invoked had particular resonance with the actors. He

[68] By using a notion such as 'intertextuality', this is not meant to foreground a relationship between 'texts' at the expense of social dynamism. As my examples suggest, it is the

would tell them to "Boost up" a delivery, and the actors interpreted this by making the line slower, louder and stronger. Another favourite phrase was "Just sharpen that" which he accompanied with a quick click of his fingers. In this case, they ensured that their exchanges were tight and clear and that one line directly affected the next line of dialogue. There were other phrases also:

Tony (to Anthony): 'Don't pull back on "*spade*". Drive it all the way through.'
Anthony: 'Yep.'

Tony, referring to BENNY'S line 'I've had to come in, else I'd have whacked him with a spade', was asking Anthony to keep the momentum in the line. From then on, Anthony delivered 'whacked him with a spade' with a fast, choppy, even tempo and slightly over-articulated. McAuley might describe this as a third order of explicit spatial (and more generally 'embodied') direction within dialogue 'that is not so clearly apparent to the general reader but which emerges in rehearsal when skilled, professional actors "work" the text' (1999: 226). According to Tony, Anthony's change of delivery would more firmly establish the relationship between Anthony/BENNY and Jonathon/BERNIE. While BERNIE was understood as non-confrontational—Jonathon even sometimes swallowed the last words of several of his deliveries—BENNY was seen as blunt and aggressive. Tony wanted 'spade' to be heard loud and clear.

The following exchange is another case in point:

Anthony (to Tony about Graham (JOHN)): 'So I don't notice he's (JOHN'S) upset.'
Tony: 'No you can. (to Graham) Just take it up a notch.'

Here Tony referred to Graham needing to offer Anthony more of a physical manifestation of 'upset-ness' so that Anthony (BENNY) has a reason to console him. 'Up a notch' referred to increasing the intensity of the moment,

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ways in which social agents use particular sources that is the focus here. This is of concern to Maria Shevtsova, who prefers Bakhtin's analytic of 'dialogism' (2002: 38-9).

however they did not discuss an inner intensity. So when Graham (JOHN) paused, brought his hand to his face, breathed deeply and lowered his head, no-one asked what was happening 'inside' him; the important thing was that signs were being produced that could be read. This nuancing of Graham's performance would, according to Tony, give Anthony/BENNY a reason to console him and it would add more weight and meaning to Graham/JOHN and Anthony/BENNY'S onstage kiss (and offstage sexual intercourse) later in the Act.

The actors' explicit physical shaping of character was not only the result of Tony's directions, because the use of accents also informed particular embodiments. From the very first rehearsal, all actors were already using English accents to various degrees: Steven, Graham, Peter and Jonathon had the fairly straightforward task of adopting standard refined accents, however Anthony's character spoke in cockney, and Sean had to develop a Northern English dialect. From the start, all actors except Sean felt extremely comfortable with their speech (Anthony, in particular, used his cockney accent to 'drive through' a lot of his passages). Sean tried the odd vowel sound now and then, but Tony told him not to worry, to continue listening to an audio tape of the accent, and to wait until he had rehearsed with Betty Williams. Betty (voice coach for NIDA) spent a couple of hours one morning with the actors (I was not invited to attend this rehearsal). Remarkably, after the session with Betty, Sean immediately began delivering his lines in his new accent, and, what was *more* remarkable was how his movement shifted accordingly: the particular rising and falling of sounds seemed to inform a more lolloping way of walking *and* his head seemed to tilt from side to side as he spoke. Again, this work was not framed as one of 'discovering meaning' but rather a building of physical characteristics that might be interpreted by an audience.

By contrast, the *Season* practitioners were inclined to frame their work in terms of 'constructing a show' only when the more stylised, less naturalistic scenes were being rehearsed. On the evening of the third rehearsal, Kate

(MAVIS), Denise (NOLA) and Lyn (GIRLIE) were to rehearse a scene from Act One. Below is an excerpt from the script followed by an account from my rehearsal notes:

GIRLIE: (*looking back after her daughter as the latter disappears in the house behind*) Whatever now? Always tears! Always secrets! When I was a girl, girls were bright. Girls were different.
(GIRLIE *goes through the motions of fetching out a broom*).
(MAVIS KNOTT, *now in her pregnancy uniform, has come into her kitchen and armed herself with an invisible duster*).
(NOLA BOYLE, *still in chenille, comes out from the front part of her house, and prepares to wield a feather duster.*)
THREE WOMEN: (*in unison, as they dust or sweep*) Laundry's over, thank God! Laundry's Monday. Tuesday for the Cash-and-Carry... mucking around the shops...
GIRLIE: And Woolworths.
NOLA: So cool.
MAVIS: Woolies is lovely.
GIRLIE: Got to be careful though.
MAVIS: Tuppence off tomato sauce...
NOLA: ...and sixpence on the Snail Defender.
GIRLIE: Specials are never special enough.
ALL: (*sweeping, flicking, rubbing*) Mucking around... mucking around... There's the pictures, too, of an afternoon. Warm as velvet on a winter afternoon...

This scene involved the actors speaking (and, to an extent, moving) in unison. Seated at the table, Mary-Anne counted the actors in—"One, two, three"—and the actors read through the scene as rhythmically as possible. After the read-through, Lyn smiled at the idea that she, Kate and Denise would have to co-ordinate their performances: "I'll cough when I pick up the broom", she said. Mary-Anne laughed, "Yes, we need a very subtle cue", and she jokingly mimed picking up a broom and bashing it on the table. After a second read-through (with Mary-Anne once more counting them in), Lyn turned to Denise and said "I don't see you [NOLA] as madly house proud.. I don't know why". After one more read, Mary-Anne laughed a bit nervously, perhaps anticipating how difficult this scene might be to co-ordinate on the floor, and said "So, do you want to get up?". She got up from the table and the actors followed. Standing in front of the three women, she explained the props they would use: Kate and Denise would use dusters and Lyn would use a broom. Rebecca (SM) handed a cleaning item to each of them. With a script in one hand and the prop in the other, the actors walked through the scene (this involved careful comprehension of the detailed stage directions). Because they were finding it hard to juggle everything, Mary-Anne decided they should put down the props for a moment and

she counted them in again. The actors stood in the stage space, moving minimally, with their heads buried in the scripts. They decided that the unison-speaking section was almost like a chant.

Rehearsal notes from the ***Season*** *process*
Kate Rossmanith, 1997

This scene was unique for the *Season* practitioners. The discussion at the table was a strange mix of the type of talk that had gone on in previous rehearsals—a search for psychological through-lines and 'real' people (manifested in Lyn's comment about NOLA not being houseproud) —*together with* the pragmatics of performing in synchronicity ("I'll cough when I pick up the broom"). Interestingly, once the actors moved onto the floor, this scene was never again contextualised within a psychological paradigm: the important thing was to ensure the performers moved together rhythmically. And it was also clear that Mary-Anne, Kate, Lyn and Denise did not have a language or a shared practice in which to approach this scene. Instead, this scene developed first and foremost through a shared embodiment. The three actors spent a number of rehearsals reading the lines together and moving in a row, becoming familiar with one another's rhythms, gesture and breath. Of all the scenes in the play, this one was the least talked about and the most physically rehearsed. Ben (HARRY) and Peter (CLIVE) also had to co-ordinate a synchronised scene where they leave for work in the morning: up from the chair, suit jacket on, kiss the wife, trot down the stairs, adjust their suits in the backyard, paper under the arm, turn and stride down the lane running adjacent to both houses. As with the scene above, there was no particular performance practice invoked. Instead the two actors rehearsed it over and over, watching one another carefully, sharing a breath and rhythm.

3.2.ii Awareness of Audience

During rehearsals, the extent to which the *Reg* practitioners framed their work as 'making meaning' was reflected in the way they explicitly referenced the audience. Tony and the actors were acutely aware of the would-be

spectators, and they focussed on when the audience might laugh, where the audience might be sitting, and the audience as a gay/straight mix. When Tony gave the direction "Don't ever move on a laugh line", he referred to the cast remaining still for a moment when a 'laugh line' was delivered so that the audience could take the time to respond without cutting short their laughter to have to concentrate on the next piece of information (whether that be expressed through movement or the next piece of dialogue). Again, in a later rehearsal, Tony said to Sean: "Make sure Steven isn't upstaging himself because these are joke lines". He wanted Sean and Steven to pause for the laughter. And then later, Tony (to Sean): "You're going to have to learn when to come in with the [audience] laughter". Tony referred to Sean knowing when to begin speaking and moving when the audience *is* laughing. He explained that Sean was to become reanimated just as the laughter starts to die down, but not to wait for complete silence. What was interesting about this direction was that 'laugh lines' were treated as autonomous facts: Tony would categorically refer to particular lines in this way, and it seemed unclear as to whether these were laugh lines because of the script or because of the delivery (had he sat down with the playtext and circled all the laugh lines? or did lines become laugh lines through an actor's delivery?). I was surprised at how confident Tony felt to predict when the audience would laugh.

Throughout rehearsals, as actors were running sections, Tony would move and sit on the left and right sides as well as directly in front. When he first moved, he smiled at the actors: "You're gonna have to get used to it". In other words, he wanted them to be constantly aware of how they might be watched. Interestingly, it was not until the actors moved into the theatre and saw the seating arrangement that one of them said "I'm suddenly aware of the audience to the sides"; no matter how prepared they thought they were in rehearsals, the physical reality of the theatre space still came as somewhat of a shock. However, as I wrote in Chapter Three, Tony never forgot that the production was being staged on a thrust stage. The actors were encouraged to move positions regularly, and there was even a chair

facing diagonally to the back of the set (a large portion of the audience would miss the face of any actor who sat there (see figure 2.4 in Chapter 2)). At the end of Act Two, Tony wanted Graham looking out from the couch while Steven is at the bar, "So the audience gets your pain [Graham] and your pain [Steven] and they don't have to share it." At key dramatic moments (in this case, dramatic irony as Graham (JOHN) is unaware of Steven (GUY'S) feelings for him) Tony would try to ensure that the whole audience would see the actors' faces. At a later rehearsal, as they ran Act One from the beginning, Tony whispered some 'audience chat' as the music began: "Oh, isn't the theatre nice. Oh, I like *The Police*..." Throughout the process, he made sure that everyone remembered that an audience would be present in performance.

Tony was explicitly aware of what he described as the 'gay' or 'straight' audience members the show might attract. Despite the program note claiming that the production was designed for a mainstream spectatorship, Tony very specifically understood the prospective audience as falling into these two categories. Reflecting on the first time he saw a production of *My Night With Reg* in London's West End, he wrote: 'Looking around the audience, it was immediately apparent that to label this as a "gay play" was too narrow a point of view. This was a play that was clearly speaking to a general audience, no matter what their sexual preference'. However, at one rehearsal he suggested to me that gay and straight audiences would respond differently. Of course it is interesting that he figured the audience in this way—gay/straight—as opposed, for instance, to age, gender, socio-economic background ('issues' just as prominent in the playtext as 'gayness'). During rehearsals, Tony and the actors sometimes included physical references that they suspected only a gay audience might understand. He chose to foreground what he understood as an AIDS theme in the script rather than, for instance, ideas about class structure. In this way, he saw that the production would speak to an Australian gay audience in a very personal way. This is despite his writing in the program: 'it is

simply about human relationships, concentrating on the nature of friendship'.

As a counterpoint to the *Reg* process, talk of 'the audience' was much less prevalent in the *Season* practitioners' rehearsals. The first time there was a mention of the audience was more than one week into rehearsals when Mary-Anne joked about MASSON'S line in the script concerning men's treatment of women (the line being, 'With some women, you gotta be unkind so as they can act kind'). Mary-Anne laughed and said "We're gonna get 'Boos' [from the audience]". At another stage, much later into rehearsals, Mary-Anne said to the lighting designer that she didn't like full black-outs on stage "because they'll [the audience] think that's the end". In both *Season* and *Reg*, discourses of technical manipulation were associated with talk about audience: just as the *Season* practitioners rarely framed their work in terms of constructing meanings, so they did not discuss how an audience might interpret such meanings.

3.2.iii Pulling Together Production Elements

For the *Reg* and *Season* practitioners, the presence of various elements of production—for instance, props, costume, music, sound—was closely connected to a discourse of practitioners' capacities to make meanings in the performance. The more the elements were foregrounded, the more talk of 'constructing a show' proliferated. From the first rehearsal, the *Reg* stage management had organised all the props—phone, ashtray, knitting, glasses, bottle of alcohol, vinyl records, bowls of nuts, pots and pans—and they were already in place ready to be used once the actors entered the stage space. Moreover, Tony was quick to provide the actors with the whereabouts of props whenever they asked:

Steven: 'Where's my door saus[age]—'
Tony: 'It's on the bar.'

Peter: 'Where's the phone?'

Tony: 'On the bar.'

This level of organization, and Tony's awareness of the elements of production, created the sense that the show was somehow (partially) fixed before rehearsals began. In a rehearsal for Act Two, involving all six actors drinking various drinks, Marco (ASM) was able to tell me whose glass was whose (and there were eight dispersed all over the set). For instance, he pointed, "That's JOHN'S first glass but now he's (Graham's) got his scotch glass over there". And each time the practitioners would run a scene from a particular section, Marco quickly rearranged the props. This use of props from early rehearsals was framed discursively as co-ordinating the elements of performance.

Like the use of props, the use of music and costume was foregrounded as a conscious construction of performance. At the first rehearsal, Tony ensured that the practitioners heard what music would be used in the production: The Police's *Every Breath You Take*, a piece by Ravel, and David Bowie's *Starman*. This music was used as transitions between Acts but also in the fiction. In the script, ERIC is listening to The Police on a walkman as he paints and sings the odd line, the Ravel is REG'S favourite piece of music, and GUY, DANIEL and JOHN sing *Starman* together. But then there was the issue of what piece to use between Acts One and Two. Tony either wanted the Ravel (which would be used later anyway) or David Bowie's *Changes* "to keep the action", he said. Here he referred to maintaining a momentum rather than slipping into the more reflective mood created by a slower, softer piece. After running the end of Act One, Tony approached Brigid (SM), "It's tempting to use *Changes*". However, when rehearsing Act Two, he tried both options each time they 'took it from the top'. Finally, *Changes* it was, and, by using it during rehearsals, the actors were continually reminded to keep the pace moving. This 'pace' was reinforced by Tony cueing the run of each Act with, "And lights coming up.. And go": that is, he repeatedly made transparent the elements of production,

and the use of these elements was framed as practitioners making meaning.

There was never a formal costume presentation during *Reg* rehearsals, and costumes were not introduced until tech-week. However, at the beginning of the third rehearsal, Tony gave Graham a long navy blue silk coat to wear and told him, "Just think about wearing it". From then on Graham wore the coat every rehearsal. Even when the heat became quite extreme he would take his shirt off underneath and wear the jacket over a singlet. And the coat seemed to make Graham's playing of JOHN slightly hunched and swinging, creating a sense of aimlessness that Tony and Graham had decided was a trait of the character. Again, Graham's use of the coat was understood as *building* rather than *discovering* character.

As mentioned in Part One, the *Season* practitioners did not really include many production elements in their rehearsals before tech-week. However, the few times they did use costume, props, set design elements, music and sound, this was framed as constructing rather than discovering a show. For instance, the sudden presence of production elements in the first run-through was largely understood as making meaning even though this idea was not strongly invoked. There was a distinct awkwardness to the gathering of temporary props and costume, as if to frame the process as a construction rather than a discovery was somehow unprofessional. The first run-through for Act One saw a multiplicity of sign systems that had previously been very peripheral to rehearsals. There were odd costume items, some props, more furniture than usual, and some actors even began experimenting with hairstyles (for instance, Gaby stood at the back wall mirror and tried swirling her hair up just before her entrance onto stage). In White's script, Lyn's character, GIRLIE, is given the most stage directions with respect to props (plates, croquery, broom, watering can, etc.). Consequently, Lyn had gathered bits and pieces from the theatre stock as well as her own items from home. Before the run-through, as she organised the props on stage, she said "I feel like a performing seal". Here, the actor,

rather than the designer or stage manager, had taken responsibility for collecting and arranging props. At the time it was unclear as to which items would be used in the actual performances, and by tech-week suddenly the temporary props were discarded and the official ones were used. During the first run-through, Kate wore an apron and Gaby wore character shoes. This was prior to the costume presentation, and again it was unclear whether these items were makeshift or permanent dress. Before the run, Kate searched for something to stuff down her front that might represent a forty-week-old pregnant tummy (she was prepared to use my cardigan but it did not fit well enough). Days after this rehearsal, Sylvia ensured that Kate had a (temporary) tummy so that the actor might practice moving with a weight and with a new sense of body space. Once the practitioners transferred the show into the theatre space during tech-week, a discourse of making meaning became more prevalent and it was closely associated with the sense of a community working together to create a production.

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There are two discrete but linked ideas to come out of this chapter. The first has to do with the discrepancy between the two processes regarding the prevalence of one set of discourses over another. Why were the *Season* practitioners less inclined than the *Reg* practitioners to frame their work as a construction of meaning?

The second idea concerns the way actors were conceptualised in the two processes, and, specifically, the relationship between the actors and directors. In theatre and rehearsal literature, there is both an explicit and implicit figuring of the director-actor exchange in terms of a parent-child, a teacher-student, or an analyst-analysand relationship. Director Lindy Davies encourages actors, in her words, to '"play, like children in a way"' (Adamson 2001: 15); Michael Leiberto's advice to would-be directors is as follows: 'You may want your actors to be as uninhibited as children, but you must

treat them like the adults they are and avoid a "summer camp" mentality' (Benedetti 1985: 110); Mnouchkine explains 'there is something in the actor's work that obliges him or her not to fall back into childhood but enter childhood' (Féral 1989: 94); director John O'Hare explains that during a particular production, 'the cast face[d] the inevitable trauma of delving into childhood' (Jinman 2001: 3); and the most compelling trope that Susan Letzler Cole wishes to invoke in order to understand directors in rehearsal is that of the maternal gaze (1995). Director John Dexter even accused one of his actors of 'just trying to get attention' (Hiley 1981: 133), and said to another one, 'You've been screaming and bleating for four weeks and now you've forgotten the move' (118). As reviewed in Chapter One, the 1970s theatre and psychology research explicitly used teacher-student models to approach rehearsal; similarly, in an account of a rehearsal process, Giorgio Strehler reprimanded the actors, 'I always push to make the best that is possible, you understand? My intention isn't to attack you, but to make you better. But you are lazy. Yes, lazy!' (Trousdell 1986: 80); director Michael Leiber explains that 'Actors need to make mistakes on their own' (Benedetti 1985: 6); and, actor Geraldine Page speaks of working with Lee Strasberg, saying that '[w]e [actors] have tendency to say, "[e]ven if we don't understand it, if Lee says it, we will"' (Schechner and Lee 1964: 120). This teaching and nurturing on the part of the director extends to a counselling role, seen, for instance, in Cole's account of Emily Mann directing a scene from *Execution of Justice*:

> When I [Cole] first see this rehearsed, John Spencer, playing Dan White, is crying so profusely that the actor playing the police inspector leaves the scene and returns momentarily with Kleenex to wipe the face of the actor whose hands remain handcuffed behind his back. Continuing to cry during his confession speech, the actor loses his lines several times, saying at one point, "I don't know where I am" (an unscripted line). At the end of the scene the director compliments Spencer: "John, it's wonderful." She rubs his shoulder and back quietly, then walks away, still visibly moved, to compose herself. (1992: 61)

The figuring of the director-actor relationship in terms of parent-child or teacher-student also slips into metaphors of the director-as-mind and the

actor-as-body. Director and actor Joseph Chaikin explains that, in rehearsals, '"The actors says, 'Be my eyes, I can't see', and the director says, 'You're the body, you're the embodiment of this thing"' (Pegnato 1981: 13). Susan Letzler Cole describes theatre rehearsal as a series of concentric circles: the outermost circle is the director's vision while the innermost is 'the more intimate space of the actor's imagination' (1992: 20) (interestingly, the circles in between are not categorised). This intriguing spatial trope invokes particular binaries and metaphorics: the director's (mind) vision and the actor's (body) imagination; the director's outside perspective and the actor's (inside) feeling. 'Concentric circles' also assumes an image of things subsumed; in this case, the space of the actor's creativity is in fact a subset of the director's all-encompassing vision. And, significantly, the actor's self is figured as intimate, as the most inside place in the rehearsal model. Implied here is that this place needs to be accessed: either penetrated from the outside, or the hidden creativity must be coaxed out.

Overall, in these theatre and rehearsal writings the actor is radically infantilised. Having encountered this material as I was conducting my fieldwork, I was especially sensitive to those director-actor exchanges where the directors 'became' parents/teachers. For instance, both Mary-Anne and Tony were considered the most knowledgeable about the playscripts. Practitioners would defer to the directors for clarification of 'meanings', and, in the case of the *Reg* rehearsals, often Tony answered a question before the actor had even finished asking it. Moreover, the directors encouraged the actors to talk about themselves and to engage in a degree of self-analysis. However, despite this, and despite the wealth of literature pointing to the infantilisation of the actor, the actors in *Season* and *Reg* were anything but patronised or pathologised. Instead, there was a distinct sense that the practitioners were just getting on with the job.

Thus, to recap: Why were the *Reg* practitioners more inclined to enlist a discourse of 'construction' to describe their rehearsal practices than the

Season practitioners? And, secondly, why was there no sense in either process that the actors were being at all infantilised? The remaining chapters seek to account for these two questions.

chapter four

Making Theatre-Making: Communities, Professionalism and Cultural Consecration

4.0 Introduction

The practitioners' practices and the discourses within which they were framed were tied to broader ideas concerning what they understood 'good' acting to be, and, perhaps more importantly, what 'proper' rehearsals—what 'good' theatre-making and what 'good' theatre—entailed. In their labours to create the productions, the two groups—*Season* at New Theatre and *Reg* through Mardi Gras and Esoteric Entertainment—were simultaneously involved in struggles to 'institutionalise their interpretations' (Weber 1987) of what it meant to produce theatre. When the *Reg* group invoked discourses of 'constructing a show', and when the *Season* cast and crew were more inclined to employ discourses of 'discovery', this was intimately connected with what they understood as 'real' work: they were making moves in a real-making game (Maxwell 1997: 34) where the reward was the power to establish a specific set of interpretations. Furthermore, although particular paradigms of directing-acting operated throughout the rehearsals, the actors did not seem at all patronised and, rather, they were just getting on with the work, because, for the practitioners, these paradigms constituted what real directors and actors do.

These struggles over interpretations of what good theatre is (and, in fact, what 'theatre' is at all) take place in, and largely comprise, the 'field' of theatre in Sydney: the field being a sphere of 'play' and competition with its

own rules. It should be noted that my discussion of this particular 'field' is confined to research undertaken in the late 1990s. As I go on to point out, fields are not static structures.[69] Recall the citation from Bourdieu's sociology in Chapter One: 'these [rules] delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the position they occupy in that space, either to change or to preserve its boundaries and form' (Wacquant 1992: 17). The idea of 'a field of Sydney theatre' is not only created by the presence of an overarching discourse—'Sydney theatre'—but by certain regulative principles that amount to competition for a particular species of capital—cultural capital—whereby a theatre group or an individual practitioner (or anyone else in the field) then has the power to manipulate that field. The point here is that the field is always being made. It is processual:

> participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it...[e.g. cultural authority in the artistic field]... and the power to decree the hierarchy and "conversion rates" between all forms of authority in the field of power. In the course of these struggles, the very shape and divisions of the field become a central stake because to alter the distribution and relative weight of forms of capital is tantamount to modifying the structure of the field. This gives any field a historical dynamism (Wacquant 1992: 17-18).

The *Season* and *Reg* theatre groups and individual practitioners were, in their work, continually making and modifying their positions in the theatre scene, and were, therefore, informing that scene.

So what exactly did the practitioners struggle over? They not only competed for material resources (for instance, funding), but, perhaps even more importantly, they competed to establish their own interpretations of the theatre scene. Bourdieu refers to this second arena of struggle as involving 'systems of classification' where agents attempt to name, state and label dimensions of the field. Three discourses circulating in and informing the theatre scene in Sydney included 'community', 'professionalism' and

[69] Maria Shevtsova suggests that while Bourdieu's emphasis lies with a synchronic study of fields, it is important to note their 'historical evolution (or regression, for that matter)' (2002: 64).

'prestige'. They circulated in publicity material, in theatre reviews, in funding discourse, in conversation, and in accounts of the scene by practitioners. In the field, they were forms of cultural capital: it meant something to be seen to be part of a community, to be a professional theatre group or practitioner, and to be producing prestigious work These discourses were deployed by the *Season* and *Reg* groups and the individual practitioners to legitimise their work. However, as I suggest in the following analysis, the theatre artists built very specific ideas into these broader discourses. Certain practices and particular working conditions were labelled after the fact: in an effort to authenticate their work, the practitioners and the theatre groups laboured to frame what they did in terms of these three overarching discourses.

PART ONE
LEGITIMISING STRATEGIES AND CLASSIFICATION STRUGGLES

4.1.i The 'Field' of Sydney Theatre

While the *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals took place in two different locations, under different organisations and with different casts, they were none-the-less caught up in ideas of what it was to make theatre in Sydney: the two groups were part of a quasi-autonomous 'field' of Sydney theatre-making. In discussions with practitioners, and in discussions with other theatre-workers over the years, I regularly heard the phrase 'theatre in Sydney' or 'Sydney theatre'. Both of the rehearsal groups understood themselves as working within a (geographic) context of 'Sydney': New Theatre was incorporated soon after the *Season* production to become New Theatre Sydney Incorporated,[70] and the *Reg* production was (partially) marketed under the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. The point here is that 'Sydney' was a 'real'; 'Sydney theatre' constituted a 'real' category for practitioners.[71] In the *Sydney Morning Herald* there is a daily section—a

[70] This was a significant detour from how it would have once seen itself: as part of an international movement.
[71] This has been reflected over the years by other groups also (for instance, an actor-

'Theatre Directory'—listing the current shows. This is the most comprehensive listing, and even the most small-scale productions (for instance, school, university and local community shows) ensure that they advertise here. This Sydney paper advertises Sydney productions.

This field is a site of competition where institutions and individuals work to carve out places in social space, and part of this struggle involves determining what constitutes 'capital' within the field and how this capital should be distributed. The field of theatre-making in Sydney is driven by a notion of cultural rather than economic capital. This is demonstrated, for instance, in the discrepancy between funding distribution and the discourses of people operating in the field of Sydney theatre. While an idea of 'Sydney' circulated amongst theatre practitioners, this categorisation is slippery in the politics of funding. The main funding body for NSW—the NSW Ministry for the Arts—barely mentions Sydney in its literature; it is virtually absent from official funding discourse. Instead, the categories of 'Western Sydney' (an area incorporating more working class suburbs than other parts of Sydney) and 'Regional NSW' are invoked, and implicit in these terms is all of NSW *outside* metropolitan Sydney.[72] However, the categories and the boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and 'regional' (and therefore, implicitly, 'Sydney') are not fixed but are under continual negotiation. Kim Spinks, from the Ministry, says that while her organisation would not, technically —according to the ABS[73] definition—classify the Blue Mountains (West) and the Central Coast (North) as being 'regional', she understands them as such. And there are cases where some theatre groups, who are non-regional, receive regional funding for touring purposes. According to Spinks, the absence of 'Sydney' from the NSW Arts Ministry's discourse is inextricably linked to both State and Federal government's push to de-emphasise Sydney-centred models of funding, and to foreground a national agenda. Similarly, Hawkins (1993) argues that two linked

based group, the Tamarama Rock Surfers, held a fundraiser and circulated fliers headed 'Angry About Sydney Theatre?').

[72] www. arts.nsw.gov.au/The_Ministry/about.htm (November 2002).

[73] The Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ideas—'excellence' and 'the nation'—are central categories in public arguments for the arts in Australia; that '[e]stablishing the relationship between public cultural institutions and national identity is a recurring demand of cultural policies from film to television to the arts' (1993: 13). It is therefore considered narrow and elitist to understand 'Sydney' as a specific region requiring funding. This was especially manifest in the 1997-8 Australia Council Annual Report in which The Bell Shakespeare Company and the Sydney Theatre Company—two companies based in, and largely operating in, Sydney—were listed as 'national' companies because they tour interstate. 'Sydney' is invoked amongst practitioners and yet it is effaced from funding bodies, or, rather, it exists implicitly. It is implicitly defined by what it is *not*. This is a classic Bourdieu-ian case of 'objectives of the first order' meeting 'objectives of the second order' (Wacquant 1992): the material categorisation and distribution of funding does not necessarily reflect the circulating discourses of social agents. This being the case, what were the funding structures of New Theatre and Esoteric Entertainment? And importantly, how were these structures interpreted and classified by the practitioners?

4.1.ii Some Historical Relations of New Theatre (*Season*) and Esoteric Entertainment (*Reg*)

The theatre field in Sydney is not a fixed framework but it is continually being made and re-made. The 'positions' New Theatre and Esoteric Entertainment occupied were not fixed categories but were dynamic negotiations involving classification debates, and these debates were based on the very specific funding arrangements and histories of these two organisations. In order to study the discourses circulating in and around the two groups, it is necessary to lay out some of these histories.

New Theatre in Australia began in the 1930s as a radical political movement. It exercised its greatest influence between 1935-70, (a period which includes the Cold War when it was marginalised by the reviewing

policies of the mainstream press (Arrow 1999)). Michelle Arrow explains that the press boycott was crucial 'in terms of the theatre's construction of its own history as a radical, marginalised organisation' (220). She continues, 'New Theatre was taken very seriously, if not as a potential threat, then at the very least as a source of dissident opinion and anti-government performances' (223). Moreover, due to the investigations during the Cold War, 'the total ASIO[74] holding on the New Theatre throughout Australia amounts to more than 900 pages' (223). According to Arrow, by the end of the 1960s the political, radical New Theatre was sidelined in the public imagination 'by the theatre collectives emerging from the counterculture and protest movements in Sydney and Melbourne' (12).

Rather than relying on a significant budget, New Theatre productions enlist other means to pull resources together. In the late 1990s, the New Theatre committee involved 20 positions, all of which were elected by the membership apart from the administrator who worked a 38-hour week and received an award wage. Funding dollars did not come from large corporate sponsorship or significant government subsidy, but rather the theatre existed almost completely on box office receipts with the exception of: a (local) Marrickville Council Small Arts Grant (which New Theatre applies for each year); one-off grants (for instance in 1998, the local shopping mall, Marrickville Metro, provided a $3000 sponsorship); the four hundred-odd members paying on average $30 annually;[75] selling New Theatre archives to Mitchell Library;[76] and renting rehearsal space to performance companies. The total budget of *Season* was approximately $1700, and covered (in order of financial cost): costumes, construction materials, furniture, lighting, props, paint, and sound.[77] In order to stay within budget, the production borrowed furniture from Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, and the practitioners (for instance, Mary-Anne provided

[74]Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation.
[75]Leigh Rowney, New Theatre president, pointed out "that's twelve grand which is kind of nice. It certainly tides us over in lean periods, if we happen to have a season that doesn't sell particularly well."
[76] The Mitchell Library is part of the State Library of New South Wales and contains research collections relating to Australia and the south-west Pacific.
[77]See appendix 4 for breakdown of cost.

the couch), and some costumes were borrowed from NIDA.[78] Sydney Theatre Company and Marion Street Theatre provided some of the props, and the fridge used in the BOYLE'S kitchen was found on the street.

While you don't have to be a member to audition for a production at New Theatre (although it is encouraged), you *do* have to join once you are accepted into the show. The playreaders and the artistic director choose the playtexts and then New Theatre advertises the auditions. There is a membership newsletter—*Spotlight*—which is distributed every 6-8 weeks and it usually coincides with auditions for productions. Leigh Rowney, New Theatre president in the late 1990s, explained in an interview that there is no screening process for auditions, and that "you just line up and have a go". He continued: "The director has the right to cast beyond the membership as much as we do *encourage* as many members as possible being involved". For *Season*, only half of the cast were initially members of New Theatre. The cast and crew are not paid to rehearse or perform, however, as will be explored, the organisation labours to ensure that it is not classified as 'amateur'.

While, geographically, the *Reg* production rehearsed up the street from *Season*, the conditions under which it evolved differed vastly: for instance, it was not produced by an established theatre organisation. Officially, the production was associated with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, an annual parade down Oxford Street in Sydney that began as a political march in 1978 (Hawkins 1993: 129). Specifically, the show was scheduled under the Mardi Gras Arts Festival that takes place in February and March each year: 'By 1990 the march had become a month-long festival featuring gay film, performing arts, television and visual arts events, community activities, sports programs and forums' (129).

The Mardi Gras organisation is governed by a volunteer fourteen member Board of Directors elected annually by the membership, and is responsible

[78] The National Institute of Dramatic Art.

for policy, strategy and direction (with day-to-day operations the responsibility of a full-time staff of nineteen). The network of volunteers who help each year totals around 4,000.[79] However, the *Reg* production was not mounted by Mardi Gras but by a small theatre group, Esoteric Entertainment, which formed specifically for the show. The mission statement for this production (designed to attract sponsorship) provides insight into the precariousness of a theatre collective, with no established residence at a particular venue, as it attempts to produce a show in Sydney. Initially, according to the mission statement, the production was to be produced by Threshold Productions (an actor-driven ensemble), to include Andrew McFarlane (a high-profile TV actor) as the lead, GUY, and it was to be performed at Belvoir Street Theatre. But, by the time rehearsals began six months later, a new theatre group had formed (Esoteric Entertainment), McFarlane was replaced by Steven Tandy, and, on losing the bid for Belvoir Street, the producers found Newtown Theatre.

Esoteric Entertainment was formed by Peter Flett and Gary Tregaskis. Tregaskis, the executive producer, wrote in a section of the *Reg* programme, (titled 'The Mission'):

> It was earlier last year when friend and actor, Peter Flett told me of Tony Knight's vision to produce *My Night With Reg* during the 1998 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Arts Festival. After the initial discussions I realised that an opportunity existed to go beyond a single production to create a new production company. A company designed to present theatre of the highest possible standard from Australia and around the world. Thus Esoteric Entertainment was established and *My Night With Reg* became our inaugural production.

However, this was to be their only production, as Esoteric Entertainment soon disbanded. The rapid forming and disbanding of theatre groups is endemic where funding is scarce and ensemble collectives virtually non-existent. (For instance, in 2001, one actor, a 1996 NIDA graduate, established his own business and called it Group Six because, in the last

[79] www.mardigras.org.au (as at May 2001).

four years, he had become involved in five small theatre groups, all of which had dissolved.)

Most of the *Reg* production budget was provided by Gary Tregaskis and by the large range of sponsors secured by Peter Flett. The sponsors included: Smirnoff (vodka); Freixenet (sparkling wine); Opal Fields (opals); Novotel Hotel; KLM Royal Dutch Airlines; Carina Australia (jewellery); Cadrys Persian Carpet Specialists; Dolce&Gabbana (clothes). When I spoke with Peter months after the show, and inquired about documents I might peruse, he explained that he didn't really have anything he could give me. While New Theatre keeps a thorough archive of each production, Esoteric Entertainment did not, or, if they did, Peter was not prepared to make the material available, and I was not prepared to insist. However, during a later conversation he was more open, telling me that the total budget was $120,000.00. Apparently this was double the original estimate ($60,000.00) and almost all of it came from Tregaskis.[80] Neither the *Season* nor *Reg* productions were subsidised by federal or state funding, and yet, as will be examined in this chapter, the *Reg* group attempted to adopt strategies used by heavily subsidised, established theatre institutions in order to legitimise their work. In this way, the relationship between subsidised theatre and more commercial ventures constitutes part of the struggle of the theatre-making field. For instance, Fotheringham argues that, due to the lack of federal government support for the arts, Australian subsidised theatre cannot claim a privileged distance from the market place, and that the boundary between commercial and state-subsidised theatre has eroded (1998: 31). I will not be suggesting that there are neat divisions, but rather that groups with or without government funding are framed in particular ways.

Neither New Theatre nor Esoteric Entertainment could be slotted into a neat framework of what constituted theatre-making in Sydney. Like other theatre

[80] The sponsors mostly provided product, however a couple of them also had a cash involvement (Smirnoff supplying $5,000.00 and Freixenet Champagne similarly providing a small cash contribution).

organisations, the funding and management structures underpinning the *Season* and *Reg* productions were dynamic: they were continually being formed and reformed. Fotheringham makes the point that the economic structures underpinning theatre in Australia

> vary from profit-share companies [...] through several types of company structure, to the fully-unionised commercial and state companies with full-time administrative staff and artists and technicians working to negotiated contracts and agreed job descriptions (1998: 34).

The kind of theatre organisations and groups operating in Sydney range from: Sydney Theatre Company (the state flagship company receiving Major Organisational Funding), Company B Belvoir (which, in 1998, received Triennial Funding and which implicitly provides an alternative to the state theatre company),[81] Griffin Theatre Company (which also received Triennial Funding and is committed to producing Australian work), Youth Theatre organisations, organisations operating from project to project, and then right through to new graduate collectives producing co-operative work. One 1997 NIDA acting graduate explained that, because the minimum award wage for actors in theatre is so low, he was paid more from a profit share production in a small theatre space than from a wage-based mainstage show at the Sydney Opera House. Here the economic returns could not be mapped onto the accruing of cultural capital. The status associated with performing at the Opera House was not translated into significant economic gain, whereas the fringe theatre work was financially rewarding. This, once again, suggests how the Sydney theatre field does not exclusively operate under the logics of a market-driven economy.

Above are some of the sociological 'facts' about the two productions; in part, a laying out of the distribution of material resources, as Bourdieu would say. But what did these 'facts' *mean* to people? For 'it matters that individuals have a practical knowledge of the world and invest this practical knowledge in their ordinary activity' (Wacquant 1992: 9). How did the practitioners and

[81] It has since been included for Major Organisation funding

the theatre groups invoke systems of classification, and how were interpretations of the social world instituted? Part of the competition for each theatre group involved distancing itself from what it understood as illegitimate theatre. It was imperative that in its publicity material and in the discourses circulating within the organisation, each group must divorce itself from the 'unserious' theatre that might be seen, by others in the field, as being closest to it. New Theatre (and *Season*) laboured to distance itself from an idea of 'amateur community performance',[82] while Esoteric Entertainment (and *Reg)* ensured that it was not labelled as a new, young, inexperienced, local theatre collective. In Bourdieu's terms, this labour of the two groups involved producing oppositions. As Born explains, Bourdieu has theorised the way in which high culture is dominated by a competition for cultural legitimacy:

> That competition is also functional complementarity expressed in a system of oppositions between different positions within the field, such as differences of ideology, genre, or style. (1995: 27)

For Born, 'functional complementarity' refers to the consensus that gets implicitly delineated when social agents (individuals or organisations) struggle to define the boundaries of the field in question: this is what she calls 'antagonistic interdependence' (27). That is, in arguing what is or is not 'real' theatre, the boundaries of a theatre field are implicitly produced. The strategies New Theatre and Esoteric Entertainment used involved mapping discrete sets of ideas onto three dominant discourses that, in part, comprise the theatre scene: community, professionalism and prestige. Each group framed its activity in terms of these discourses.

[82]This struggle between notions of 'community', 'amateurism' and 'professionalism' is not restricted to the *Season* and *Reg* groups. Graham Pitts (co-founded Sidetrack Theatre, 1979) debates the term 'community' and suggests that mainstream theatre has used it as a derogatory label, equating it with amateur, whereas he understands community theatre as being wholly or in part very professional (Foster 2000: 57).

4.1.iii Representing and Creating 'Community'

*'New Theatre is **Your** Theatre'* [83]

New Theatre and the practitioners in *Season* continually invoked discourses of 'community' throughout rehearsals and performance. They were, to some extent, representing 'their' community. In Bourdieu's terms, their labour of representation was a move in a game of cultural legitimation: in order to manipulate the perception of the social world, 'one may act by actions of representation [...] meant to display and to throw into relief certain realities' (1990b: 133). He writes that this can operate at a group level, where 'the goal is to exhibit a group, its size, its strength, its cohesiveness, to make it exist visibly' (133). In representing their 'community', the *Season* group was in a process of *making* that community.

The New Theatre's and the *Season* practitioners' discourses of 'community' were explicitly tied to leftist political discourse and, specifically, an 'egalitarianism'. When I interviewed Rowney in 1998, he spoke of New Theatre in terms of its egalitarian structure, and the particular ideology it seeks to foreground. He explained, for instance, that there is a commitment to do Australian work

> if we get quality scripts that we think are viable and which we think fall into line with what we want to say about the world [...] Basically we want to expose[...] inequalities in human experience and where one party is disadvantaged by the actions of another. So, politically it's like, you know, the capitalist system disadvantages the bottom rung of the ladder so that we'll attack *that*.

The 'we' that Rowney refers to is both the committee and the membership. In this sense, who counts as part of the community is clearly defined: you are either a member or you're not. In fact, Rowney was so familiar with his 400-odd membership that, in 1998, one year after the *Season* production, he was able to spontaneously name those cast members who had and had not been members before rehearsals began. The construction of the New

Theatre membership as an 'egalitarian community' was emphasised by the *Season* programme where a biography was provided for everyone involved—from the actors through to the assistant stage manager—and they were presented in alphabetical order. This is a departure from other theatre productions where usually only the actors and the 'creative' team—for instance, director, designer, lighting designer, composer—are given biographies, and these are often presented in a hierarchical order ('star' actor down to 'walk-on role' actor). And, in every biography in the *Season* programme, practitioners' relationships with New Theatre were foregrounded. For instance, in the entry 'Amos Ronca is a new member here at New Theatre', Amos (who assisted with set construction) is figured as an outsider who has joined an us 'here'.

The first rehearsal for *Season* involved what was called a 'get-to-know-you' evening when the cast and crew gathered in the foyer of New Theatre to meet everyone and, as Rowney suggested, be introduced to the running of the organisation. Rowney asked for the foyer doors fronting onto the street be shut, and, while this was ostensibly to shut out the noise and the mid-May evening cold, the effect was that suddenly the space felt cushioned and contained. We all spontaneously arranged ourselves in a large circle and Rowney asked us to introduce ourselves. Each actor announced, "I'm so-and-so and I'm playing so-and-so" (and there was a lot of nervous "Oohs" after I told them I was documenting the rehearsal process for a university thesis). It was at the first rehearsal when we were told a Cast Committee was to be elected: three people from the cast were to act as a body that could be approached if actors had problems with the director. From this first contact, the practices operating at New Theatre were framed as being about 'community' and 'democracy'—every new member received the membership booklet (a document which has, as its first point, a section titled 'Democracy')—and this continued throughout the process. In particular, the practitioners slipped between production roles; there were no wages delineating one position from another, so that sometimes people

[83] Title of the New Theatre Membership booklet.

filled in for each other. At the first rehearsal, Mary-Anne informed the cast that she was still securing the (small) roles of the two ambulance men (for the scene in Act Two where MAVIS (played by Kate) goes into labour and is carried off on a stretcher). Two actors, Darren and Mark, joined the cast a month into rehearsals, and then another actor, Emil, replaced Darren for one rehearsal and replaced Mark for the actual performances because Mark had unexpected work commitments. During another rehearsal, Mary-Anne was ill so Pete (assistant director) directed the ambulance scene. This was also a rehearsal in which they had only one ambulance man, so in the scene, Pete took the other end of the stretcher—he literally helped carry and manoeuvre the stretcher *while* he gave directions to the cast. At another rehearsal, the lighting designer filled in for an ambulance man. Similarly, Joanne, the violinist, joined the crew eight days before opening night and immediately began helping with props. Rebecca (stage manager) said to Mary-Anne, "Joanne's here. Where do you want her?", and Joanne entered the stage and placed some tea-towels on the POGSON ironing table. There was very much a sense of a 'pulling together' with 'all hands on deck'. This was emphasised by the huge cast[84]—by the fact that this production was so peopled—and the way that these people used the theatre space. As mentioned in Chapter Two, on the cold rehearsal nights the practitioners huddled together in pockets of the building. People were rarely alone.

New Theatre members are part of the 'community' associated with the actual theatre. According to Rowney, however, the theatre operates "*for* [my emphasis] the community". Outside the New Theatre committee and membership, who exactly comprises such a 'community' is left unclear, and perhaps the important point is that the audience is referred to as a 'community' rather than, say, 'patrons' or 'clients' or even simply 'audiences'. Built into this use of the term 'community' is a sense of inclusion (the same term is used both for the practitioners and the spectators), a sense of shared values and beliefs, and a sense of living

[84] When Mary-Anne first saw the large number of cast members—sixteen—she exclaimed, "Oh God!"

locally. However, operating 'for the community' does not make New Theatre 'community theatre', a point reiterated by Lyn Collingwood, the Theatre's secretary (and who played GIRLIE in *Season*). Collingwood says that New Theatre is sometimes mis-categorised as 'community theatre'. For instance, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Friday *Metro* lift-out, in the Stage section, the editor often includes a specific category of 'Community Theatre', and New Theatre productions are listed here. The term 'community theatre' is invoked by theatre practitioners, audiences and the press in a number of contexts. The Community Theatre movement (under the broader banner of 'Community Arts') entered Federal arts policy in the early 1970s, and at the time 'it was framed within the social democratic demand for increased access to and participation in the arts' (Hawkins 1993: xviii). However, the Community Arts Program has had difficulty defining itself: 'a vague boundary is established that distinguishes community arts from both "high" culture and mass culture' (xix), and '[c]lustered around this elusive term ['community arts'] are notions like "amateur", "local", "political", "authentic", "social concern", "welfare", "therapy" and "worthy", notions which are at once the source of community arts' opposition and marginality' (xix).[85] The sort of theatre the program generated included agit prop performance and regional theatre groups, collectives traditionally preoccupied with a social agenda. However, the term 'community theatre' is also used to refer to local amateur dramatic groups. Collingwood understood 'community theatre' in this way (she specifically referred to the (amateur) Rockdale Musical Society). Hawkins suggests that this label, 'community arts', is often invoked as a term of 'derision and dismissal', a sign of 'aesthetic fiasco[s] and cultural lack' (xix). In an effort to distance New Theatre from this notion of 'community theatre' Collingwood invoked New Theatre's 70-year history, the implication being that the Theatre's long past disqualifies it from such a recently-coined term: here history is used to legitimise the organisation.

[85] Hawkins is making the point that the terms associated with 'community arts' such as 'local' and 'amateur' are used to challenge the hegemony of the professional and the national in arts policy, but these terms are also used derisively (1993: xix).

The discourse of leftist political ideology and egalitarianism is continually reinforced by the historical narratives surrounding New Theatre. In 1992 New Theatre published a revised edition of its history booklet (edited by David Milliss), celebrating and acknowledging its 60th anniversary. The booklet very explicitly positions the theatre within a leftist socio-political context in Australia. It describes the subversiveness of Sydney New Theatre and the censorship it suffered, with bans and encounters with police depicted in detail, and the writing carefully associates Australia's political climate of the 1950s with the American persecution of communists. The term 'radical' is used repeatedly throughout the booklet, and is even in the title.[86] Importantly, New Theatre's history is made part of rehearsal procedure. On the first night of rehearsal for *Season*, the history booklet was handed out to every practitioner (it was not relegated to a foyer counter), and, along with this, Rowney provided a brief history of the theatre. Months later, when I asked Rowney about this pre-rehearsal gathering, he explained: "The management committee does sometimes feel that while it's all very well for us to make decisions about what happens here and who does it, sometimes we actually need to make real contact with the people who do that work on our behalf [...]", and that it is important to acquaint people with a little bit of the Theatre's history. New Theatre and *Season* linked 'community' with 'history'—with an idea of past generations of theatre-makers and social activists—and this operated to position the Theatre as an established organisation. When practitioners joined the community, they were becoming a part of, and simultaneously making, history. They were being linked to all those artists that went before them and to a great tradition. New Theatre (and the *Season* practitioners) invoked discourses of 'community' and 'history' in order to help create and preserve the positions that it held in Sydney theatre. However, this was not the only strategy adopted. During *Season*, a discourse of 'egalitarian community' was juxtaposed with individual career building; as will be explored, a 'collective creativity' was negotiated with the very real conditions of securing future acting work.

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[86] *The New Years 1932- : The Plays, People and Events of Six Decades of Sydney's Radical New Theatre.*

While ideas of 'egalitarian community' and 'leftist history' were central to the legitimising discourse of New Theatre (and *Season*), they were virtually absent from the *Reg* production. This is surprising given the direct association between *Reg* and Mardi Gras; the Mardi Gras history is grounded in gay rights and social activism, and the 'field' promoted collective community and the figure of the 'volunteer'. The *Reg* production was initially careful to umbrella itself under Mardi Gras, however the discourse surrounding the rehearsals did not involve this framing whatsoever. Hawkins, referring to the Mardi Gras parade, argues that:

> This is not a cultural practice established to mimic high cultural forms; it is oblivious to dominant ideas about standards. Mardi Gras allows participants ritualised expression. It does not establish a hierarchy amongst performers, nor does it valorise the work of artists as more creative [...] The parade celebrates spectacle, design, preparation, and, most importantly, collective creativity (1993: 130).

Contrary to Hawkins' observation of Mardi Gras (an observation, granted, of the parade rather than the arts festival), the *Reg* practitioners invoked discourses of 'professionalism', 'high culture' and 'prestige' with a very distinct foregrounding of individual artists' achievements. If Hawkins discovered a site of pure collective creativity in the parade, it was explicitly problematised during *Reg*. This is a case, in Bourdieu's terms, of two quasi-autonomous fields operating: Mardi Gras and Sydney theatre-making. The practical logics—the 'species of capital' (Wacquant 1992: 7)—work differently in each of these fields, as 'each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles' (17).

Rather than operating within a Mardi Gras context, the *Reg* production was part of Sydney theatre-making, and, an imperative of Esoteric Entertainment —being new on the scene—was to dispel any notion that the group was somehow local or parochial. Esoteric Entertainment laboured to distance itself from the small, new theatre groups that regularly form in Sydney, and it was, therefore, anxious to establish itself as doing internationally-based work. For starters, Gary Tregaskis was an Australian living in London, and

throughout rehearsals he was careful to explicitly nurture any relationship this Sydney *Reg* production might have with London culture. Specifically, both Tregaskis and Flett forged a relationship with Kevin Elyot (playwright) who lives in London. Prior to *Reg*, Elyot had a reputation as a talented playwright. He was, in January 1998, at the time of the *Reg* production, a celebrated emerging playwright from London. *My Night With Reg* had premiered in 1994 at London's Royal Court Theatre Upstairs and won the Writers Guild of Great Britain Award for Best Fringe Theatre play. 'It transferred to the Criterion Theatre in the West End, winning the Laurence Olivier and London Evening Standard Awards for Best Comedy, as well as a London Theatre Critics Circle Award' (*Reg* programme 1998). His later play, *The Day I Stood Still*, premiered in London while the *Reg* practitioners were rehearsing. Esoteric Entertainment used Elyot's international standing to create a position in social space. In Foucault's terms, this constitutes an exploration of the 'author function': 'The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse: [...] [it] must be received in a certain mode and [...] in a given culture, must receive a certain status' (1984: 107). Esoteric Entertainment flew Elyot out (business class) from London for opening night. In this way, part of the West End came to Sydney, not only the play but the playwright also. Esoteric Entertainment worked to position itself as a mediator between Sydney (and, more broadly Australia) and the London theatre scene. This was also reinforced by Tony's programme note: he first saw a production of *Reg* in London.

The point here is that the producers were understanding themselves within a notion of 'community', however it was within an *international* rather than a *local* community. Of course, it was not just any internationalism they were using, but a very specific Western, high cultural arena (West End, London). As opposed to invoking 'community' within a leftist agenda, or within the parochial idea of proximity (in the way small, newly established ensembles tend to do), they ensured that their work and their theatre organisation was positioned as cosmopolitan, sophisticated and therefore the 'real thing'.

4.1.iv Professionalism, Non-Professionalism, and Amateurism

*'We are an ensemble theatre and **there are no stars except the play.***[87]

The two theatre groups used the term 'professional', and the potential slipperiness of such a category, in order to frame their work as 'serious (and therefore legitimate) professionalism'. New Theatre and *Season* worked to frame themselves in opposition to 'amateur community theatre', while Esoteric Entertainment worked to distance itself from young, less experienced, theatre collectives. Like the term 'community', the terms 'professional' and 'professionalism' are contested labels rather than *a priori* categories, and this is never more so than in Sydney (and, arguably, Australian) theatre-making where funding is so precarious. Fotheringham suggests that the discourse of professionalism 'has become the dominant force operating to centralise or marginalise particular artists, companies and shows' (1998: 34), *and* that 'professionalism' is 'a contested term, since [...] actual economic structures vary' (34). Similarly, the NSW Ministry for the Arts admits that its definition of 'professional artist' is deliberately broad, and suggests the following criteria to ascertain who is or is not professional: 'A professional artist: identifies him/herself as such, on the basis of skill or experience; is accepted by peers or the arts industry as a professional; *may or may not earn income from artwork* [my emphasis]'.[88]

The *Reg* production used a discourse of professionalism in an effort to carve out a niche in the social space of theatre-making in Sydney. Rather than invoke Mardi Gras history (a history that, on the website at least, continually refers to the Gay and Lesbian 'communities' that comprise a larger 'community'), the *Reg* show was used as a platform to launch a new theatre group: in the programme, *Reg* was framed as the 'inaugural production' of Esoteric Entertainment. Tregaskis wrote that Esoteric

[87] New Theatre Membership booklet, p.8.
[88] www.arts.nsw.gov.au/Guidelines/Grants/grants.htm#Eligibility (as at November 2002).

Entertainment would have 'a commitment to the highest level of integrity and professionalism'. The new-ness of the theatre group—the fact it was unknown and had not proved itself—made it important for Gary Tregaskis and Peter Flett to carefully present the group within a legitimate frame. Here integrity and professionalism—that is, a *trustworthy-ness* and a *seriousness*—were linked.

The actors in *Reg* were paid only the award wage to rehearse and perform. However, despite this minimum pay—$22.69 per hour to rehearse and $577.50 (gross) per week to perform[89]—the discourse circulating in the show stressed the excellence of the artists. As with New Theatre, the 'quality' of the practitioners operated largely independently of actual financial reward. While the *Season* programme listed everyone involved and their history with New Theatre, the *Reg* programme only included the cast, the writer, director, executive producer, designer and lighting designer. And rather than positioning these people in relation to their history with Mardi Gras, their biographies listed theatre, film and television credits and foregrounded their status in the industry. For instance: 'Tony [Youlden] is one of Australia's top lighting designers, having lit over 350 productions'; 'A NIDA graduate with diplomas in both acting and directing, Steven [Tandy] has an impressive list of theatrical credits'; and, in Sean's case, 'Sean is at the threshold of a very promising career and Esoteric Entertainment is delighted to present this talented newcomer in the role of Eric'. In this last case, here Esoteric Entertainment acted as mediator between a 'star-to-be-born' and the public.

Like the *Reg* group, the New Theatre group also participated in debates over what it was to be a professional artist. The *Season* practitioners, like all artists who work with New Theatre, were not paid to rehearse or perform,[90] and only some of the actors had agent representation. However,

[89] These rates are taken from the MEAA's 1998 records for award pay.
[90] With 16 performers, the costing for rehearsals and performance would have been approximately $40,000.00. Again, this is taken from the MEAA's 1997 records for actors' award rates ($22.26 per hour to rehearse and either $525.80 or $567.50 per week to perform depending on the level of experience).

Collingwood suggested that the Theatre is 'semi-professional' rather than 'amateur'. While the Theatre positions itself as being community-based, and, as quoted in the epigraph to this section, an 'ensemble theatre', ideas of 'professional' artists and high-profile practitioners circulated in the New Theatre reading material and the general talk. The history booklet explains how the theatre has been careful to preserve the egalitarian group nature of the company, with stars rarely featured. However, the booklet immediately follows this with, 'All the same, many of [the Theatre's] members have gone on to become professionals' (Milliss 1992: 14), and it lists over fifty names of artists. The tension between ideas of 'community' those of 'professional star artist' was similarly manifest in the interview with Rowney. When he offered reasons why practitioners are drawn to New Theatre, two of the three ran somewhat counter to ideas of community and collective creativity. He explained that those reasons might include: work experience, usually for actors; and the Theatre "calling on some honour" that high-profile directors and actors (usually) might have due to a history with the theatre. That is, distinct discourses of 'excellence'[91] and 'career-building' co-existed with 'community' ideals. Rowney continued: "a lot of us carry [...] strong artistic ambition [...] We want to make this play the best possible thing because it's our artistic integrity that's at stake as much as New Theatre's survival."

Ideas of artistic ambition were very present during rehearsals. For many actors *Season* was an opportunity to secure an acting agent. Below is an account from my rehearsal notes:

It was an early rehearsal for *Season* and the actors moved through the play, scene by scene, in the marked out area of the stage space. In the past fortnight they had spent a great deal of time carefully analysing the script to 'find the meanings' of exchanges and the underlying psychologies of the characters. As they performed, there was often a hesitancy to their deliveries as they attempted to access or bring together the thoughts from previous rehearsals. At one point, an actor, Gaby (playing JUDY), was standing centre stage rehearsing her role. She held a large folder which contained the script and she glanced down now and then to view her lines. She was not only juggling

[91] I have borrowed this notion from Gay Hawkins in her study of the politics of arts funding (1993: 10).

remembering the exact wording of phrases, but she tried to remind herself of the psychological motivations underscoring JUDY.

Then, during a delivery, a large photograph—her headshot—slipped out of her folder and onto the floor. Everyone in the room looked down at the back-and-white styled photo of Gaby, who blushed with embarrassment as Mary-Anne jumped up and scooped the photo off the floor so that the scene might continue uninterrupted.

*Rehearsal notes from the **Season** process*
Kate Rossmanith, 1997

This account constitutes an explicit incursion of the social reality into the fiction: everyone was reminded that Gaby, playing JUDY, was an actor seeking work in an industry. An actor's headshot is an 8-inch by 10-inch black and white close-up photograph and it operates as important currency. It can secure actors an interview with an acting agency, a 'go-see' (meeting) with a casting agent (who will call on an actor to audition for a role), and even an audition with a director (for theatre, film or television). Rowney explained that "we encourage the cast to make their agents welcome [to see the show]", and New Theatre offers them complimentary tickets. For actors seeking to build their profile, Rowney suggests that the Theatre is a perfect place, and that

> [Actors] are looking for work and looking to hone their skills [...] because we don't pay any actors, we can afford to do shows that have large casts. So you're going to get an opportunity to work here [...] a lot of people also come here not knowing anything about the place. Their agent said, you know, "You're not going to get any work without experience. Here's a place to get experience". Or, the acting school said, "You've got to get experience. Here's a place where you can get experience."

The rehearsals for *Season* were as much about individuals 'becoming professional' and 'becoming recognised' as they were about 'community, democratic' ideals. This juxtaposition has been duly criticised. Kelly, writing about theatre in Australia, argues that community-based theatre 'fuelled by graduates of proliferating tertiary training courses, was coming to be seen as merely another funded career option' (1998: 16). Similarly, in an interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Frank McNamara, Artistic Director of New Theatre in 2001, suggested that:

> Until 10 years ago, the base of our membership was people who had some kind of social commitment towards the left of politics [...] Therefore we could depend on voluntary labour for virtually everything we did. Now we don't have that social commitment. We get a lot of people who want to be actors or directors and need to get experience. So in the forefront of their minds is their career and the job. (Morgan 2001: 3).

This indicates perfectly the extent to which fields and institutions continually evolve (and 'regress', as Shevtsova suggests (2002: 64)). Here practitioners struggle to name and define what theatre practice should be. For McNamara at New Theatre, real productions should involve a social commitment rather than a career-building strategy.

The idea of 'professionalism' worked explicitly both on a group and an individual level. The *Season* and *Reg* collectives employed this discourse to help legitimise the productions (and the cultural producers) and the practitioners used it in terms of nurturing a career path. When Gaby carried her headshot with her, and when she discussed securing an agent, she was participating in an individual struggle, employing 'strategies of presentation of self designed to manipulate one's self image and especially one's position in social space' (Bourdieu 1990b: 133-4). Steven was involved in such a strategy when his agent scheduled him in for an audition for some television work and a *Reg* rehearsal was subsequently postponed: Steven had to leave rehearsals early to attend this casting. He had spent the night before learning lines and had carefully chosen an outfit to wear that might seem suitable for the role he was auditioning for. He was, in Bourdieu's terms, 'manipulating' his self image. This emphasis on the individual practitioner was also demonstrated during another *Reg* rehearsal when Tony filled in for Graham (who had ducked out to the bathroom): Tony entered the stage space, took Graham's position as JOHN, and said emphatically "You mean I'm *Graham Harvey*?!" Graham was an attractive, high-profile Australian television actor, and here Tony jokingly referred to Graham's position in the industry.

Some practitioners in particular drew on their history and experience in the industry (as seen, for instance, by the *Reg* programme) in order to define themselves as professionals. Mary-Anne, Tony and a number of the *Reg* actors and crew foregrounded their training at NIDA as a form of cultural capital. This institution is central to my study as it is the most prominent, well-funded training school in the country, and it produces graduates that flow into mainstream theatre, film and television, some working in Hollywood (Cate Blanchett, Mel Gibson, and Judy Davis among others). Furthermore, many of the practitioners central to this thesis trained there. In 1954 the Australian Federal government implemented a national body to subsidise the arts: the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.[92] Part of the Trust's agenda involved establishing a national theatre training institution modelled on the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in England. So, in 1958, NIDA was created. With respect to NIDA's relationship with other training schools in the country, Fotheringham argues that:

> during the twenty years it was the only training school, NIDA developed close links with the subsidized state companies, and established a nexus which operated to privilege its own graduates and to exclude directors and actors who came from other backgrounds and training experiences. This worked to institutionalise a certain kind of performance style (realism) within an overall aesthetic (plays from British tradition) and economic structures (the English provincial repertory theatres) (1998: 27).[93]

NIDA's prominence is revealed in the funding distribution (it receives more than $20,000 per student as opposed to other major training institutions at $7-9,000 (Fotheringham 1998)), and by its very direct link to the Sydney Theatre Company: In 1979, NIDA helped to establish what was to become the major subsidized theatre company in NSW thereby, if not explicitly then

[92] The Trust was partly modelled on the British Arts Council and its objectives included: 'the creation and promotion of professional drama, opera and ballet companies in Australia. This would be achieved by supporting local rather than overseas companies and by providing continuity of employment for members of those troupes, to stimulate and develop local talent. Ultimately, its aims were even more grand for it also proposed to encourage "a native drama, opera and ballet" created by Australian writers, composers and artists' (Waterhouse 1997: 152). In the late 1960s the Trust was succeeded by the federal government's arts body, the Council for the Arts, which then later became the Australia Council.

[93] It is questionable whether these economic structures were in fact institutionalised, since there is a distinct absence of repertory theatre in Australia.

at least implicitly, securing direct trajectories for its graduates. In the *Season* programme and during rehearsals, Mary-Anne foregrounded her experience at NIDA and her previous productions with New Theatre. In fact, *Season* was to be her final production at the Theatre as Artistic Director because she left to take up the Artistic Directorship at Railway Theatre, a theatre group operating in Western Sydney and one, again, with a leftist leaning. For Mary-Anne, NIDA and New Theatre (and *Season*) were part of a larger career trajectory. Similarly, Tony used his position at NIDA, specifically his reputation as having directed many large-scale productions there, in order to branch out into theatre-making beyond the educational institutional environment. As Bourdieu argues, 'In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles' (1990b: 135). The practitioners used this 'capital'—their specific training and experience—in order to participate in struggles over what good theatre is or should be.

To recap thus far: the *Season* and *Reg* practitioners used discourses of 'community' and 'professionalism' to legitimise their work, however they used these discourses in very specific ways. New Theatre couched ideas of egalitarianism and leftist political history within a broader discourse of 'community'; Esoteric Entertainment wanted to position itself as part of an international community. New Theatre divorced any association between 'professionalism' and 'paid work' by framing many of their (unpaid) practitioners as 'professionals'. This, in turn, would distance them from amateur groups. Esoteric Entertainment emphasised the experience and training of its practitioners and used discourses of professionalism to establish itself as a legitimate organisation.

1.5 Prestige and High Cultural Product

The third discourse the two groups deployed was that of prestige and high culture, and, again, they collapsed very specific sets of practices and

discourses into this more over-arching discourse. By creating ideas of prestige and sophistication around *Reg*—ideas that feature in the discourse surrounding opera and other long-standing performance traditions—the producers would create Esoteric Entertainment as an 'established' ensemble doing serious 'cultured' work rather than a temporary theatre collective. Throughout rehearsals, Peter would creep up to me and show me the latest poster, pamphlet, programme proofs or opening night tickets, emphasising their polished quality. The programme was in a long, slender format, black except for the white letter '**r e g**' on the front; the design (including the weighty, expensive paper used and the matt finish) rendered it reminiscent of a sleek cocktail menu. The programme was filled with advertising from sponsors. The *Reg* production gathered sponsors from the most expensive strata of society: a five star hotel, expensive alcohol, stylish jewellery and clothes. This expense filtered into the production itself where, for instance, the set included a Persian carpet, Graham wore a white Dolce and Gabbana robe, and every night Peter (DANIEL) had to pop open a bottle of champagne. Moreover, the mission statement used the term 'pedigree' to describe the play, the producers and the cast involved, thereby invoking a class system. In the foyer area of the theatre, Stuart Campbell, a Sydney photographer, held a photography exhibition that ran throughout the *Reg* season. The photos were black and white and largely of nudes. On opening night, the audience (all with complimentary tickets) filed into Newtown Theatre, ascended the spacious, grand staircase and gathered in the bar area. The bar staff (who wore tight black T-shirts with the word 'r e g' on them) served complimentary vodka and gourmet hors d'oeuvres, and the audience milled around looking at the photography exhibition. When we (for I had been offered a complimentary ticket also) entered the theatre, we encountered brand new seating structure. Rather than use plastic seats, the producers had insisted on constructing tiered rostra on three sides of the playing area.[94] And, because the summer nights were so warm, they had hired an air-conditioning unit that would pump cool air into the giant hall for the duration of the show. When we arrived at our seats, we found

[94] The producers shared the cost with Mark Cleary.

dishwashing gloves placed along all the rostra (300 pairs in total). The producers had arranged for everyone to receive the English brand of glove—*Marigolds*—so that they would better understand the line in the show, 'He masturbates in Marigolds'. For opening night, no expense was spared.

Rather than simply being about 'expense', the excess associated with the *Reg* production was specifically caught up with ideas of taste. The black and white photography, the various sponsors, the vodka, the new seating, were markers of prestige. Bourdieu argues,

> when the only usable, effective capital is the (mis)recognised, legitimate capital called 'prestige' or 'authority', the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field—nor the 'economic' profits they always imply—unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital (1980: 262).

By creating markers of cultural elitism reminiscent of Opera Australia, The Bell Shakespeare Company, and the Sydney Theatre Company, the *Reg* producers were labouring to frame the show (and Esoteric Entertainment) as what Bourdieu calls 'institutionalised consecration'. Critiquing Kant's distinction between facile pleasures and pure pleasures, Bourdieu suggests: 'The culture which results from this magical division is sacred. Cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations it touches, a sort of ontological promotion akin to a trans-substantiation' (1984: 6). The producers were producing markers associated with prominent, state subsidised, national flag-ship companies; legitimate theatre producing consecrated work that was somehow divorced from cheaper production values. The *Reg* show was a fully commercial enterprise, and this impacted very directly on the entire production. For instance, because Smirnoff vodka was a sponsor, all scotch references in the script were changed to vodka. However, because the tastes reflected in such sponsorships were so exclusive, they mapped more readily onto high culture forms rather than commercial productions such as populist, large-scale musicals. As Bourdieu argues,

> Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (1984: 6).

The *Reg* producers were able to make classifications—for instance, in their choice of companies to approach for sponsorship—and this 'expressed' a particular (high) taste and therefore a (high) class: tastes directly associated with high-profile bourgeois theatre.

The kind of taste classifications invoked by New Theatre and the *Season* group were not so much about expense or sophisticated products. Rather they concerned Patrick White's work, and, in particular, the intellectual nature of his plays. White is one of Australia's most revered writers. In his life he wrote eight plays, thirteen novels, two collections of short stories and one collection of poems, and in 1973 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. White's plays—the majority of which were written in the 1960s—explicitly challenged the genre of naturalism and therefore provoked mixed responses from the public. Akerholt acknowledges that White was '[t]he first Australian dramatist to offer a serious alternative to the naturalistic theatre in the 1960s', and that '[h]is plays were in the forefront of increasing innovation', from which future Australian playwrights emerged (1995: 638): 'Through a combination of vigorous vernacular and heightened poetic language, White created a new dramatic language and gave it life, colour and energy never previously experienced on the Australian stage' (638). White is renowned for his heightened prose, a style associated with an intellectual elite, and New Theatre and *Season* used White's intellectual reputation to locate themselves within a high cultural arena.

White's plays are not only considered intellectual but also left-wing. The *Season* practitioners—particularly Mary-Anne—were passionate about what they saw as White's critique of Australian middle classes of the 1950s, especially the emphasis on owning a home in suburbia and on raising

respectable children with respectable careers. In her programme note, Mary-Anne referred to this as White's comment on what it was to 'sit on the fence'; he was 'telling us' to 'Crash that fence, leap from it or climb carefully, but venture down into life'.[95] In Bourdieu's terms, the practitioners comprised an 'intellectual fraction' that 'expect [...] from the artist [in this case, White] a symbolic challenging of social reality and of the orthodox representation of it in "bourgeois" art' (1984: 295).

Moreover, White's plays are part of an Australian theatrical canon. *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (TSAS) premiered in 1962 at Union Theatre, Adelaide, by Adelaide University Theatre Guild and has seen revivals by the country's state theatre companies, thereby confirming it as an Australian classic. By producing a piece from such a canon, New Theatre was again establishing itself as a site of history and tradition. The practitioners in *Season* were doing serious, 'cultured' art and this further divorced them from amateur projects.

PART TWO
BODILY PRACTICE, REHEARSAL WORK AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

4.2.i Towards a Logic of Practice

As I have argued, the practitioners invoked discourses of 'community', 'professionalism' and 'prestige' as legitimising strategies in order to preserve and (re)create their positions within the field of Sydney theatre. However, these ideas not only operated at a broader level of discourse but also with respect to the very specific labours involved in rehearsing acts and scenes. The *Season* and *Reg* practitioners worked within ideas of what constituted 'New Theatre', 'Patrick White's plays', 'Newtown Theatre', 'Mardi Gras', and so on. They remained in a dynamic play between the minutiae of rehearsal practices and larger working contexts. The practitioners carried these contexts into rehearsals, and, in turn, the practitioners' ways of being

[95] See appendix 7 for full programme.

fed back into these contexts: that is, the practices that were framed as 'discovery' and 'making meaning' cannot be separated from the more overarching discourses and institutional contexts, for they are complicit in the continual (re)making of the field and of the organisations within which they are couched.

The competition and struggles of the theatre scene got played out in and through various agents: the theatre groups and practitioners embodied very particular ways of being. They expressed, in Bourdieu's terms, a specific habitus:[96]

> a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks (in Wacquant 1992: 18).

Importantly, for Bourdieu, the 'habitus' is located somewhere between social structures and human agency: that is, he actively problematises clear distinctions between objective structures and individual agency (behaviours, attitudes, and so forth). The 'habitus', or corporealised dispositions, function

> as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to obtain them. Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor (1990a: 53).

The issue here is one of agency and determinism: in the *Season* and *Reg* processes, the practitioners were not products of a larger social framework, nor were they free agents operating in a socio-historical cultural vacuum. Their ways of being—and, specifically, their ways of rehearsing—were intimately connected to, but not wholly determined by, the dynamics of the field. The practices and discourses were associated with what Wittgenstein

[96] Bourdieu is responsible for popularising this concept. It was first used by anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1973) to describe 'techniques of the body which are socially patterned' (Lindsay 1996: 198).

refers to as 'an environment of a way of acting' (in Jackson 1989: 126). In an effort to make sense of bodily practice in his work with the Kuanko people,[97] Michael Jackson draws on Bourdieu's 'habitus', suggesting that

> the regular or conventional character of these bodily practices is not necessarily the result of obedience to rules or conscious intentions but rather a consequence of ways people's bodies are informed by habits instilled within a shared environment (1989: 128).

Sydney theatre constituted an environment where practitioners shared specific ways of being, and, as I will argue, these dispositions were fed by and *fed back into* such an environment: in Bourdieu's words, the habitus is a 'generative matrix' (in Wacquant 1992: 19).

Implicit in Part One of this chapter, and what I wish to make explicit here, is that the discourses of 'community', 'professionalism' and 'prestige' were played out through, and were informed by, the *Season* and *Reg* practitioners. For instance, the *Season* practitioners' logics of practice included wearing second-hand clothes, wearing a lot of black, and gathering in doorways in small groups to smoke. All this was partly understood as being about 'community' and social activism. The *Reg* practitioners lined one windowsill of the rehearsal room with their mobile phones—seven or eight small black phones sat side by side—and this was partly framed as the practice of professional and high-profile directors and actors. The micropractices of these theatre artists—their behaviours from how they dressed to how they walked and talked—were intimately connected to the broader discourses of the theatre field. They not only expressed the legitimising strategies of the field but informed these strategies. Bourdieu is careful to stress the interconnectedness of this sociology: the concepts of 'field and habitus are relational [...] they function fully *only in relation to one another*' (Wacquant 1992: 19). Furthermore, as I shall argue, the rehearsal work itself—the practices understood as 'discovering' and 'making meaning'—was an expression of a specific set of

[97] This fieldwork was undertaken in Firawa, Sierra Leone, 1970.

ways of being. This 'habitus' reinforced and was reinforced by the broader legitimising discourses: community, professionalism, prestige.

4.2.ii Authorship: (Embodying) International Standing and Cultural Consecration

The discourse of 'discovering the meaning'; the rigorous practice of observing dialogue and stage directions; the discourse of remaining loyal to the playwright; and the acting practice understood as 'finding character'; all were invariably linked to the status of the two playwrights. New Theatre and Esoteric Entertainment deployed the issues of status in particular ways: the *Season* group collapsed an idea of White's intellectual standing with a certain prestige; the *Reg* process coupled an idea of Elyot's reputation in the United Kingdom with belonging to an international, cosmopolitan theatre community.

The *Season* practitioners framed White as an authentic poet who might speak through the actors: they would become conduits for the lines. Consider the following exchange which took place after the first read-through:

Jacqui: 'You play GIRLIE very well.'
Lyn: 'Oh, the part reads itself.'

Here Lyn effaced her own agency by figuring herself as a vessel for White's poetry. At the first rehearsal, after the read-through, Mary-Anne said to the cast, "I was surprised at how it [the script] moved off the page when you read it". And throughout rehearsals, she would sometimes sigh and shake her head softly whenever they encountered what she thought was an especially beautiful few lines of dialogue. Moreover, these lines had to remain intact (recall Mary-Anne's "We'll do the play now") and the stage directions observed ("Patrick has given you a laugh and rolling a cigarette"). By producing such a great Australian classic play—a play considered quite

intellectual—New Theatre was once again distancing itself from amateur community performance.

Season and New Theatre positioned White in terms of what Potts describes as the 'absent' playwright. Potts, in her study of rehearsal practice in Australia, noticed several circulating discourses surrounding the sacrosanct nature of the playwright's work. She argues that common ideas surrounding authorship

> come from the mainstage concentration on classics and 'canonised' texts, or texts from overseas—from a glut of cases where the playwright is invariably absent. But their absence is not just the raison d'etre of these statements; it is often a condition for their perpetuation and for the various myths they encompass (1995: 41).

Patrick White died in 1990 and was therefore literally absent from the *Season* process. Due to his position as a canonised writer, his text was treated with a sort of religiosity. Leigh Rowney pointed out that the number of people who auditioned for *Season* was unusually high, and this was primarily due to what he termed the 'quality' of the playtext. During *Season*, there was an emphasis on understanding—*discovering*—the meaning behind White's poetic language, and Mary-Anne very much became the link between the playwright and the rest of the practitioners; she was certainly the most learned and this imbued her with the ability to decipher White's work. As Potts writes, 'the text [...] carries a privileged status and [directors] appear to be cementing a bond with the absent playwright or at least a special relationship with the text' (1995: 43). A significant means by which Mary-Anne manifested this bond was by calling White 'Patrick' throughout rehearsals (the only practitioner to do so).[98] Her director's note in the programme included the following: 'All this has shown us there is no sitting on the fence with Patrick (as he has become affectionately known to us). And that's the way he liked it.' Moreover, at the start of rehearsals, she provided the cast with a list of the play's issues; Mary-Anne's sheet was

[98]This is reminiscent of director Stafford-Clark's *Letters to George* (1989) in which he keeps a journal of his direction of George Farquar's *The Recruiting Officer*. Stafford-Clark assembled the document as letters to the (dead) playwright, and he begins each entry

literally a mediation between the 'playtext' and everyone else. In this way, White's absence involved a very particular presence during rehearsals.

In many ways, the *Reg* process was more fraught in terms of 'authorship' simply because of Elyot's involvement from London and his actual presence in Sydney on opening night. Being 'loyal' to Elyot's work was intimately connected to Esoteric Entertainment's labour to position themselves as part of an international theatre community. The producers and director were in regular contact with Elyot, not least in requesting permission for minor textual changes. While Peter (producer and actor) laboured to embody the bond between Elyot and the other practitioners, Tony also developed his own relationship with the playwright. Peter referred to 'Kevin' from the start of rehearsals, and delivered messages from Elyot to the cast and from the cast to Elyot (for instance, he faxed a 'Good Luck' note for Elyot's premiere in the West End of his latest play). Tony also began referring to his own communication with 'Kevin': for instance, "I'll cut it if Kevin doesn't want it". This relationship with the playwright sometimes culminated in firm exchanges between Tony and Peter as to decision-making in rehearsals ("It's *his* play"). Unlike *Season*, in which Mary-Anne could quite uncontestedly invoke a strong bond with White, Elyot was still alive and could communicate with anyone.

For Esoteric Entertainment and the *Reg* production, the English accents, the reinstating of the English colloquialisms, the 'clocking' of the stage directions, the cutting of the added line for Steven, were all part of this negotiation about being seen to be in close relationship to a London theatre scene. Much to the chagrin of the producers, the Newtown *Reg* production was not the Australian premiere, as a theatre group in Melbourne had performed the play a number of years earlier. However, Peter informed me that he had heard the Melbourne production was not very good and that Elyot's sister saw it and did not like it. Here Peter was once again working to position Esoteric Entertainment as the legitimate new theatre group

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with 'Dear George'.

operating within a high-profile international arena, and in doing so he distanced his partnership with Tregaskis from younger, less experienced, lower-profile theatre groups.

4.2.iii Being a Professional With Proper Training

The idea of 'discovering character' and 'discovering self' was, for the *Season* group especially, couched within a broader idea of professionalism: 'discovering character and self' constituted 'real' acting. 'Discovery' was the most prominent discourse used during *Season*, with one third of the rehearsal hours spent at the table discussing the script. The practitioners engaged in this psychologised practice: it was their job to know about people and emotions, about characters' 'truths' and psychological depths. And it was their job to know about themselves (note, for example, the sensitivity with which the Denise (NOLA) and Mark (MASSON) scene was approached). The centrality of this discourse, and the practitioners' association of professional acting, was demonstrated in the way that the director and actors were comfortable working in this paradigm from the very start: there was no hesitation before they were all getting on with what they saw was the right way to work.

In the *Season* process, the notion of 'discovery' as 'real' and 'legitimate' acting was similarly reflected in the way that it was explicitly foregrounded over other dimensions of production. The practitioners did not encounter such elements as the set design (or even the exact spatial dimensions), the costumes, or the props they would use until well into rehearsals. Rather than framing this in terms of, say, the production being poorly resourced due to budget constraints, the practitioners understood that their work required discovering meanings from the playtext—a practice that merely required a director, actors and a script—and therefore these very concrete design elements of performance were often treated throughout rehearsals as

extraneous and merely present to help realise the poetry. The move from the rehearsal room to the theatre might be described as a transposition: the practitioners transpose their work onto the stage proper. Following the musical analogy, this implies that the *key* shifts while the *intervals*—the *relationships*—remain the same. However, in *Season*, creating precise stage-dimensions was not necessarily a straightforward process. Two weeks into rehearsals, the floor-tape in the rehearsal room was shifted. The rehearsal room is not as wide as the New Theatre stage and Mary-Anne decided to forfeit the lane running between two of the houses in favour of exact house-dimensions. There was no lane in rehearsals so the actors just walked along the masking tape and were unable to develop a sense of space—How wide is the lane? How might I walk or run down it?—until the production moved into the theatre. Once in the theatre, the actors' *activation* of the stage space was compelling to watch. This was clearly demonstrated with Steve (ROY) and Jacqui's (PIPPY) use of the POGSON stairs on the set. In the script, ROY tells PIPPY that they should 'push off' from Sarsaparilla. In the dress rehearsals, as Steve delivered the line, he literally put one foot on the second stair and pushed off from it. This movement could only have been developed on the set with real stairs. Similarly, PIPPY says she will fly away from Mildred street, and on this line Jacqui began using the stairs to leap and jump up from. Mary-Anne was so aware of how important it was for the actors to get a feel for the set in the theatre that, as soon as the actors entered the theatre for the first time, she said "Go on and play in your houses—go *on*". However, this emphasis was virtually absent throughout most of the process. Two weeks into rehearsals, Simon Shaw and Sylvia Jagtman presented the set and costume designs respectively. This presentation took place after the first run-through of Act One. That is, the actors were expected to physicalise a fictional logic without seeing the set design or explicitly discussing and experimenting with how they might use the space. Similarly, they were developing physicalisations of characters that may not accommodate what was to be the costume they would wear. The deferring of any explicit discussion about set, costume or props was not in order for the actors to inform the development of these areas—they were

not consulted about any domain—but rather, rehearsals operated within an implicit assumption that if the actor thoroughly understood the character's psychology, then this would manifest in all the sign-systems of performance. *And*, importantly, this was framed as the real rehearsal work and was used by the practitioners to distinguish themselves from amateur performance groups who might not be aware of character psychology and motivation.

The *Season* practitioners did not invoke 'meaning making' discourses to the same extent as Tony and the *Reg* actors, and this was because for them it did not constitute what professional practitioners *do*. For Mary-Anne and the *Season* cast, 'real' rehearsals—the kind of rehearsals that are 'professional' rather than 'amateur'—involve discovering meanings in poetic playscripts, and discovering the psychologies of characters and actors. Prior to tech-week, a '*making* meaning' discourse was virtually absent from rehearsals, and when it was invoked, there was almost a sense of embarrassment that their practice in this way might in fact efface the real practice: *discovering* meaning. For the practitioners, prior to tech-week, framing rehearsal work as constructing a show was associated with amateurism.[99]

The *Reg* group approached 'discovery' in much more of a shorthand way. They did not invoke it as much as the *Season* practitioners—they did not spend as much time 'finding' characters—and, rather than frame it as 'professional' they understood it far more in terms of having received appropriate (legitimate) acting training. The practitioners did not operate within a set of propositional knowledges—declarative knowings—but rather within a paradigm of embodied, craft knowledge where knowledges circulated fluidly in and amongst rehearsals. The practitioners in both *Season* and *Reg* (overtly) came from a range of trainings and experiences.

[99] During tech-week, however, the practitioners more explicitly spoke of manipulating props, the set, etc., and here they associated a construction of the production in terms of the New Theatre community pulling together. As previously mentioned, the practitioners took on one another's roles especially towards the end of the rehearsal process (I was even asked to help out with the lighting plot).

For instance, not all of them had come through formal training institutions, and yet, despite this, rehearsals saw a shared language and shared practices. During the rehearsals for *Reg* I was especially aware of the extraordinary shorthand used between practitioners. Technical acting *terms*—'beats', 'objectives'—and *phrases*—'You need to earn that beat'—circulated in the sessions and people seemed to understand exactly what was meant. When I commented to Tony about this, he responded, "It's a NIDA thing". There are two ideas working here: firstly, that there is a 'thing'—in this case, a set of discourses and doings—that was recognisably 'NIDA'; and secondly, that although only three of the six *Reg* actors actually attended NIDA, Tony was able to umbrella *all* of them under this 'thing'. The 'thing-ness' to which Tony referred (partly) involved a specific actor training provided by the National Institute of Dramatic Art, arguably the most prestigious drama school in the country.

In *Reg*, the 'discovery' shorthand was used as a marker of distinction to signal the exclusive acting schooling. When Tony asked the actors to 'sharpen that line', 'earn that beat', 'shorten the vowels', when he told Sean to give the line to Steven, when he asked succinct questions about the script ("What is this Act about?"), he did not offer any further explanation of the direction: these terms, and the particular approach to acting, was assumed knowledge, not only by Tony but by the other practitioners also. These practitioners similarly understood their 'making meaning' practice in terms of creating a slick, 'professional' production, again signalling a specific training. The directions from Tony often concerned the minutiae of an actor's delivery or physicality (or both), and this level of detail was associated with making the production 'perfect'. During one rehearsal, Tony even said, "Let's be absolutely perfect". Here the practitioners' discourses of 'making meaning' were directly linked to the construction of high cultural product.

Ironically, as the producers laboured to establish this production as 'elite', there was also the strong sense of a stretched budget. The cast and crew worked in a school classroom as opposed to a 'proper' studio, the heat at

times was almost unbearable and there was a constant sense that this rehearsal space was somehow makeshift. Peter and Felix relied on mobile phones to do business, so rather than there being an established desk or office from which to produce the show, the producers wandered around with phones pressed to their ears trying to find the best mobile reception. Marco (assistant stage manager) set up a lap-top computer to one side of the classroom and would pack it up at the end of each day. Initially Murray (designer) undertook costume fittings in a corner of the room—actors would literally exit the stage space and move over to the side to be measured up before walking back on for the next entrance—before the producers secured an extra classroom opposite. The school toilets were fairly basic, with graffiti and a certain institutional aesthetic and smell. And, as previously noted, whenever anyone wanted to be let into the building, they had to shout up to the classroom windows so that someone could go downstairs and unlock the door. Even more specifically, this tight budget was manifest in the urgency of the rehearsal process as Tony and the actors spent twenty-one days working at a remarkable speed. Importantly, however, rather than understanding this rushed work in terms of very particular budget conditions, it was framed as the natural nature of rehearsals: this is what it is to rehearse a show. And, rather than vying for more rehearsal time, the emphasis, in many ways, was on Tony's quick directions and the actors' abilities to manifest physical shifts in their bodies. For the practitioners, this work was about producing a polished performance.

While not all the practitioners in *Season* and *Reg* had undergone rigorous institutional training, they had developed practices and knowledges by working with other artists and by attending less formal acting classes. In Bourdieu's terms, these practitioners were expressing a particular habitus that had been instilled through previous experiences: an 'infraconscious mastery that agents acquire of their social world by way of durable immersion within it' (Wacquant 1992: 19). Knowledge and training circulates inside *and outside* formal training institutions. As I suggested in Chapter One, Maxwell (2001) refers to this as professional craft knowledge.

He points out that due to Australia's short rehearsal periods (the *Season* process was seven weeks part-time while the *Reg* process was just under four weeks), and because of practitioners' contract-based employment, professional craft knowledges 'circulate as shorthands, facilitating the verbal, textual, physical and spatial negotiations constituting the work of rehearsal' (2001: 102). In this way, the set of practices and shorthands Tony attributed as the 'NIDA thing' circulated in and amongst working contexts: while Peter and Anthony had not trained at NIDA, Tony had worked with them on several occasions. These actors learnt particular knowledges 'on the job'. It would have been in these actors' best interests to 'accumulate experience and skills' (Maxwell 2001: 102) in order to secure re-employment by Tony or by other NIDA-oriented directors. The *Season* working practice was less systematised than the *Reg* process. This process had far less technical language, which was not surprising considering how only a few practitioners had worked with one another before. However, they all segmented the script, created and discussed characters' psychologies, and developed believable people. This shared knowledge can be partially accounted for by the fact that, while most of the *Season* actors had not undergone formal training, most of them had experienced trainings of sorts. Maxwell makes the point that many actors 'find themselves teaching classes to each other, further contracting the circle of pedagogic reinforcement' (102). Here more formally trained actors will in fact train other actors in less formal settings: for instance, local community courses, and even classes to teach would-be actors how to 'get into' drama school.[100]

Thus to recall an earlier argument: rather than understanding these rehearsal knowledges as born out of a theory—as born from *An Actor Prepares* or *Building a Character*—they are better conceptualised as partial and piecemeal practices circulating in practical contexts. Michael Jackson, in an effort to rescue the logics of bodily practice from a framework of purely

[100]Currently there is a company in Sydney called RE: ACTOR comprised of NIDA graduates who teach people how to audition for (and, with luck, be accepted into) one of the major acting schools in Australia.

propositional knowledge, suggests that: 'the meaning of practical knowledge lies in what is accomplished through it, not in what conceptual order may be said to underlie or precede it' (1996: 34). One of the things that got accomplished in rehearsals through the practice of practical knowledge was a rearticulation of what constitutes 'professional acting' and 'proper training'.

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The argument of this chapter has been as follows: New Theatre (*Season*) and Esoteric Entertainment (*Reg*) operated within a field of theatre in Sydney. They had particular funding structures and histories within the Sydney theatre scene, and these conditions were framed by the practitioners in very specific ways. The *Season* and *Reg* groups worked to label and shape these conditions in terms of cultural capital as they competed for institutional legitimation. New Theatre used ideas of 'egalitarian community', 'professionalism' and 'intellectual prestige' to define its place; Esoteric Entertainment used discourses of 'international community', 'experienced professionalism' and 'high cultural product'. Importantly, these classification and definition struggles were also related to the daily practice of rehearsal work: that is, practices of 'discovery' and 'making meaning' were caught up with notions of the status of the two playwrights, with what it was to be a professional practitioner, and what it was to have proper training.

This goes some way to account for why the *Reg* group were more inclined to use meaning-making discourses than their *Season* counterparts, and why the actors in neither process were remotely infantilised: the practitioners were simply doing what good actors and directors do. The final chapter of this thesis seeks to account for all this work—all the strategies, classifications, interpretations, tiny fragments of rehearsal, full run-throughs of scenes, and so on—at the level of embodiment. The labour involved in

the *Season* and *Reg* processes was grounded in specific embodied states: as Maxwell argues, participation in a particular scene or community 'is sustained by an intensity of affect' (2003: 181). It is to this 'intensity of affect' that I now turn.

chapter five

Feeling the Right Impulse: Making, and Being Made By, the World

5.0 Introduction

If every event which occurred could be given a name,
there would be no need for stories. As things are here,
life outstrips our vocabulary.

—John Berger, *Once in Europa*[101]

The final chapter of this thesis begins with a story.

On a Wednesday in January, fifteen minutes before lunch, the *Reg* practitioners were rehearsing Act Two of the show. The summer heat had already filled the classroom by the time they began work at 10am, so by now, it had seeped deeply into everyone. Sweaty clothes stuck to large male bodies and shoes and socks were discarded to the sides of the playing area. We could smell and taste this heat. Act Two, set once more in GUY'S apartment, involved friends gathered after a funeral. According to the practitioners, the tone of the performance required a dramatic shift between the first two acts, and Tony, Steven, Graham, Jonathon and Anthony had spent hours working on the first section of this middle Act. Relationships between characters became clearer as they all ensured that there was a shared understanding as to how each character felt about the others

They were about to 'take it from the top' when Tony said to the cast, "Just an acting exercise. Can I hear all your inner monologues". Without further prompting, the four actors put their heads down and began whispering, as if speaking to themselves. An 'inner monologue', in Stanislavskian terms and in the way it was being invoked here, refers to the running commentary inside a character's head, the inner psychology, the subtext a

character is feeling at any particular moment. The actors—Steven, Graham, Jonathon and Anthony—settled their gazes on a space in front of themselves and spoke softly for a minute or so. The four of them, with sticky clothes and flushed faces, at four different parts of the stage space, seemed suspended in time: the whole room seem suspended in time. Even the traffic noise outside became a misty, rolling wash of sound. It was almost like a collective incantation. I could not make out what any individual was saying, and Tony himself did not seem concerned in discerning specific voices. The importance, it seemed, was that the performers had found exactly what was going on inside their characters. The effect in the room was quite intense. As they whispered, I felt uncomfortable watching, so I also lowered my head; the echoes here of a prayer did not escape me.

Then, as the voices continued, Tony quietly told them to start the scene. For a moment, the room became silent before the first line of dialogue, and we all shared a stillness. As the actors ran the first section, everything about their movements was so nuanced and refined and deliberate. Their deliveries were focussed and understated and 'real'. There was a depth and meaningfulness to each exchange. It really felt as if something had been divined or discovered deep within each actor. During this small section of rehearsal, we all felt the shift. The onlookers (Tony, Bridget, Marcus, the other two actors, and myself) did not move a muscle. I had the sense that to *breathe* might damage or interrupt the perfection of the scene. Once it felt as if the actors needed further direction—a dropped line, an awkward movement—Tony broke the flow and then turned to me and grinned: we both knew, *we all recognised*, that the actors had—that we all had—collectively *found* something special.

Rehearsal notes from the ***Reg*** *process*
Kate Rossmanith, 1998

As I have previously argued, the various discourses of the theatre scene in Sydney—those involving 'community', 'professionalism' and 'prestige'—were invoked as explanations and authentications for the theatre work that the practitioners engaged in. Furthermore, the work on acts and scenes—those processes that got called 'discovering' or 'making meaning'—were intimately connected to these broader discourses. The practitioners were instituting their interpretations of what constituted real theatre and real theatre-making. This chapter argues that these struggles were grounded in embodied states.

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[101] Quoted in Jackson (1996: i).

When practitioners 'discovered' meaning in the script, 'discovered' characters' traits and motivations, and when they 'constructed' their performances, these were not merely discursive tropes but operated as bodily experiences. Recall Zarrilli's point: 'a practice is not a discourse, but implicit in any practice are one or more discourses and perhaps paradigms through which the experience of practice might be reflected upon and possibly explained' (1998: 5). The point here is that the labelling of practices and experiences comes after the fact. Something was felt that then enabled a practitioner to say "I've discovered meaning" or "I'm manipulating this moment". In Maxwell's (2003) terms, this is where the discursive account is in fact preceded and grounded by the affective dimension of performances.

The practitioners' talk was grounded in real sensations. The experience of the theatre practitioners—and, in fact, this account of two rehearsal processes—cannot rest completely on an analysis of a set of discursive formations; Michael Jackson offers an important cautionary note: the lived subject must not be 'dissolved' into discourse (1989: 1). It is for this reason that, once more, an ethnographic approach is so fundamental. Ethnography not only advocates researching working practices on the social agents' own terms—with the practitioners' own definitions and categorisations of what it is that they do—but it recognises that the frameworks within which agents understand the world also act at the level of embodiment. For, when I study the interpretations of cultural agents (the *Reg* actors discovered 'subtexts'), this not only concerns what gets said but also the affective states that precede what gets said.

During rehearsals, the talk of discovering meaning and character, and of constructing a show, would often slip into what 'felt right' or 'good'; there was a sense—in the very literal sense of 'sense'—that the practitioners 'got it', that they had discovered the meaning or had moved in the right way. This chapter turns to the affective dimension of rehearsal work: it investigates what it is that gets felt by the practitioners, what is involved in feeling the 'right' feelings, and how these feelings are produced.

PART ONE
SPARKING THE ACTOR'S INVENTIVENESS

5.1.i A Call to 'Feel Right'

This chapter opened with an account of a rehearsal where practitioners felt that they had found the 'right' way to play the scene, and this discovery was located as a 'feeling right' thing. As a way to explore this further, the following section considers moments in rehearsal where in fact these 'right' feelings were not always so easily produced: the existence of 'right' or 'good' feelings implies the existence of 'wrong' feelings also, and a discussion of one invariably includes a discussion of the other.

Consider the following account from my rehearsal notes for *Reg*:

During a rehearsal of Act Two of *My Night With Reg*, Peter plays DANIEL who has just attended the funeral of his lover, REG. Tony interrupts a run saying to Peter 'I can't see the link.. I can't see the thought process'. He refers to the delivery of the lines:

JOHN: How are you?
DANIEL: Marvellous. I've just cremated my dead lover. What a fucking nightmare!
JOHN: Yeah.
Beat
DANIEL: Thanks for going to the hospital. I'm sure he appreciated it.

Tony explained that he could not make sense of Peter's line 'Thanks for going to the hospital'. He needed to see, *physically*, what was going on inside Peter/DANIEL during that *beat*. He needed to see—visually, *corporeally*—the subtext of the link between Peter/DANIEL'S two thoughts.

Here was a case where the actor felt something but the director did not. Peter understood exactly what had to happen: the psychological link he had discovered for DANIEL'S lines—the link that he felt—had to be made more physically manifest so that Tony—and, by extension, the audience—could feel it as well.

At times the directors—Tony and Mary-Anne—very explicitly urged the actors to 'feel' things within themselves, however these directions were not necessarily productive for the practitioners. At the end of the first day of rehearsal for *Reg*, Tony introduced a rehearsal technique that he planned to use throughout the coming weeks. He asked Steven and Graham to get onto the floor where he demonstrated an acting exercise involving 'throwing' each line of dialogue to one another, "until the impulse seems right" he said. For instance, Graham delivered JOHN'S first line to Steven, 'Am I early?', and then Steven repeated the line but addressed it back to Graham, 'Are you early?'. Then Graham tried it with a different inflection, 'Am I early?'. This to-ing and fro-ing continued until Steven 'felt' that Graham's 'impulse' to say the line 'seemed right' in which case Steven would move onto his own line of dialogue and the exercise would continue. After about ten minutes of this, Tony explained to the actors that they were "resolving reactions to lines", that they were feeling the right impulse to respond to the previous line of dialogue. Tony encouraged Steven and Graham to feel the 'right-ness' of their lines, and the assumption was that if they felt it, we, the spectators, would feel it too.

However, the exercise was soon abandoned. Tony introduced it in the last twenty minutes of Day One of rehearsals, and the practitioners took it up for the first twenty minutes of Day Two, but, after that, it was never used or referred to again. It was clear that Tony, Steven, and Graham were frustrated with the impulse work. Tony spent a long time explaining it, but when Steven and Graham tried to do it they stammered over lines and forgot whose line was whose. Sometimes Tony interrupted to remind them of their lines, and he even told them when to move to the following line: rather than waiting for the actors to feel something, he just pushed on. (I could not help but wonder how Tony thought he could rehearse the entire play this way as it took forty minutes to cover five or six lines of dialogue.) Tony expected that the actors would feel impulses sooner than they did, and Steven and Graham were visibly confused by the exercise as they were unsure of what exactly they were supposed to feel. After a cigarette break on the morning of Day Two,

the practitioners re-entered the rehearsal room and the exercise was abandoned without comment. Similarly, during the *Season* rehearsals, Mary-Anne sometimes told the actors to get up from the table and go to the floor to "see what you find". For instance, after a run-through of Act One, she told them, "One of the things that struck me is finding an ease in the yard. A lot of stuff happens in the POGSON yard". This 'finding' was understood as a 'finding' in their bodily presence and movements. Mary-Anne specifically urged the actors to get up and move. However, throughout rehearsals and performances, the actors, despite Mary-Anne's regular reminders, never really did seem entirely comfortable in that part of the stage.

For Susan Letzler Cole, this work constitutes 'the seeming false starts and important wrong paths' of rehearsal (2001: xiii). And yet, among these 'false starts' and 'wrong paths', what constitutes 'feeling right' and 'feeling wrong'?

5.1.ii Accessing Original Impulses

In the last few pages I have touched on the *Reg* actors' discovery of their characters' subtexts, Mary-Anne's idea of walking through a scene to see what the actors 'find', and Tony's exercise using one actor's delivery to force another actor's delivery. All these practices reflect a conceptualising of the actor as a site of potential energy that simply requires a sudden surge of power to initiate it. This is a familiar trope in writings on theatre rehearsal. Cole describes the actor as needing a 'jumper cable' to "jolt" his/her 'awareness of subtextual possibilities' (1995: 21), and Goorney writes how the actor might use specific ideas to 'spark his [sic] own inventiveness' (1966: 103). This 'jolting' and 'sparking' is located deep within the actor's body. Graham and Steven were expected to locate impulses deep inside them; actors in *Season* were expected to allow the scene to generate deep intuitive practice. Again, this is common in rehearsal literature: Blau writes of a rehearsal process where the actors experimented with particular actions that came 'unpredictably (and absurdly) from the lower depths' (1963: 126),

and Brook writes of the dangers of clogging original impulses (1988: 82), that is, obstructing the flow of energy that comes from deep within.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the rehearsal spaces—the actual places where the practitioners rehearsed—directly mirrored this very particular figuring of the actors. In order to access or generate these 'right' moments, practitioners created appropriate rehearsal conditions—safe, carefully circumscribed spaces—where actors' 'impulses' and 'intuition' could be accessed. In the case of both *Season* and *Reg*, the rehearsal building was locked and the rehearsal room was situated upstairs, tucked away. There were a number of 'barriers' or check points we had to move through in order to gain access. Even locating the entrance to the rehearsal buildings themselves was ambiguous. Inside the rooms themselves, careful attention was given to who was present at any moment. For instance, while I had cleared permission from Mary-Anne to attend rehearsal sessions for *Season*, I had not spoken to the cast collectively about my 'role' there. Consequently, some of the actors approached Mary-Anne who then asked me to address the cast about my work. They wanted to know exactly my interest in their practice and exactly what I was writing. Subsequently I was careful to speak with everyone at the first *Reg* rehearsal to avoid repeated awkwardness, although, of course, the scenes between Graham and Sean were closed: here an already circumscribed space was further bounded and defined. As Cole writes, 'To observe directors and actors in rehearsal is clearly a delicate undertaking, it can be perceived as an intrusion upon, and even a repression of, the conditions necessary to rehearsal (risk-taking, spontaneity, intimacy)' (1995: 3). Similarly, when I asked one Sydney director her attitudes towards rehearsal documentation, she responded "I am very careful who I let into rehearsals. We need a space to take risks". In Cole's observation, the Sydney director's attitude, and in the *Season* and *Reg* rehearsals, there was a distinct correlation between the safe rehearsal room and the risky discovery of character and self. In my fieldwork, it became clear that these private rehearsal spaces created

conditions where actors could take risks, by accessing their own 'well of creativity' in order to discover and create their characters.

Ultimately, this particular conceptualising of the practitioners was associated with experiences that felt pre-lingual. This is why rehearsal work dissolved into what felt 'right' or 'good', as practitioners could only account for their labours at the level of embodiment and affect. For Zarrilli, the directions provided by Tony and Mary-Anne (to find subtexts, and so on) would constitute moments where the actor's mind is effaced 'in favour of the body-of-impulses'. This, Zarrilli argues, simply reinscribes Cartesian dualism 'in the form of an overly simplistic and monolithic subjectivity often described as the actor's "presence", or as an "organic" or "natural" state of being' (1995: 15).[102] Tony and Mary-Anne's directions were, if not explicitly then at least implicitly, tied to ideas of the natural body and releasing natural responses. If they simply had to be natural, why, then, did the practitioners 'feel right' only some of the time? What was happening when one party felt right and others didn't? Who decides what feels right and by what authority?

5.1.iii Towards the 'Meaning' of Performance

A formalist analysis is not enough to enable the spectator—or, in this case, the researcher—to make distinctions between scenes or moments in rehearsal are 'right' or 'good' and those that are something else. It is not possible to develop an appraisal of the performative features—ungrounded in any explicit socio-cultural, historical and institutional contexts—of the *Reg* inner monologues and the 'impulse work' of Steven and Graham to adduce a verifiable conclusion as to the material difference between one exercise (or rehearsal moment) and another. As Maxwell argues, '[a]ssessment... is not made in a semiotic vacuum' (2003: 181). What is being critiqued here is a formalist semiotic paradigm. However, a different order of semiotics is potentially productive in thinking about the practitioners' work. In order to

[102] A similar argument is proposed by Copeland (1990) who uses a Derridean framework in order to critique the reification of an actor's presence.

explore this further, it is useful to briefly consider the role of performance analysis within the discipline of Performance Studies. For it is in the various models of performance analysis proposed over the last twenty years that semiotic frameworks for theatre have been comprehensively investigated.

In her article, 'Performance Analysis: Theory and Practice' (1998b), Gay McAuley reviews the performance analysis literature of the last two decades, and, importantly, teases out the different agendas at work in a number of approaches. These approaches include showing what performance consists of by listing its elements (Kowzan), modelling the (ideal) spectator's process (Fisher-Lichte; Martin and Sauter), foregrounding a pedagogical agenda (Pavis), and exploring factors that condition the spectator's reading (Ubersfeld). All the aforementioned approaches rest on the assumption that spectators in the theatre are always in a process of making meaning—of engaging with the formal properties of performance. However, these theorists differ in the extent to which they recognise how these properties are socially and culturally embedded (for instance, Kowzan is perhaps the least explicit on this front while, at the other end, Ubersfeld starts to address the social project of any performance analysis). Implicit in these models is that the very categories and taxonomies of performance characteristics—of 'space', 'movement', and so on—are themselves products of specific social worlds. They are not necessary, a priori, 'neutral' elements or lists. As Shevtsova notes, 'Makers of theatre are not [...] recipients of desocialized "laws", "structures", or "systems of signification", which are presumed [...] to be immanent in aesthetic forms' (1989a: 32).

Rather than attempting to approach the 'formal qualities' of the *Season* and *Reg* scenes in the semiotic terms suggested by some of the above frameworks—that is, investigating how different elements necessarily worked together to create 'meaning'—these scenes need to be thought about in terms of an explicit socio-cultural project, and, specifically, a very present interpretive community (Weber 1987): the practitioners made

sense of their work in particular ways. McAuley is interested in this shift. She writes:

> I prefer to see the theatrical event as a dynamic process of communication in which the spectators are vitally implicated, one that forms part of a series of interconnected processes of socially situated signification and communication, for theatre exists within a culture that it helps to construct, and it is the product of a specific work process (1999: 7).

Similarly, Shevtsova suggests that there needs to be a 'reformulation of signs, for example, via a concept of social semiotics which holds that social signs are made by someone to someone in an *exchange* of meaning in concrete situations allowing the creation of *meaning*' (1989a: 32). This shift from a more formalist semiotics towards a social semiotics is exactly Geertz's project in his essay, 'Art As a Cultural System'. He specifically critiques aesthetic formalism (and the associated varieties of semiotics) which attempts 'to create a technical language capable of representing the internal relations of myths, poems, dances, or melodies in abstract, transposable terms' (1983: 95). As he argues, 'exposing the structure of a work of art and accounting for its impact are not the same thing' (118). Instead, he turns to what he calls 'an ethnography of the vehicles of meaning' (118) by which he investigates a number of cultural worlds, including the art that comes out of, or, rather, is part of, those worlds, and examines how this art is made to mean things in these communities. He argues:

> It is, after all, not just the statues [or, in my case, performances] that we have to do with but the factors that cause these things to seem important—that is, affected with import—to those who make or possess them, and these are various as life itself (119).

In the same way, Maxwell argues that a performance analysis can be useful to the extent that, for social agents—or an interpretive community—'"meaning", or "worth" will be ascribed to particular, identifiable [performance] features' (2003: 181). In this way, then, it is possible to tease out characteristics of the two rehearsal exercises and associated

scenework—the *Reg* monologues and the *Reg* impulse work—as characteristics that were meaning*ful* for the practitioners. This will lead us closer to determining the grounds for which claims to 'feeling right' are made.

1.4 Interpreting Performance Features

This section offers a brief performance appraisal of, firstly, the opening of Act Two (following the *Reg* monologues) and, secondly, the exchange following the impulse work. Here I specifically address the details that the practitioners understood as being constitutive of 'good' or 'right' work (in the first instance) and 'wrong' feelings (in the second instance).

Once the actors had finished whispering their inner monologues, they immediately began to run Act Two, scene one. Anthony was sitting on the couch (centre stage), Graham was in the armchair (downstage left), Steven stood downstage right, and Jonathon was standing upstage centre. All four actors had their eyes lowered at the start of the scene and there was a prolonged silence. Jonathon/BERNIE looked up, flicked his head, eyes darting around the room, and began speaking (he talks of ERIC'S work on GUY'S conservatory):

BERNIE: Nice. Very nice. He's a good little worker. This is the year, Benny, for our conservatory. Adds thousands, you know. I saw a very smart one in a magazine. Reasonable, too. Lots of stained glass—not too garish, but not dull, either—and garlands moulded all the way around with the odd cherub and bird dotted here and there. Very smart, it was, with a fountain in the middle. Did I show it to you, Benny?

As Jonathon spoke, his pace became quicker and the delivery louder, and his gestures more flamboyant. None of the others moved, except for Steven/GUY who raised his head slightly in order to make eye contact with Jonathon. Anthony/BENNY and Graham/JOHN kept completely still. When Jonathon finally directed a question to Anthony/BENNY, Anthony/BENNY

paused for a split second, took a long intake of breath, remained motionless, and replied 'Yeah', in an overemphasised, drawn-out way, much like the deep vibrating horn of a large truck. There was another long pause while no-one moved, and Jonathon/BERNIE broke the silence with the next line:

BERNIE: I like the sound of water. Very relaxing.

Another silence followed before Steven/GUY lifted his chest, shuffled his feet slightly, and offered 'Nuts?' as a way to break the awkwardness of characters' exchanges.

Tony interrupted this run once the actors began moving around the stage space. He suggested that they needed very specific blocking directions in order to continue to shape the material. However, until Tony's interruption, everyone had 'felt' that the scene had been performed perfectly. They had 'got it'. According to them, they had managed to convey the melancholy of the funeral wake, the difficult relationship between BERNIE and BENNY, and the uncomfortable atmosphere. The 'success' of this run came down to the actors knowing their characters' psychologies intimately; this was manifest, according to the practitioners, in the pauses and silences, by the stillness, and by the extremely slow pace.

Now to the earlier scene between Graham and Steven. Recall the impulse work: these two actors threw lines of dialogue to one another, repeating the same line 'until the impulse seemed right', when they could then proceed to the next line. Tony asked the actors to run the first little section of the scene, trying to incorporate some of what they had found in the exercise. Steven (downstage left) and Graham (downstage right) stood 2-3 metres apart. Graham was slightly hunched, with his bodyweight rested on one leg; his head was bowed, which forced him to raise his eyebrows and push his face out slightly in order to meet Steven's gaze. Graham/JOHN began, 'Am I early?', in a low voice, with the inflection falling instead of rising (a result of

the English accent). Steven's embodiment was more flighty, with fidgety fingers and quick movements. He paused, shook his head and said 'No'. Graham/JOHN slowly and deliberately replied 'I couldn't remember what time you said'. And Steven/GUY, after another pause, said 'You're not, really'.

Tony stopped the scene. It wasn't 'working'. Instead of there being a consensual feeling among the practitioners that they had 'got it', Steven and Graham turned to Tony and waited for advice. According to Tony, the actors were not 'feeding off' one another enough and therefore there was no 'impulse' to say the dialogue. The scene had silence, pauses, stillness, and the two actors thought that they 'knew' the psychologies of the two characters, however neither the actors nor Tony 'felt' as if the exchange had been 'natural'.

What I am pointing to here is that the very same performance features 'can be "read" to opposite effect' (Maxwell 2003: 182). Both of the scene-runs had many of the same ingredients, however this did not make them meaningful in the same way: for the interpretive community, one run felt right and the other didn't. Because of my own experience in theatre, and because of my involvement in this rehearsal process, I similarly had the experience of one scene 'working' and the other not feeling right. Moreover, the distinction between the two scenes could not be accounted for through a listing of their formal features. As in the opening account to this chapter, when a scene 'works', practitioners—and here I include myself with my own acting experience—want to rely on phrases such as 'more real' and 'having more depth'.

What was certainly similar about the practitioners' engagement with each scene was their commitment to interpretation: there was an intense labour to analyse and interpret and 'feel' every little part of the performance. Here, artists were engaged in struggles to institute potential readings of their performances; they were working to limit the generation of multiple

meanings (Maxwell 2003). The reward is the capacity to make a 'real': in this case, to label what good theatre-making is. It is to this labour of the practitioners that I now return.

PART TWO
REHEARSAL INTUITION: BEING MADE BY THE WORLD

5.2.i Recognising the Right Rehearsal Work

When the *Reg* practitioners carefully and softly stood still and whispered the monologues, and when they all felt that they had discovered the very core of their characters' psychological states, this felt sensation was intimately tied up with how they understood themselves within the theatre field. The extent to which acting practices 'felt right' or did not 'feel right' for the practitioners can be understood in terms of the relationship between a social world and the agents who exist in, and who are complicit in propagating, that world. Bourdieu argues that, for social agents, those moments in the social world that feel intuitive (or 'spontaneous' or 'right') are moments when there is a direct fit between field and habitus. The point here is that the feeling right 'thing' is learnt. The *Reg* practitioners, in their gradual acquiring of a habitus, had learnt to yoke particular states of affect to particular sets of discourses. The monologue exercise, and, importantly, the *feelings* surrounding that exercise, were framed in very specific ways.

In the rehearsals, this process of feeling the right feelings revealed itself most explicitly in the practice of *teaching* or *transferring* a set of corporealised dispositions and working practices. In both *Season* and *Reg*, there was at least one actor who had had very little training or experience, and in these cases the directors taught them how to 'feel' and 'label' the right things: the practitioners had to know how to identify what it was to discover the playwright's intentions, what it was to examine people's psychologies, and they had to recognise what it was to discover and construct meanings. The exchange between actor and director was a site

where this 'identification' work took place. For the process by which a rehearsal practice becomes marked as being authentic or legitimate needs to be understood, firstly, in terms of an operation of 'identification', 'embodiment' or 'recognition' (Maxwell 1997: 19).

In *Season*, Mary-Anne worked with Steve (ROY) more closely than with any other actor, and this was partly because she saw ROY as a kind of link between the production and the audience (for instance, he operates as a commentator and directly addresses the spectators about the story), and partly because the actor was so inexperienced. Mary-Anne spent more time 'finding' ROY'S psychology, his desires and motivations, than any other character's. And while she would usually elicit this sort of character-material from other actors, she was far more directive with Steve. She told him ROY'S state of mind at the end of the playscript, prompting the response from Steve of "Yeah, that's good. I *like* that". This 'recognition' process was reinforced in the stage space as Steve was encouraged to re-shape his performance. At one point, Mary-Anne interrupted a run of an early scene to tell Steve that ROY'S line 'I'll write a book' is sincere. Steve had delivered the line in a joking manner, almost sarcastically, and was now being told that the tone of the line was earnest. It was now up to Steve to not only understand Mary-Anne's direction cognitively, but to feel it in his body. During the next run, Steve took his time with the line, and, rather than brushing it off, he focussed more fully on the other actor, Gaby. Mary-Anne responded, "Yeah. That's it". This 'it-ness' did not simply refer to the re-shaping of the delivery in semiotic terms; Steve was learning how to connect an affective state with very specific language.

In the *Reg* process, Sean was the only actor who had not received formal training, and Tony spent time detailing with him what the rest of the actors understood as self-evident practices. Sean was present throughout Act One but he had very few lines. This resulted in him spending a great deal of time sitting and watching Tony direct the other (more experienced) performers. This was, in effect, part of a training. Tony's directions to the actors were very

brief, but when he specifically addressed Sean, he would expand on this shorthand in order to explain what he meant. When Sean, during a run of a scene, rested on the edge of the sofa, Tony not only told him to sit up straight, but he added "The body doesn't speak when you're slouched on the arm [of the couch]". Sean immediately sat up. While Mary-Anne focussed on a psychological set of discourses as a way to explain certain sets of embodied feelings, Tony drew on the manipulation of bodies: he was teaching Sean to label affective states in terms of whether of not bodies were positioned or moved properly.

5.2.ii Naturalisation Through Repetition

In the case of Steve and Sean, this practice of recognising 'right' feelings got naturalised through a process of repetition. For instance, Sean not only responded to Tony's explicit directions at the time they were given, but Tony's language began informing Sean's overall approach to rehearsing: Sean 'learnt' to make succinct suggestions of his own that sounded much like the physically-based directions Tony offered. Similarly, Steve's rehearsal work started to feel 'natural' to him. Instead of hesitating on stage or floundering for words to describe performance or text, he started to offer psychological states for ROY, and was quick to describe his own experiences in terms of whether or not they 'felt right': If the first operation by which rehearsal practice gets understood as legitimate is that of 'identification', the second operation involves 'naturalising' those experiences (Maxwell 1997: 19).

If Mary-Anne and Tony had simply directed Steve and Sean to just 'feel natural' on stage, these actors would have been unable to produce spontaneous performances because 'natural' acting cannot come out of a direction to 'be' or 'feel' spontaneous but out of repetitive practice. Joseph Roach, drawing on Diderot and Stanislavsky, explores ideas of repetition and spontaneity in acting practice, where the actor, paradoxically, rehearses and rehearses to produce a spontaneous performance:

> In the early stages of an actor's efforts—either as a beginner or at the start of rehearsals for a new role—his body resists his will: his gestures die stillborn, words fail him, his rhythms splutter and lurch like a new machine whose parts do not quite fit. As he repeats himself in rehearsals and exercises, however, testing the pulses of his imagination, probing his physical and mental limits, these hesitancies tend to fall away one by one; his assurance generates energy, until he seems more thoroughly alive than ever before. The paradox is evident: the actor's spontaneous vitality seems to depend on the extent to which his actions and thoughts have been automatized, made second nature (Roach 1985: 16).

This description is productive in understanding the process of Steve and Sean, two inexperienced performers at the 'early stages' of their careers. However, what about the other actors? The *Reg* performers in particular had had many years of experience—repetitive practice—and yet the impulse work did not come 'naturally' at all. Why?

Graham and Steven's 'impulse' exchange was unproductive for them because the framing of the exercise related more closely to an acting classroom than to a professional rehearsal. Tony had brought his role of 'teacher' into an unsympathetic environment. Roach describes a 'machine whose parts do not quite fit', a generation of 'energy', being 'thoroughly alive', and having 'actions and thoughts automatized'. The 'machine' image is potent: Tony's habitus of 'acting teacher' could not translate to, or 'fit' into or with, the habitus of these professional actors and this rehearsal environment. Note that the machine metaphor is not meant to introduce an explicit structuralism—the practitioners were not merely small parts of a giant pre-given social structure—however, it is meant to foreground how 'right' feelings are embedded in specific cultural contexts. This is exactly Roach's project. In *The Player's Passion*, he explores how dominant scientific paradigms informing selfhood—namely, what he terms as 'psychology' and 'physiology'—have, over the centuries, informed theories of acting. Thus he is concerned with the socio-historical domains associated with specific performance conditions. What I am pointing towards here is that 'natural' acting and 'spontaneous' feelings are not just the result of repeating *any* practice; they are the result of acquiring, developing and

repeating a thick weave of bodily, corporealised dispositions that are associated with a specific social—in this case, theatre—world.

In rehearsals, Steve and Sean were being taught how to recognise discovery work or the practices involving making meaning—they watched other actors' performances—but also what it was to embody these ideas; what it felt like to marry states of affect to particular discourses. Bourdieu and Wacquant describe this as a sedimentation process (1992: 22), where a habitus is gradually 'lodged in the body'. For musicologist Steven Feld, this is a process whereby the recognition of a specific style (in his case, in music) is experienced as an intuitive, feelingful sense; that it is intuitively 'real' (1994: 112). Maxwell draws on Feld's account of the 'groove' in music, pointing out that Feld's use of the term 'intuition' hides the labour of identification and interpretation (1997: 20) on the part of social agents. In an effort to foreground the learning process, Maxwell summarises:

> Feld's argument is that although the *feeling* of intuitiveness that constitutes "the groove" is learnt, the *fit* between any given experience and one's learnt expectations of that experience is *experienced*, affectively, as primal, as unmediated (1997: 20).

Through Steve and Sean, the (usually) masked process of 'identification and interpretation' was made explicit through the teaching process. During *Season* rehearsals, Steve learnt about 'discovering character and self' so that whenever he felt a particular synthesis between dialogue and physical action, he recognised this as a moment of revelation. In Zarrilli's terms, 'when one becomes enculturated into a system of practices it often feels natural' (1995: 323).

Importantly, they could 'recognise' practices in order to label them: they were articulating rehearsal work to the dominant discourses of the field. The *Season* and *Reg* practitioners were in a continual movement between working practices, experiencing those practices, and labelling or explaining those practices. Bryan S. Turner's research on people's experiences of disease and pain is productive here. In an effort to loosen the hegemonic

hold that positivist, physiological models have on such debates, he argues that researchers should avoid conceptualising the body within a single philosophical paradigm. He suggests that 'we should encourage research which will be open both to the idea of the body as lived experience (*Leib*) and to the discourse of the body as an objective presence (*Körper*)' (1992: 57), and adds that there is a constant dialectic between the two. It is the dialectic that most concerns me here. Zarrilli, using Turner's work to reflect on his own fieldwork in Southern India, assumes that

> practitioners speak from their experience of the body-in-practice (*Leib*), that these explanations are discursive representations of the body (*Körper*), and that there is a constant process of negotiation between experience, the set of discursive formations available and how an individual thinks and talks about the experience of practice at any given moment (1998: 7).

What Turner and Zarrilli point to is the negotiation involved between experience and discourse. Mary-Anne—with her years of theatre experience and her diploma of directing from NIDA; that is, with the symbolic capital she had 'acquired in previous struggles' (Bourdieu 1990b: 135)—was 'enculturating' Steve into what professional, 'real' acting was about. She introduced him to particular discourses that he would then use to explain states of affect. In *Reg*, Tony's relationship with Sean had special significance: Sean had just been accepted into the NIDA acting course and Tony would soon be one of his teachers. Fotheringham argues that, since the inception of other training schools, 'NIDA has an interest in maintaining its control over what acting is and what the profession is, and so wants to adopt a leadership role in relation to these other institutions' (1998: 27). Tony was introducing Sean to an exclusive actor training, thereby continuing to reinforce 'the NIDA thing'.

To recap thus far: The discourses circulating in rehearsals operated at the level of talk *and* at the level of embodied experience, where particular affective states were coupled with an idea of 'feeling right'. A formalist semiotic analysis is insufficient to judge whether a scene or a moment in rehearsal 'worked' as certain performance features can be read to opposite

effect. Rather, the extent to which acting practices 'felt right' was associated with the logics of the theatre world and the practitioners' positions within that field; a relationship that was made most explicit through the teaching and transferring of ways of being.

Now to what Feld and Maxwell call the 'primal', 'unmediated' experiences of rehearsal.

5.2.iii A Question of Agency

Sometimes the practitioners framed their experiences in rehearsal as being somehow separate from active psychological discovery or character construction. And, rather than coming out of a direction to 'feel' something, these experiences seemed to come out of something bigger, where something bigger than the 'agency' of the practitioners seemed to be operating. Nor can they be understood in terms of an overt structuralism where practitioners' practices were somehow pre-determined. These experiences seemed to stem from a group rehearsing and performing *together* in particular places at particular times. For example, neither the *Season* nor the *Reg* rehearsal rooms had carpeted floors. Consequently, as the actors worked on scenes in the floor space, they could hear one another's footsteps; the rhythm of their movement was audible. Recall the example in Chapter Two when Lyn (GIRLIE) was first exposed to the full comings and goings of the rest of the cast in the stage space: she not only felt their bodies moving but she heard their footsteps, and her movement became informed by such rhythms. Importantly, both the *Season* and *Reg* stage spaces in the actual theatres were not carpeted either and so these audible rhythms were quite easily transferred into performance.[103] At no stage were these rhythms and movements connected to a specific, individual agency.

[103] The upstage section of the *Reg* set was carpeted, however this area was not occupied as much as the downstage section.

For the *Season* practitioners, these experiences and the associated discourses seemed to build rapidly during tech-week. For example, in TSAS, White carefully stipulates when the violin—JUDY'S playing—is to come in and out of the soundscape. In Act One, White writes:

(*A violin is heard in the other part of the Pogson house, playing something sweet and true, but with a touch that is not exactly brilliant. The piece could be the loure from the sixth Bach Sonata in E Major.*)
NOLA: (*glancing through the paper, still seated on the steps*) I'd give anything to see a good picture. In which a man cracks a whip. (*Dreamy*) Nola Boyle—Bevan then—went to the pictures. An old bloke squeezed her knee. She got the shivers. But didn't shift...
GIRLIE: When you've got the home, when you've got the kids, when you've got the wash on Monday, you forget there was a time for dimples.
CLIVE: When you've been around so long, you forget running up the path from tennis... willows tickling prickly skin. You forget bumping up against the girl on accidental purpose. You forget you could never be around enough.
GIRLIE: Must remember. Oh, I must remember!
CLIVE: Then... you forget...
NOLA: (*laying aside the paper*) She got the shivers in the second reel. But went on waiting for the next move. Whose move? That was always so important. More important than the picture...
(*Violin OFF plays a sour note.*)

Like most of the other parts of the script, this section had been discussed and analysed within a psychological paradigm where a full understanding of a character would manifest an appropriate performance. Denise, Lyn and Peter usually played these lines in a slightly chatty register looking out to the (would-be) audience. However, during tech-week, something shifted dramatically when the violin-playing was introduced. Suddenly, without any direction from Mary-Anne, or any discussion between the three actors, they all began delivering this section in exactly the same pace, staring out above audience's heads, and all in the same lyrical tone: that is, they seemed to allow the violin to inform their delivery. A similar change occurred when the other piece of music was introduced: the first twelve bars or so of Handel's 'And the Trumpet Shall Sound' from *The Messiah*. This was an addition by Mary-Anne, as a response to RON and JUDY shouting their love out loud:

JUDY: Until we sound a trumpet. (*Becoming more ambitious, visualising, indicating with her hands*) Or masses. Desks and desks! Of massed brass!
RON: (*laughing happily*) Get that old What's-his-Name... that *Handel* to blow his head off for us. Split the sky open at last. He's the one. He would have been glad...
(*They go off hand in hand, down the lane.*)

Like the violin, this was introduced during tech-week, and Mary-Anne brought the music in after Stephen's line 'Split the sky open at last'. Gaby and Stephen's delivery built to a crescendo just before the music entered, and, like the earlier example, this was not consciously discussed but seemed to spontaneously occur. Similarly, when Steve (ROY) first saw and felt the dramatic lighting shifts in particular soliloquies, the performance he had rehearsed over and over was altered. As Steve/ROY talked of the neighbours living in their brick boxes, steeped in routine, the lights slowly faded up and then down, with whites and goldens and blues and then blackouts, as if suggesting day and night and day and night. As the violin seemed to inform Denise, Lyn and Peter's deliveries, so Steve's delivery was altered with the introduction of the lighting shifts. It was as if his voice embodied the rising and falling of the lighting.

There are two important ideas here: firstly, the practitioners' sensations were less about being in control of their work and more about something bigger controlling them; and, secondly, their work was grounded in a sense of collectivity, where a group creativity existed rather than an individual one.

5.2.iv Making, And Being Made By, The World

So, what exactly constitutes the feeling of 'rightness' for these practitioners? What constitutes the affective states? How might we account for the intense, sweaty *Reg* rehearsal where the actors whispered the inner monologues? Implicit in all this are questions of subjectivity, for 'no matter what constituting power we assign the impersonal forces of history, language, and upbringing, the subject always figures, at the very least, as the site

where these forces find expression and are played out' (Jackson 1996: 22). By 'subject', Jackson is not invoking a subject/object divide, but instead suggests that any idea an individual might have about subjectivity and objectivity is always grounded in an 'I', even if this 'I' is experiencing itself as having no agency. In other words, in order to understand how the theatre rehearsals were meaningful for the practitioners, it is productive to turn to the directors' and actors' experiences in their lived immediacy.

The practitioners were producing 'inspired' performances that somehow lacked an obvious sense of agency; that is, for example, when the performance moved the actors rather than the actors controlling the performance. Rather than understand this as 'objective structures or subjective intentions' (26)—either through structuralist thinking or within a more existential or purely humanist framework—it is better understood phenomenologically. The antinomy between objectivity and subjectivity ceases to be a problem

> if these terms are seen as indicative of the way human experience vacillates between a sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects; in effect, making us feel sometimes that we are world-makers, sometimes that we are merely made by the world (21).

During rehearsals, the practitioners partially understood their work as making conscious decisions: they would actively search the playtext for clues about characters, and they would explicitly shape scenes and interactions. However, they also experienced their practice as if the Act, the scene, or the exchange informed their performances; that is, in Jackson's terms, they were being made by the world: The violin-playing helped 'make' Lyn, Peter, and Denise's deliveries; Handel's *Messiah* informed Stephen and Gaby's performance; the movement of the other actors shaped Lyn's movements as GIRLIE.

The practitioners experienced themselves as both 'being' a body and 'having' a body, and there was a continual negotiation between the two. This

not only recalls Bryan Turner's distinction between 'Leib' and 'Körper',[104] but is also Lewis' thinking when he argues that

> Embodied selves are not only sites for mediating language and experience, they are also where subjectivity meets objectivity, since we live our lives as our bodies, but these bodies also become objects other than (or "othered from") ourselves (1995: 222).

In many of the cases cited in this thesis, the practitioners had the experience of existing apart from their bodies: Steve discovered something analytically and put it into his body; Sean ensured his body would sit straight up on the couch. Following Zarrilli's point about the pervasiveness of psychological realism in actor training, practitioners 'will often experience a 'real' *disjuncture* between their minds and their bodies' (1995: 13), where the mind (active) controls and informs the body (passive). This is Jackson's point when he suggests that human beings can sometimes experience themselves as disembodied (1996: 31).

However, in *Season* and *Reg*, the practitioners' experiences of their own bodies was something entirely different when scenes were 'working' in a 'spontaneous' manner. In Leder's terms, this is the state of embodied doing—'ecstasis'[105]—in which the process of using the body as an instrument makes the body invisible or transparent. When the theatre rehearsal practices 'worked' in *Season* and *Reg*—when they produced the right feelings and the right results—the practitioners were, to an extent, in modes of 'ecstasis' where their work was invisible to them simply because the process disappears into its use: 'The body conceals itself precisely in the act of revealing what is Other. The very presencing of the world and of the body as an object within it is always correlative with this primordial absence' (Leder 1990: 22). This idea of Leder's—that bodily presence is often categorised by an absence—is most compellingly described in his account of the tennis player. He explains that '[p]rior to the onset of pain', the tennis player experiences 'bodily disappearance':

[104] Leder (1990) makes the point that philosophers—especially those concerned with phenomenology—have often used this distinction.

> Attention is ecstatically distributed to distant points. Parts of the body are backgrounded and forgotten as all power centers in the swing. A metabolic machinery supplies the player with energy, without demanding his [sic] attention or guidance. The game is made possible only by this bodily self-concealment (71).

In rehearsals, the practitioners' own bodies were concealed from them as attention was focussed on the scene or the exchange. Leder's thesis is that the body is only foregrounded in awareness when there is illness or injury. However, the practitioners seemed to be in a continual state of having their bodily awareness foregrounded and then made invisible: that is, there was not a strict binary, and this bodily awareness was not necessarily associated with things going wrong (such as illness). Here Lewis' work on Leder is salient. He suggests that Leder's binary of 'ecstasis' and 'dys-appearance' is better conceptualised as a mediation. This is never more so than in the cases of practitioners 'whose main instrument is the body itself' (1995: 229): 'What one does when learning a skill is to focus precisely on the mediating processes that link relatively embodied and relatively disembodied states' (229). Following Lewis, the *Season* and *Reg* practitioners were in a constant state of 'mediation': they were both being a body (ecstasis) and having a body (dys-appearance).

The practitioners were so deeply familiar with the embodiments of their fellow actors that the shared rhythms between them were framed as being 'spontaneous' and 'right'. Wacquant writes that, for Bourdieu, 'practical sense'—or this 'feeling right' thing—

> constitutes the world as meaningful by spontaneously anticipating its immanent tendencies in the manner of the ball player endowed with great "field vision" who, caught in the heat of the action, instantaneously intuits the moves of his [sic] opponents and team mates, acts and reacts in an "inspired" manner without the benefit of hindsight and calculative reason (1992: 21).

[105] Leder borrows this term from Greek thinkers and, more recently, Heidegger (1990: 21).

Here Wacquant is paying homage to Merleau-Ponty's example of the soccer player, foregrounding that, in fact, any theory of the social must involve the phenomenological:

'The field itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the "goal" for example, just as immediately as the vertical and the horizontal planes of his own body' (in Wacquant 1992: 21).

What Merleau-Ponty points to, and what was happening for the practitioners, involves the fluidity of the body: the soccer player feels the direction of the goal as an extension of his own body. When Denise, Lyn and Peter began delivering their dialogue in the same way as each other, and using the violin to shape them, they were experiencing their bodies as unbounded and extending out towards the elements of production and towards one another.

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The 'inspired performances' discussed in this chapter were not always centred on individuals, but in fact were mostly couched as shared moments when everyone felt collectively 'right'. When Jackson and Lewis question the very grounds on which claims of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' are made, they are suggesting that subjectivity cannot be collapsed into an idea of individualism: for these thinkers, subjectivity does not imply a solipsistic, inward-looking state: 'Subjectivity entails a reaching beyond the self. Insofar as experience includes substantive and transitive, disjunctive and conjunctive modalities, it covers a sense of ourselves as singular individuals as well as belonging to a collectivity' (Jackson 1996: 26). The affective dimension of rehearsals needs to be understood as a shared experience between the practitioners. When the *Reg* actors whispered their monologues, and when they subsequently began performing the scene, the feeling of right-ness—the feeling that they had found something very profound—was felt amongst us all. This was a moment where any

individual sense of agency was in fact collapsed into a moment of 'sociality'. It can be understood in terms of a notion of intersubjectivity:

> For social phenomenology, praxis is seldom a matter of individuals acting alone. It is a mode of shared endeavour as well as conflict, of mutual adjustment as well as violence. Subjectivity is in effect a matter of intersubjectivity, and experience is inter-experience (Merleau-Ponty in Jackson 1996: 26).

The notion of 'intersubjectivity'[106]—emphasising 'experience in relationships' (Jackson, 1996: 26)—offers a means to describe the moments in rehearsal when no single practitioner was 'driving' the scene, and when, instead, a collective rhythm was at play. In these moments, the practitioners did not talk in terms of making conscious choices, but in terms of sharing a 'right' feeling. These constituted intersubjective experiences. For, as Jackson argues, 'selves are no more single existences than are atoms and molecules' (Jackson, 1999: 6), and there were many times in rehearsals when to talk of individual agency—or, indeed, individuals operating apart from one other—was a desperately inadequate description. The practitioners' experiences of themselves became less about bounded bodies—any sense of turning inwards—and instead became about extending outwards. It is to this 'extending outwards' that I now turn in order to conclude this thesis.

[106] When Jackson uses this term, he is drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Husserl and others.

e p i l o g u e

Making the Familiar Strange

6.1 Opening Night: Saying Farewell

The opening night of *Season* took place on Saturday 5th July 1997. It was a full house—comprising friends and industry professionals—and I sat near the back of the theatre specifically to allow other spectators seats further forward. Suddenly the presence of outsiders—people not at all involved in the production—emphasised my own strange position in the process: not part of the show and yet not quite outside it. At interval, I was even compelled to justify some of the staging decisions to my theatre partner. It was difficult to bracket out my own investment in this show and, perhaps more significantly, the people involved in it. Afterwards in the foyer—amongst the tables of cheese platters and chunks of cabanossi—Steve (who played ROY) demanded, "Where were you the other night? There was a cast and crew photo and you should have been there. You're part of the gang." Later, registering that my documentation work was completed, some of the other actors crowded around me and Peter said, "Is that it, then. Are you just walking out of our lives?"

Rehearsal notes for the ***Season*** *process*
Kate Rossmanith 1997

The opening night of *Reg*, on Tuesday 3rd February 1998, was a far more glamorous affair. As opposed to the casual attire of most of the *Season* opening night crowd, the *Reg* audience was full of glitz and colour. But as with *Season,* these spectators were friends and people steeped in 'the industry' (including several television personalities). As we all settled in our seats, a friend of the designer's announced that she didn't need a programme because she knew everyone in the show. People waved at one another from across the thrust-style seating. Another friend of the designer's asked him if there would be an interval, and Murray replied "No darling, it's Sydney. Straight through without an interval. In and out in time for a drink and something to eat afterwards." In all this, the Mardi Gras Festival was making itself known. I looked around for Kevin Elyot, the

playwright, and once I spotted him (in the best seat in the house) I felt nervous for the cast and crew. During the show I looked over at Kevin and felt relieved when he laughed. At the end, once the actors had taken their curtain call, Peter introduced Kevin to the crowd. Kevin stood and acknowledged the applause, this being all the more poignant given his obvious condition. His collapsed body and his very sunken face—a world away from the slick, wholesome headshot in the programme—made us all too aware of the illness he was struggling with.

*Rehearsal notes for the **Reg** process*
Kate Rossmanith 1997

In fieldwork research—engaging with real people with real lives—goodbyes are inevitable. In this epilogue, I will sketch an overview of the findings of the thesis, tease out some central issues to have emerged from my analysis and suggest how they might lead to further areas of research. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on additional questions of methodology first posed at the start of my project.

6.2 Some Conclusions

In my prologue, I suggested two encompassing aims: to study the relationship between the minutiae of rehearsal work and larger working contexts, and to develop a research approach to study rehearsal. Initially I will turn to the first of these concerns. This thesis has argued that the working practices and discourses of the rehearsal agents were inextricably caught up with the struggles of those practitioners (and of the organisations with which they were associated) to legitimise and authenticate their theatre-making within the Sydney theatre scene. Furthermore, the practices and discourses—the practitioners' involvement in and commitment to their work—were sustained on the level of embodiment and affect.

Firstly, I suggested that in order to engage with the practices in *Season* and *Reg* it is crucial to start by understanding the literal arenas of the work. I began with the spaces and places: how they were located geographically, how they were positioned by people, and what exactly were the practitioners' experiences of them. Then I turned to temporal considerations: how

rehearsal scheduling, as well as the time allocated for each process, informed the work done and even particular embodiments. And lastly, I examined the rehearsal practices themselves—what it meant to 'work at the table' or 'on the floor'—and argued that these practices and the discourses with which they were framed must be understood on their own terms rather than through recourse to ideas of acting traditions or genealogies. The practitioners did not invoke 'Stanislavsky' or 'Grotowski' in their work, but rather referred to 'discovering meaning and character' or 'constructing a show'.

Secondly, I turned to a more thorough consideration of these two key discourses: 'discovering' and 'making' meaning. Rehearsal work which involved observing the playwright's stage directions and being accurate with dialogue was framed as 'discovering meaning' and 'remaining loyal to the playwright'. Under the more general rubric of 'discovery', a cluster of three metaphors stood out as key acting discourses—these revolved around psychological depth, emotionality, and believability—and the discovery of character also became a discovery of the performer's self. However, the work was also described as 'constructing a performance' by which elements of production—blocking, gesture, props, costumes, music and so on—were manipulated for the prospective audience.

When writers write about performers in rehearsal, they often lean towards a notion that actors are somehow infantilised in the performance-making process; that the performers are urged to be the analysands while the director is the analyst; that they are the students and the director is the all-knowing teacher; that, in Cole's terms, the actor is the subset of the director's imagination. However, I suggested that in the rehearsals I studied, there was no sense that the performers were disempowered or infantilised at all. This led me to my third major argument.

I argued that the practitioners' practices and the discourses within which they were framed were tied to broader ideas concerning what 'good' acting

was, and what 'real' rehearsals entailed. The two productions, *Season* and *Reg*, not only involved making theatre, but making theatre-making: they were in a process of reproducing and to an extent creating what it meant to produce theatre. The two groups—*Season* and New Theatre, and *Reg* and Esoteric Entertainment—were part of a quasi-autonomous 'field' of Sydney theatre, and they were involved in struggles of institutional legitimation. Both groups used their own ideas of 'community', 'professionalism' and 'high cultural product' to carve out their places in social space. These struggles were played out in, and informed by, the practitioners, as they themselves were caught up in career-building strategies.

Importantly, the two dominant rehearsal discourses of 'discovery' and 'meaning-making' (and their associated practices) were intimately bound up with these broader struggles. For the *Season* practitioners, the work of 'discovering meaning' was tied to White's status as an intellectual writer, as they became interpreters of and conduits for the lines and were therefore able to distance themselves from amateur community performance. When they discovered character and discovered themselves, they were couching their work in terms of what 'professional' practitioners do. For the *Reg* practitioners, being 'loyal' to Elyot's script by discovering the real meanings was intimately connected to Esoteric Entertainment's labour to position itself as a mediator between Sydney and London's gay theatre scenes. And, when they engaged in self-excavation, this self 'discovery' was used in a shorthand way as a marker of distinction to signal an exclusive acting schooling: 'the NIDA thing'. Moreover, they understood their meaning-making practice in terms of creating a slick, polished, 'professional' production within an arena of high culture.

Finally, I approached the two rehearsal processes at the level of embodiment, where the practitioners' work operated as a feeling-thing: something got felt that enabled practitioners to say in rehearsal "We got that moment right". I suggested that the extent to which the work 'felt right' or not was directly linked to the relationship between 'field' and 'habitus'.

Moreover, this work was often couched not so much in terms of individual agency, but as group sociality or intersubjectivity. As Shevtsova writes,

> Performances are inextricably tied up with subjects. They are prepared, rehearsed and performed by directors, actors, designers, and other practitioners in relation to imaginary, potential or real spectators. The whole is a supremely collective effort, an action brought about by many, agency and sociability going hand in glove (1997: 4).

Just as the practitioners moved between sensations of 'making' and 'being made by the world', so they moved between experiencing themselves as solo agents and as part of something bigger than the boundaries of their own self and their own corporeality.

6.3 Extending Outwards...

Two areas to have emerged from my project and that may provide future research directions concern theories of acting and dimensions of performance analysis.

6.3.i Theories of Acting

Academics writing about acting have recognised that the practices and discourses associated with performing operate as projective tests through which to consider specific socio-cultural paradigms. For instance, a primary tenet of Zarrilli's 1995 anthology—*Acting (Re)Considered*—is that when actors perform they implicitly enact a theory of acting. So that even when an actor explains that, when she's on stage, she doesn't use a specific technique but simply allows the lines to flow naturally from her, this is, as this thesis has demonstrated, none-the-less a theory of what constitutes acting. Zarrilli extends this to suggest that theories of acting in fact reflect theories of the self in any given cultural setting. My own findings suggested this also, as, in Chapter Three, I examined how the actors' use of psychology-centred discourses to describe characters was the same language used to describe the actors themselves. Zarrilli couches theories of acting within what he terms 'meta-theories' which involve 'culture-specific

assumptions about the mind/body relationship, the nature of the "self", the emotions/feelings, and performance context' (1995: 4). This concern preoccupies Joseph Roach in *The Player's Passion* when he explains how 'conceptions of the human body drawn from physiology and psychology have dominated theories of acting from antiquity to the present' (1985: 11). And Peck, reviewing Zarrilli's acting anthology, argues, 'the study of acting is among the most revealing indices of the obsessions, prejudices, and preoccupations of any age' (1997: 171).[107] In the *Season* and *Reg* processes, part of the acting practices involved the performers interrogating their own psychologies, thereby firmly designating 'the actor's self as logos' (Auslander 1995: 60). Zarrilli (1995) and Auslander (1995) have both suggested that Western acting practice designates the actor's self as a grounding concept.[108] (Moreover, the *Season* and *Reg* practice of locating the self-as-logos partially effaced performance histories and traditions by locating self discovery as the source of good practice.)

However, the practitioners' conceptions of selfhood were not fixed but continually shifted. The different discourses of rehearsal work were associated with specific constructions of what it was to 'be a practitioner' and what it was to be a 'self'. In 1995, Zarrilli argued that acting practice, itself a socio-cultural variable, involves or manifests a particular socio-cultural figuring of selfhood. This work suggests, at least implicitly, that there are multiple conceptualisations in the world of what it is to be a human being; that selfhood is multiple and fractured; that, for instance, a Western self (and we may wish to nuance and problematise 'Westernness') differs from a Hindu Indian self, from an Indigenous Australian self, from a Nepalese Yolmo self.[109] As Appadurai (1990) suggests, there is a *variability* of the relationship between language, feelings and concepts of the self in

[107]Here Peck is paraphrasing a line of the character, Peter Quince, from the fifth act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare: "The actors are at hand; and by their show, you shall know all that you are like to know."
[108] In order to examine ideas about the actor's subconscious, Auslander, citing Derrida's work on Freud, writes: 'the making conscious of unconscious materials is a process of creation, not retrieval' (1995: 61). He argues that the self is produced by the performance it supposedly grounds.
[109]see Zarrilli (1990: 144) on Indian Kathakali; Jackson (1995), quoted in Jackson (1996:

human societies. Following Zarrilli's more recent thinking that 'modes of cultural practice exist as a set of potentialities of [amongst other things] *self* [my emphasis]' (1998: 8), I wish to extend the notion that there are broad socio-cultural figurings of self and suggest that within the very culturally-specific contexts of the two rehearsal processes, 'selfhood' was conceptualised in more than one way. It is not enough to locate a 'Western theory of self', for each of the rehearsal paradigms manifested a particular subjectivity. Recall Steven: in order to perform the first beat of *Reg*, he identified GUY'S nervousness—the character's emotional topography—and tried to locate those same parts in himself, thereby 'becoming', or, in Foucault's terms *producing* (1988), a layered, psychologised self with a conscious and a subconscious. However, when Steven quite explicitly developed external, physical movements—the 'tweaking'—he 'became' a technician, a machine manipulating signifiers for an audience. Other dimensions of subjectivity also existed amongst the practitioners. They experienced themselves as being somehow beyond the boundaries of their bodies, where in fact, their bodies had 'disappeared' (in Leder's sense). They experienced themselves not as individuals but as a group with its own corporeal logic, its own movement and flow.[110]

Just as practitioners' practices were intersections—they were not complete 'things' grounded in an acting tradition—so too the subjectivities continually shifted, resisting a fixedness or wholeness. Future research in this direction would call for phenomenological frameworks in order to document this dimension of rehearsal.

6.3.ii Performance Analysis

As explained in Chapter One, this study chose not to focus on the actual performances of either *Season* or *Reg*. However, performance analysis still

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33), on the Warlpiri people; and Desjarlais (1992) on the Yolmo people.

[110] Sally-Ann Ness writes in detail about her experience as a dancer. 'There is a general tendency to assume that the mind of a human being is the same thing as its brain' (1992: 6).

emerged as a theoretical concern, and several questions arising in my thesis might elucidate the performance analysis project. In many respects, it is obvious to step from a study of rehearsal towards a study of performance. The first question concerns semiotics. As argued in Chapter Five (and as others have argued before me) it is necessary to move away from a formalist paradigm of *a priori* taxonomies of theatre elements. Instead, any performance analysis needs to be grounded in the interpretive community for which this performance is made meaning*ful*. Following Geertz, the emphasis should fall on what he terms 'a matrix of sensibility' (1983: 102)—on how art is invested with meaning by any given community—rather than how an artwork is somehow the source of immanent signs via an analysis of its formal features.

This thinking is directly relevant to the performance analysis project in at least three ways. The first concerns a turn towards social semiotics where, for instance, any division of the 'elements' of performance—or in Geertz's words, art in 'craft terms' (95)—needs to incorporate the audience for which the performance is a meaningful part of their lives. That is, the labelling and the discussion of the 'internal' characteristics of a performance must be grounded in a specific community of interpreters. So, for instance, it is equally as important to record whether or not a community even refers to particular aspects of a show as it is to implement a list of features of that show. Ideas of 'costume' or 'music', for example, may not enter the discourse of some audience groups. (In her sociological studies of audiences for the Sydney Theatre Company's production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters,* directed by Richard Wherrett, Maria Shevtsova noticed that spectators responded the least about 'music and atmosphere' and the most about aspects of acting (1993: 118).)

A second related area concerns addressing how and where the performance fits in or relates to the lives of an audience. One way to approach this is via Bourdieu's analytics of 'cultural capital' and, more specifically, matters of taste and social class. This is central to Maria

Shevtsova's book, *Theatre and Cultural Interaction* (1993), which focuses on audiences. In her research, she gathered quantitative and qualitative data about education, profession, and responses to particular theatre performances. For instance, in one chapter, she is very much concerned with 'social and cultural elites'. More recently, she has in her terms 'appropriated' Bourdieu's concept of habitus in order to understand particular staging decisions, thereby studying specific socially informed ways of being (2002). This idea that art—in this case, performance—directly relates to the broader contexts of spectators' lives is exactly Geertz's preoccupation in his essay 'Art As A Cultural System' (1983). He suggests that the theoretical approach commonly adopted by Western aesthetics 'blinds us to the very existence of the data upon which a comparative understanding of [art] could be built' (1983: 98); that a discussion of art in terms of 'how it is used, who owns it, when it is performed, who performs or makes it, what role it plays in this or that activity, what it may be exchanged for, what it is called, how it began, and so forth' (97), cannot be separated from the artwork itself.

Lastly, an analysis of performance must include theories of affect: people are very much affected by the world in and around them. Chapter Five of this thesis pointed to this very explicitly: the grounds on which practitioners engaged with theatre seemed to operate largely at the level of embodiment and affect. Put simply, it felt good. This framework might be productive in thinking about why audiences attend shows. As Geertz writes, 'to study an art form is to explore a sensibility' (99). By using a word like 'sensibility' rather than, say, 'understanding', the emphasis is shifted away from a purely cognitive paradigm ('to understand something') towards a more corporeal paradigm ('to feel something'). This is, of course, not to resuscitate a mind-body dualism, but to recognise that even our experience of 'being a mind' is one of corporeality: to recall Lewis's line, 'we live our lives as bodies'. This is of concern to Gay McAuley who concluded her study on space in performance with a thoughtful chapter about the spectator. Specifically, she discusses what she calls 'energy exchange', suggesting

that 'the live presence of both performers and spectators created complex flows of energy between both groups' (1999: 247). Invoking a particularly visceral image, she writes: 'if theatre is an event occurring "in the actors' organisms", as Grotowski claimed (1969, 86-7), then it is also occurring in the spectators' organisms' (1999: 235).

All three concerns are grounded in the same principle: that performance analysis must take into account the interpretive community—the sensibility of that community—rather than rely solely on an imposed system of structures. To ground performance analysis in such a principle requires a move beyond classic structuralist/ semiotic grids, but also a move beyond post-structuralist approaches—in particular, deconstructionist approaches which tend to wrench performance out of any embodied, social reality.

6.4 Looking Obliquely at Nearby Collective Cultural Arrangements

An area of concern central to this thesis has been the issue of what exactly it is to study and write about theatre rehearsal. Methodological issues opened the thesis, and it is to these I return in order to conclude my work. As suggested in the first section of this thesis, current rehearsal studies are inadequate to approach the sort of fieldwork forming the basis of this project, and Chapter One reviewed how critical ethnography came to deeply inform my research approach. I proposed that in order to make sense of the weeks and weeks of rehearsal work, I needed theoretical frameworks dealing with micropractices in their lived immediacy, ways to understand macro socio-cultural, historical and institutional contexts, and, lastly, theories of embodiment. The close of Chapter Five wrote of an 'extending outwards', and this metaphor is productive in thinking about the role of research frameworks and the position of the researcher with respect to rehearsal studies. The question I pose now is this: What is it for a researcher to be 'inside' or 'outside' a 'scene' or cultural setting? What is it for a rehearsal studies scholar to borrow an anthropological paradigm? To this end, I discuss three ideas: firstly, that research is an embodied practice

and that the researcher is engaged corporeally with a process no matter how 'removed' they think they are; secondly, that it is productive, methodologically, for a researcher not to be directly involved in the creation of the theatre production; and the third and most encompassing area involves exploring the implications when the researcher studies (in) very familiar cultural settings.

6.4.i Research as an Embodied Practice

The weeks and weeks of rehearsals were not only embodied realities for the practitioners but for me as well. Conquergood, in an effort to foreground some crucial characteristics of an ethnographic methodology, points out that it is 'an *embodied practice*; it is an intensely sensuous way of knowing' (1991:180). Being in the room with them all, I experienced the rhythms of their specific working practices. The adrenalin of the *Reg* process pumped through me as it pumped through everyone. Some ethnographers have written about how their bodies changed during fieldwork: Robert Desjarlais (1992) explains that during his time with the Nepalese Yolmo people, he subconsciously moved with them and like them; and Jackson suggests that for him, during his fieldwork,

> participat[ing] bodily in everyday practical tasks was a creative technique which often helped me to grasp the sense of an activity by using my body as others did. (1989: 135).

Similarly, Geertz argues that participatory fieldwork allows and encourages the researcher to think creatively and imaginatively *with* the cultural agents (1973: 23). While I did not explicitly participate in the rehearsal work, I was certainly involved peripherally: Bridget (stage manager) would often ask me to pass messages to Tony if she had to slip out of the room; Tony would turn to me during a run as he responded to a scene and searched for collusion in me; during one *Season* rehearsal I was asked to read an actor's part because she was running late; during the tech run I moved across the stage for the lighting plot. I even confess to foregoing

documentation of one of the *Season* scenes in order to have my eyebrows shaped by Jacqui (who played PIPPY). These anecdotes are not to celebrate 'the researcher' (although, interestingly, Conquergood (1991) points out that one's reputation as an ethnographer is established by the bodily, physical and emotional risks taken in the field), but to foreground Geertz's position that ethnography requires theory to stay close to the ground, and, specifically, to stay grounded in the embodied practice of the groups studied (1973: 24). Moreover, the notion of 'embodied research' recognises ethnography's capacity to effect real change on the researcher.

6.4.ii Being Outside the Practices

If, as I have just suggested, there is something to be gained as a researcher by participating physically in the rehearsal work—being in the rooms and experiencing the pulses—why, then, shouldn't we be studying our own practices? Why shouldn't I have directed or performed in a show myself and documented my own process? The answer to this question lies in two discrete but linked theoretical positions:

(i) Jackson asserts that 'the knowledge whereby one lives is not necessarily identical with the knowledge whereby one explains life' (1996: 2);

(ii) Born (1995) argues that ethnography, with its attention to micropractices, provides a means of discerning between a conscious discourse about a field and a less conscious discourse within a field.

In other words, Jackson suggests that there is a difference between how someone goes about their day-to-day living and how they might explain that living (for example, in an interview), and Born recognises that the way that social agents describe a cultural sphere to someone outside that sphere will differ from the discourses that operate within the cultural sphere when

participants engage with one another.[111] What these two positions argue is that the practices and discourses participants engage in are not necessarily transparent to those participants. Practitioners who are 'insiders' are unable to discern between layers of discourse, and this is a major limitation of some of the rehearsal literature discussed, for example, in Chapter One. Interviews with practitioners are just that: discourses *about* a field. Similarly, Stafford-Clark, Simon Callow and Anthony Sher's writings involve their comments on the work that they do. All this material is unable to offer the kind of talk or attitudes that circulate within rehearsals themselves: the discourses *within* the field.

This concept has been central to this thesis as it has allowed for an examination of the competing and contradictory metaphorics occurring among practitioners. For instance, actors may be figured as deeply psychologised and 'layered', but then the production pragmatics move across this: a character's psychological motives are displaced by an actor needing to be downstage by a specific line. These sites of tension were also manifest in the way that the practitioners framed the theatre organisations. As argued earlier, a very conscious discourse surrounding the *Reg* rehearsals concerned financial expense and excess. The producers secured sponsorship from the most expensive domains—a luxury hotel, imported alcoholic spirits, designer jewellery and clothes—and they flew the playwright out from London. However, less conscious ideas about tight budgets also circulated: the production had under four weeks to rehearse, the actors were paid the award wage, and there were even jokes about the MEAA pressuring the producers if the performers were asked to work late. In rehearsals for New Theatre, a very explicit discourse of 'community' circulated, through the invoking of leftist political historical narratives as well as a general egalitarianism (as the New Theatre booklet states "We are an ensemble theatre and **there are no stars except the play**"). However, there was also a more implicit discourse of 'career

[111] Abu-Lughod and Lutz, in their research on emotion, advance a similar argument. They distinguish between 'discourses on emotion' (local theories about emotion) and 'emotional discourses' (situated deployments of emotional linguistic forms) (1990: 12).

building' as practitioners used productions to secure agent representation and more prominent positions in the theatre scene.[112]

6.4.iii Imposing a Strangeness

So far I have foregrounded the outside perspective of the researcher, by considering what it was to be present in the rehearsal rooms and yet not directly involved in creating theatre. However, what have been some implications of doing research in my own backyard? 'Doing' ethnography usually involves a sustained time spent in a different cultural context and then the reflection on and writing up of such time. Much has been written about the process of the fieldworker approaching difference; this process is central to anthropological thought. In fact Rabinow once defined anthropology as 'humanity encountered as other' (in Tomlinson 1993: 5). However, what are some implications of doing research closer to home? In my case, what is it to do research in Sydney—where I have lived for most of my life—about theatre—a field familiar to me, given that I was (albeit some time ago now) involved in youth theatre and semi-professional work as an actor for ten years? This very specific research context is a productive site in order to rethink ideas about 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness', not only for the researcher but for the social agents also.[113] This rethinking has started circulating in ethnographic studies: Lewis (1992), in his work on Brazilian Capoeira, refers to himself as a 'semi-insider' because he believes his position was somewhere in-between; similarly, Zarrilli, in his fieldwork in Southern India, refers to himself as an 'outsider-insider' (1998: 11), again

[112] Authorship and creative decision-making might also be investigated through this analytic. Threadgold's paper, on the DPS Chekhov project, recognises that the discourse surrounding the practitioners' practice and the practice itself diverged dramatically. She noticed that the first group 'used conduit metaphors (the meaning is in the text, we just have to get it out), yet what actually took place (in discussions, interpersonal and corporeal interactions, budget considerations, late 20th century context) subverted the "realist" modernist discourse and the belief in immanent meanings' (1995: 178). The second group set out to be deconstructive, with a refusal of plot, character and narrative, and prioritised the body over language. 'There was a refusal to fix meanings and the yet the "themes" were interpretations, arrived at through paraphrase and exegesis, and were meant to structure performance and control the audience's reading of the performance text' (178). Threadgold revealed the opposing discourses within each group's practice.

[113] My use of the term 'agent' is not meant to reify 'agency' of 'individual', but rather to use it in Bourdieu's sense.

invoking a creative tension. Kirsten Hastrup points out that, as ethnographers dismantle the category of 'culture', the previously 'substantially defined entities' of 'selves' and 'others'' have been 'refined as categories of thought' (1995: 6).[114] How has the dialectic between 'insider' and 'outsider'—between 'self' and 'other'—operated during my research?

During rehearsals, some of the things people said and did seemed initially very familiar to me. I was comfortable with much of the terminology used and with the structure of the processes themselves. I knew about 'beats' and 'objectives', 'run-throughs' and 'tech-week'. This familiarity with form meant that I not only concentrated on what was being said, but also focussed on practitioners' embodiments—on doings that are more difficult to record with notebook and pen. It was my 'insideness' in the Sydney theatre scene that secured me the placements in the first place, as rehearsals are generally difficult to gain access to. However, this familiarity led to my reluctance to ask lots of questions as the practitioners assumed I possessed relevant knowledge. My 'insideness' meant that no-one felt it necessary to 'teach' me about rehearsal or to explain their work. For the practitioners, it would have seemed redundant to tell me about the ins and outs of what rehearsing theatre entailed. All this did *not* mean I *was* an 'insider'. For instance, I had never worked at New Theatre or the Mardi Gras Arts Festival; I had never worked with any of the directors or actors. To the practitioners, I did not appear as part of them but as a university student, and was therefore treated with some suspicion: some rehearsals were closed to me because they were considered too private; practitioners wanted to know if and where my research would be published; one actor initially asked that her full name not be used.

During rehearsals I was both 'part of the gang' and somehow outside it. Georgina Born and Judith Okely, two researchers studying in complex post-industrial socio-cultural contexts, describe this very experience. Born, in her ethnography of IRCAM, writes in terms of the 'double' nature of her research

[114]Okely also advances this argument in *Own or Other Culture* (1996).

position (1995: 9) as she was able to chat with musicians about music (Born is a musician herself) but would then race home to write up her fieldnotes. Okely describes her 'double vision' (1996: 22) when she researched gypsy-groups in England. On spending time with these people, she explains that she began seeing white anglo-saxon culture through their eyes. In my work, I write 'part of the gang', but I am wary to reify a neat group and unwilling to unproblematically reify and homogenise 'being an insider'. In both rehearsal processes, there were degrees of 'being inside the scene'. For instance, New Theatre emphasised the histories each practitioner had (or did not have) with the theatre, and it became obvious who was more familiar or less familiar with the organisation. Some of the actors—Lyn, Ben and Mark—knew the workings of the theatre and the spaces in the building very well, and they introduced other actors—for instance, Kate and Steve—to these areas. Moreover, my being in those rehearsal rooms encouraged practitioners to reflect, at least briefly, on their own practice. During one rehearsal, Lyn, on seeing me take notes, said "Are you writing 'Lyn makes another dumb comment'?". Here, the presence of the researcher led to social agents *reflecting with some distance* on their own work: perhaps they were gaining an outside perspective.

This distancing is the very process I continued to undertake upon leaving the field. In the act of reflecting and writing, I imposed a strangeness and a strangeness imposed itself; I 'forgot' what I thought I knew of theatre terms and rehearsal structures. An ethnographic approach, with its capacity for scrutinising the minutiae, displaced my complacency in terms of my implicit rehearsal knowledge, as I have been forced to engage with how practitioners understood their own practice. For instance, I have suspended my knowledge of 'beats', 'objectives', 'tech-week' and so on, and allowed the practitioners' understanding of these terms, and of their working practices generally, to propel the thesis. In Clifford's terms, I was, and still am, looking obliquely at nearby collective cultural arrangements; I am making the familiar strange (1986: 2-3). Here my project intersects productively with hermenuetic thought. Gadamer describes 'the true home

of hermeneutics' as 'a place between strangeness and familiarity' (in Tomlinson 1993: 21). Following Tomlinson, rather than understand my position of researcher as 'a sporadic flip-flopping between recognition and assimilation of difference', I wish to see it as sustaining a 'presence of foreignness' (23). For Bourdieu, the 'foreignness', or distance, comes through a commitment to reflexivity, where '[i]t is not the individual unconscious of the researcher but the epistemological unconscious of his [sic] discipline that must be unearthed' (in Wacquant 1992: 41). I write about theatre rehearsal, not because I once acted, not because I was once part of a scene, but because I reflect on it, and I study it within specific institutional contexts.[115] In the spirit of unearthing an epistemological unconscious, I offer the following: During my PhD candidature—a long process of researching and writing a thesis—the discipline of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney has moved under my feet, from a semiotic orientation inflected with ethnography, into a hermeneutics of ethnography, embodiment and towards phenomenology. In many ways, my work wrestles with this shift, continually negotiating and reshaping interpretations and evaluations.

This thesis has, perhaps, contributed to several disciplines of the humanities by studying a dimension of artistic practice that has so far been awarded little critical attention. As Born proposes, by focussing on Western cultural arenas not yet thus examined, the anthropological project might be 'reinvigorated' and its frameworks 'expanded' (1995: 8). And so we are back to a notion of 'expanding outwards' (a suitable point to conclude any thesis). This metaphor of 'expanding' recalls Ricoeur's thinking, for whom 'familiarisation' or what he calls 'appropriation' is not a 'taking possession' but a 'letting go', where upon exposing oneself to a research project we receive from it 'an *enlarged* [my emphasis] self' (in Tomlinson 1993: 26). Hopefully, my project has moved towards a process of expanding and

[115]Bourdieu is careful to outline why he researches France: 'I shall talk about France, a country I know fairly well, not because I was born there and speak its language but because I have studied it a great deal' (1998: 1).

enlarging ethnographic research and rehearsal studies by remaining on, in and apart from the pulses of other people's practices.

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Appendix 1: Production List for *Season*

cast

Kate Atcheson	*Mavis Knot*
Ben O'Reilly	*Harry Knott*
Steve Anderton	*Roy Child*
Lyn Collingwood	*Girlie Pogson*
Peter Flett	*Clive Pogson*
Gabrielle Rogers	*Judy Pogson*
Jacqueline Mikhail	*Pippy Pogson*
Denise Young	*Nola Boyle*
Mick Innes	*Ernie Boyle*
Shae Bacales	*Julia Sheen*
Harold Kissin	*Mr Erbage*
Stephen Barker	*Ron Suddard*
Mark Butler	*Rowley Masson*
Imara Savage	*Deedre*
Emil Lewis	*Ambulance Officer*
Darren Coughran	*Ambulance Officer*
Joanne Toranto	*Violinist*

creative/ production team

Mary-Anne Gifford	*Director*
Simon Shaw	*Set Designer*
Spiros Hristas	*Sound Designer*
Sylvia Jagtman	*Costume Designer*
Morgan Gregory	*Sound Designer*
Manuella Macri	*Production Manager*
Rebecca Ingram	*Stage Manager*

Nicola Best	*Assistant Stage Manager*
Pete Nettel	*Assistant Director*
Ravenna Gregory	*Props Coordinator*
Le-Anne Suthern	*Hair*
Imogen Ross	*Costume Construction*
Sarah Wilson	*Costume Construction*
Alison Fabian	*Costume Construction*
Rory Cubby	*Sound Mixer*
Annabel Meehan	*Sound Operator*
Narelle Lewis	*Lighting Operator*
Amos Ronca	*Lighting Operator*

Appendix 2: Media Release for *Season*

new theatre
Established October 1932
542 King Street Newtown NSW 2042
Ph: (02) 9519 3403 • Fax: (02) 9519 8958

MEDIA RELEASE

THE SEASON AT SARSAPARILLA
by Patrick White

The next production at NEW THEATRE is **The Season at Sarsaparilla** by Patrick White, directed by Mary-Anne Gifford and opening on July 5th.

Summer in Sydney in 1961. In Sarsaparilla people live cheek by jowl in suburban routine with jobs to go to, homes to keep clean, children to care for, meals to prepare and passions to suppress. In Mildred Street the dogs are on heat, the barking never ceases and three families striving to maintain the Australian dream are whirlpooled into the ruthless persistence of life.

Patrick White wrote this "Charade of Suburbia" in 1961 and quickly followed in with *A Cheery Soul* and *Night on Bald Mountain* which was completed in 1962. The first production of ***The Season at Sarsaparilla*** was by the Adelaide University Theatre Guild in 1962. White's mythical suburb of Sarsaparilla appears in the novel, *Riders in the Chariot* and in his short stories, *The Burnt Ones*. His vision of the sprawl of mediocrity is explored further in this play where the tribulations of 'a business executive', 'a man in mens wear', 'a sanitary man' and their families are unveiled with comic insight.

This is Mary-Anne Gifford's last production for New Theatre before taking up her new position as Artistic Director of New England Theatre Company.

DETAILS
Season: Previews July 3rd and 4th. Opens July 5th. Closes August 16th
Plays Friday, Saturday at 8pm, and Sunday at 5.30 pm
Tickets $20 full, $15 concession.
Bookings Telephone: (02) 9519 3403

Director - Mary-Anne Gifford; Assistant Director - Pete Nettell; Costumes - Sylvia Jagtman; Set - Simon Shaw; Lights - Spiros Hristias; Sound - Morgan Gregory.

Cast: Steve Anderton, Kate Atcheson, Shae Bacales, Stephen Barker, Mark Butler, Lyn Collingwood, Darren Coughran, Peter Flett, Mark Hogan, Mick Innes, Harold Kissin, Jacqui Mikhail, Ben O'Reilly, Gabrielle Rogers, Imara Savage, Joanne Tarento, Denise Young.

Media Inquiries: Shane Mortimer, Willpower Promotions - (048) 62 1222

Appendix 3: Script Synopsis of *The Season at Sarsaparilla* (my own synopsis)

Scene: The kitchens and backyards of three houses in Mildred Street, Sarsaparilla, an outer suburb of Sydney
Time: Summer 1961

Act One
Deedre (an eleven year old) visits her friend, Pippy Pogson (also twelve). Girlie Pogson prepares breakfast for her family. Harry Knott fusses around his very pregnant wife, Mavis. Mavis complains about getting no sleep due to the barking of the dogs in the neighbourhood. Harry Knott and Clive Pogson go to work. Judy Pogson (eighteen year old daughter of Clive and Girlie) plays the violin. Roy Child (Mavis' brother)—a teacher on holidays—wonders whether he'll write a book. Ron Suddards (a postal worker) visits Judy and asks her to a concert. Roy teases them both. Julia Sheen (a model) visits Judy to show her the new outfit. Roy tells Judy that she's not that much of a musician. Ernie Boyle returns home to his wife, Nola, after being on night duty as a sanitary man. Roy addresses the audience about the mundanity of suburban life. Clive and Harry return home after their respective day's work. Roy tells Judy that he intends to leave Sarsaparilla but he's not sure where he'll go. Ron brings Judy a book. Julia arrives to show Judy her new hat. She brings Mr Erbage with her (an alderman type, mid-fifties). Rowley Masson (a mate of Ernie's) arrives looking for the Boyle's place. He has come to stay a few days. Ernie comes home and he and Masson start to catch up before Nola arrives. She's not too happy about Masson staying. Ernie leaves for his night job. Nola prepares dinner for Masson, they talk, and she goes to bed. Roy addresses the audience once more, describing nightime in Mildred Street. Harry attends to Mavis and then goes to work. Clive rushes out the door to work. Ernie comes home from work. Masson helps Girlie with her tap in the backyard. Pippy realises that she's too old to play with Deedre. Nola's in the backyard when Ernie and Masson return from the pub drunk. Ernie goes to work. Nola and Masson seduce one another while Pippy, who had gone next door to visit Nola and tell her about the two dogs mating under her own house, accidentally sees them through the window. Nola and Masson disappear to the bedroom and Pippy runs back to her place sobbing.

Act Two

It's early the following morning. Mavis complains about her lack of sleep, and the dogs barking, and Harry makes her a cup of tea. Harry asks Girlie if he could use her phone if Mavis should go into labour. Harry decides to stay at home with Mavis today. Girlie makes Clive eggs for breakfast. They argue. Judy tells her parents that she won't return to the Conservatorium when term begins. Judy tells Roy what she might do with her life. Julia arrives. Ron visits Judy and the two of them go into the Pogsons. Julia tells Roy that she's pregnant and intimates that he might help her (by marrying her?). Roy avoids the issue and offers her money. Julia leaves. Ron tells Judy that he loves and could make her love him. Nola and Masson are feeling guilty about the previous night. Ernie arrives home and knows that Nola and Masson slept together. As Masson leaves, Ernie punches him. On Nola's suggestion, Pippy reluctantly enters the Boyle's yard and kitchen. Pippy softens. Mavis goes into labour and Harry uses the Pogson's phone to call an ambulance. The neighbours gather. Ambulance men arrive and carry Mavis away on a stretcher. Roy tells Judy that he loves her, but when he kisses her, she says she feels nothing. She tells him that love doesn't really matter, only kindness and affection. Ron arrives and Judy makes her affections for him known. Pippy and Deedre laugh at the lovers. Ernie and Nola argue (we discover that she's infertile) and they reconcile. Clive and Girlie argue. Mr Erbage visits Roy and tells him that Julia has killed herself. Harry visits the Pogsons and tells Clive that Mavis had a boy. Mavis returns. Roy leaves Sarsaparilla, certain he'll return.

Appendix 4: Budget Breakdown for *Season*

SEASON BUDGET	
Construction Materials	400
Paint	100
Furniture	300
Costumes	600
Lighting	150
Sound	30
Props	120
TOTAL	**1700**

Season Budget	1700
Hardware contribution	100
Biobox maintenance	100
Contingency	200
TOTAL	**2100**

Appendix 5: Cover page of New Theatre History Booklet

THE NEW YEARS

1932-

The Plays, People and Events
of Six Decades of Sydney's Radical
New Theatre

Appendix 6: Cover page of New Theatre Membership Booklet

new theatre
IS YOUR THEATRE

Those who have been around New Theatre for some time will be familiar with most of the points here. For all members, new and old, as well as for non-members who participate in our shows from time to time, this should be useful as a guide to the sort of standards we expect to be developed and maintained. There are most likely other points, not included here, that will be encountered in actual experience.

IN GENERAL

Democracy

We are a co-operative, democratic non-profit venture. You—that is, the membership—run the theatre. The office-bearers, Management Committee and Production Committee are elected by you and are responsible to you. Play your part in the administration and decision-making of the theatre. Don't beef about anything bothering you in private: bring it up with an office-bearer or the relevant committee or at the quarterly general meeting.
New Theatre is *your* theatre.

Standards

We are an amateur theatre, but we aim to attain professional standards, not only in the level of acting and production, for example, but also in general presentation and discipline as well. Remember, we exist ***because of the public***, and we have a prime responsibility to them. ***We serve them***, and not the other way round. Courtesy and consideration are the essence of all our dealings with the public.

Discipline

Should be 'self-discipline', but of a high standard. Always be punctual. If you can't make a rehearsal, a meeting or some activity you've volunteered for, phone up. Rehearsals are compulsory if you've undertaken to go in a show and should only be missed in the case of illness or with the prior
agreement of the director. This goes for backstage, too.

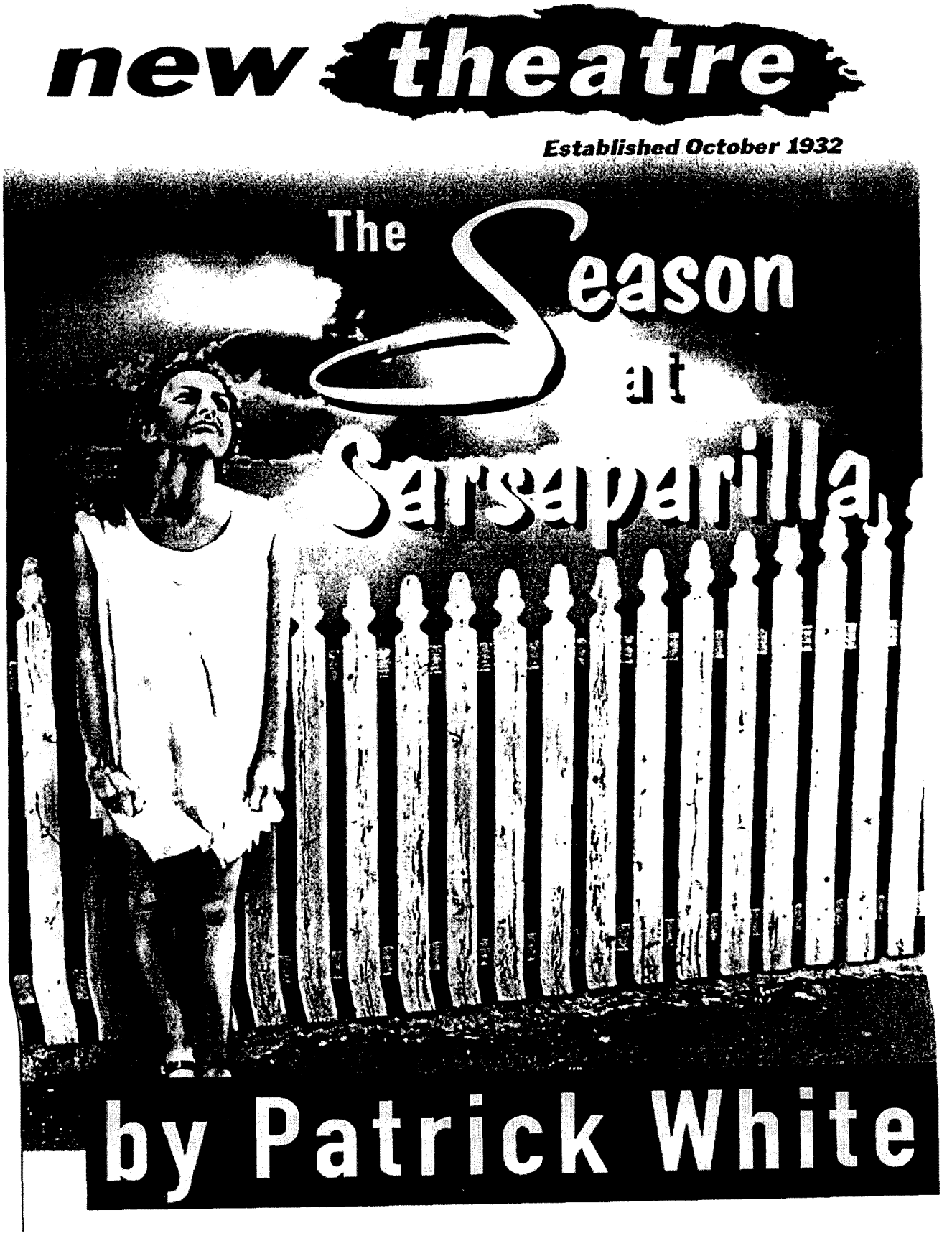
Consider this before you commit yourself to a production.

The worst disrespect you can show a fellow actor or the audience is not to be in a fit enough state to give of your best, either on stage or at any other function. So, please no stimulants of any kind
immediately prior to or during a performance or rehearsal.

The possession and consumption of illegal drugs on New Theatre premises is strictly forbidden. Any person found to be using such drugs shall forfeit membership.

Further, members are reminded that under the terms of our liquor licence alcohol **may be consumed only in the foyer area.**

Appendix 7.1: *Season* programme, page 1



Appendix 7.2: *Season* programme, page 2

The Season at Sarsaparilla

A Charade of Surburbia in Two Acts

Commencing Saturday 5 July 1997

The Setting

Act One:

Day One and Day Two in Mildred St, Sarsaparilla (a fictional suburb in Sydney), Summer 1961.

Act Two:

Day Three in Mildred St, Sarsaparilla. Summer 1961. The la scene takes place three weeks later.

The Characters

The Knott's House

Harry Knott ..... Benjamin O'Reilly
Mavis Knott ..... Kate Atcheson
Roy Child (Brother of Mavis) ..... Steve Anderton

The Pogson's House

Clive Pogson ..... Peter Flett
Girlie Pogson ..... Lyn Collingwood
Judy Pogson ..... Gabriella Rogers
Joyleen (Pippy) Pogson ..... Jacqueline Mikhail

The Boyle's House

Ernie Boyle ..... Mick Innes
Nola Boyle ..... Denise Young

The Visitors (in order of appearance)

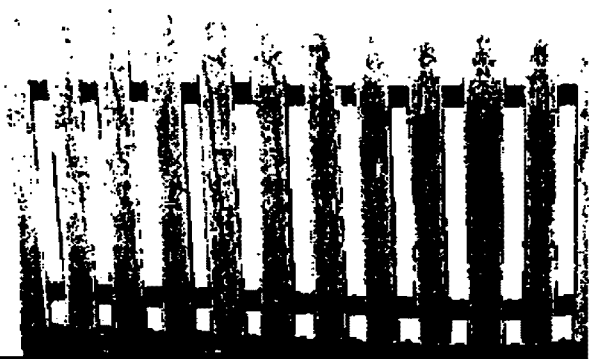
Deedree (Pippy's friend) ..... Imara J. Sava
Ron Saddards (a post office clerk) ..... Stephen Bark
Julia Sheen (a model) ..... Shae Bacab
Rowley (Bigger) Masson (Ernie's mate) ..... Mark Bull
Mr Erbage (an important person) ..... Harold Kiss
Ambulance Man #1 ..... Barren Cough
Ambulance Man #2 ..... Emil Lew

Violinist ..... Joanne Tara

The Production Team

Director ..... Mary-Anne Gifford
Assistant Director ..... Pete Nettell
Set Designer ..... Simon Shaw
Lighting Designer ..... Spiros Kristias
Costume Designer ..... Sylvia Jagtman
Sound Designer ..... Morgan Gregory
Production Manager ..... Manuela Macri
Stage Manager ..... Rebecca Ingram
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Nicola Rosalind Best
Props Coordinator ..... Ravenna Gregory
Hair ..... Lea-Ann Suthern
Sound Mixer ..... Rory Cubby
Lighting Technicians ..... Erin Foran Ole Borch
Lighting Operators ..... Narelle Lewis Amos Ronca
Sound Operators ..... Morgan Gregory Annabel Meehan
Set Construction/Bump-in Crew ..... Doug Park Stuart Grigg
John Massey Andrew Steane
Geoff Channel Amos Ronca Geoffery Chee
Tricia Blambery Simon Shaw Manuela Macri

Costume Construction ..... Sylvia Jagtman Imogen R
Sarah Wilson Allsen Fab
Poster & Programme Design and Typesetting ..... Cheryl W
Posters printed by ..... Paper Tiger Print
Programmes printed by ..... Pink Panther Printing (Ultis
Billboard ..... Max Ethou
Photography ..... Bob Se
Publicity ..... Willpower Promoti



There is one interval of 15 minutes. Refreshments are served at the ba

Appendix 7.3: *Season* programme, page 3

Patrick White 1912-1990

John Tasker directed Patrick White's play *The Ham Funeral* in Adelaide in 1961. That play had been sitting in his drawer at home since 1947 until White said to Geoffrey Dutton, 'I've got this play sitting in my drawer... It wasn't the first play White had written or had produced, but it is the first one that is available for us to read. The earlier plays, written in the 1938's for the little theatre, *Beryl Bryant's Playhouse* and *Return to Abyssinia* (1947) have been suppressed.

Dutton had put *The Ham Funeral* forward for the 1962 Adelaide Festival but it was rejected by the Adelaide Festival Drama Advisory Committee. It was deemed too difficult for Australian audiences to understand, with the comment that "people don't go to the theatre to see plays as penance". The Adelaide Theatre Guild produced the play instead.

In the next three years, Patrick White wrote three more plays: *The Season At Sarsaparilla*, *A Cheery Soul* and *Night On Bald Mountain*. Responses to White's four plays at the time are dominated by criticisms of their being clever and abstract. It seems that Australian critics in the early 1968's agreed with Mr Estbage in *The Season At Sarsaparilla* who says, "I never saw the necessity for getting clever".

Criticisms of the plays are not only aimed at the style, but also the content. At this time it was only Patrick White and Barry Humphries who were satirising Australian surburbia on our stages and the critics and the audiences found it disturbing.

Patrick White didn't write any more plays until 1977 after Jim Sharman revived *The Season At Sarsaparilla* at the Old Tote in 1976. Then came *Big Toys* (1977), *Signal Driver* (1982), *Netherwood* (1983) and *Shepard On The Rocks* (1987). Patrick White had a love/hate relationship with the Australian theatre, feeling that few people understood his work or got it right, yet he kept coming back to writing for the stage. This is probably due to the productions of the few directors who White thought did get it right – particularly the work of Jim Sharman and Neil Armfield.

Australian audiences and writers owe a great debt to the plays of Patrick White. Dorothy Hewitt has said that White killed naturalism in the Australian theatre forever. This may not be entirely true, but his use of epic forms and innovations with language certainly meant we could not look at our writing or ourselves the same way ever again.

Director's Note

When you work in the theatre, you go to see plays. It seems you spend most of your life in theatre foyers – that's where a lot of your conversations take place. The first question almost everyone asks you is, what are you up to? That means, are you working and if so what are you working on? It's something we all bemoan – that we can't think of anything else to ask – but we all still keep doing it. Perhaps we could, as Girlie Pogson finally does in the play, ask, "Are you happy?" but then perhaps, as she decides, the answer may unravel the universe. Unlike Girlie, who doesn't wait for the answer, we just leave that question well enough alone.

My response to the safer question "What are you working on?" has brought lots of different reactions. Oh, I love that play! That's a common one, thank God. And then there's: Why would you want to do his plays, he's so complicated and such a misogynist. So, I disagree, mostly politely, and grab for another scotch before the end of interval. Everyone who has been working on the play has their own stories. One of our company went to an audition and had directors tell her, with great gusto and derision, that they hate this play. She was very upset. I told her they obviously hadn't read it and, besides, that was a disgusting thing to do to someone at an audition. Don't work for them, I said, even if you get the role. Yes, passions are running high in King Street!

All this has shown us there is no sitting on the fence with Patrick (as he has become affectionately known to us). And that's the way he liked it. It's one of the things *The Season At Sarsaparilla* tells us repeatedly. It's way too high up there. Crash that fence, leap from it or climb carefully, but venture down into life. So you ask me, What are you up to? I can answer that one. Ask another question.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the following individuals and organisations without whom this production would not be possible: Pink Panther Printing; Nola Kay for costume cleaning; HarryHarrop – Gibson Chemicals; Newtons Cocina; Hardware House; SE Timbers; Swadlings; Court Craft Australia; Flemings Newtown; Bazza & Son; Mahin & Anoosh at Anoosh's Corner; NSW Ambulance Service; Gene Carroll & Sydney Theatre Co.; Belvoir St Theatre; Marian St Theatre; New Theatre Management Committee; Robyn Monkhouse & NIDA; Amanda McNamara & the University of Western Sydney Nepean; Haberfield School Canteen; Annie Breslin at AFTRS; Tom Bannerman; Danielle Batha; Mario Bianco; Joanne Duffy; Angus Fraser; Gregory Godhard; Mark Hogan; Kelsey Hughes; Donita Hulme; David Ingram; Lucas Thein; The Irvines; Margrit Macri, Marianne McKeon; Barbara Mobbs; Nancy & Jenny Short; Marion Smith; Tony Youlden.

New Theatre gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Council of the City of South Sydney.

Next Production

Don Juan Comes Back from the War
by Ödön von Horváth
translated by Christopher Hampton
directed by Kevin Jackson
Sept 6 - Oct 18

Appendix 7.4: *Season* programme, page 4

Biographies

STEVE AMBERTON is in his 2nd production for NT, having performed in *Lovelock's Dream Run At ANU* he appeared in *Roll Your Own* and *Hands*, and appeared in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for Acid Theatre Co.

KATE ATCHESON graduated from VCA in 1995, appearing for them in *Dancing At Lughnasa* and *The Cherry Orchard*. She both wrote and performed *One Seconnes One* at Theatreworks in Melbourne. For the ATYP she appeared in *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Romeo And Juliet*. Kate has also worked on the feature film *The Alive Tribe*.

SHAE BACHES has previously performed with NT in *The Cherry Orchard*. Shae has also appeared in *Low Level Panic* at The Stables and Carlton Court House and in *Goldilocks* at the Playhouse - Sydney Opera House.

STEPHEN BARKER has worked on over 30 productions at NT, including *Misalliance*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Hamlet*. He has performed with various other companies including Armidillos Theatre Co. where he performed in *The Ghost Sonata* and Armidale Playhouse in *Extremities*. He directed *Dido And Aeneas* for UNE/TQN/SBS-TV.

NICOLA ROSALIND BEST is a new member of New Theatre and joins as ASM on this production.

MARK BUTLER has worked on over 6 productions for New Theatre, including *Subversi* and *The Body* both of which he directed. He has previously been the Artistic Director & playreader for New Theatre.

LYN COLLINGWOOD has performed at New Theatre many times over her 17 year membership, including *Kafka's Dick*, *Yobbo Nowt & Ghoul 9*. She has also performed for The Ensemble Theatre in *A Hard God* & *The Family* & for The Riverina Theatre Co. in *The One Day Of The Year*. She is currently a playreader for NT.

DARREN COUGHRAN is in his 1st production for New Theatre. He has performed in productions of *How The Other Half Live* for Brisbane Arts & *Laugh Or Die* for Shopfront Theatre.

PETER FLETT is recent member of NT. He has had a long career in theatre & television including appearances in *The Caver* at Belvoir St., *Cyrano de Bergerac* at STC & *Elegies* at Threshold/NIDA.

MARY-ANNE GIFFORD has been appointed Artistic Director of New England Theatre Co. and is unfortunately vacating the position of AD here at NT. This is her 3rd production for NT, having previously directed *The Father We Loved On A Beach By The Sea* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

MORGAN GREGORY has used her talents at New Theatre in 2 productions earlier this year, they are *Lie Of The Mind* as ASM and *The Cherry Orchard* as sound designer and operator.

RAVENNA GREGORY has been Stage Manager for *Women On Top* at IO Myers Theatre, co-directed *A Theatrical Fish* at Figtree Theatre and performed in *Stags And Hens* at PACT Youth Theatre. She is a new member of New Theatre.

SPIROS HRISTIAS is the man you want when wires & lights are involved. He's been there & more for New Theatre as Lighting Designer on *The Father We Loved On The Beach By The Sea*, *One Word...ME!* & *The Cherry Orchard*. He has gone way past "there", as the NT's Technical Director. He has also been there for others as the director of *Arts And Crafts* at the Lighthouse & as lighting designer on numerous productions for Stables and Downstairs at Belvoir St.

REBECCA INGRAM is working on her first production as Stage Manager for NT. She has performed in *Dating You Were Marvelous* at Cafe de Lane, *Pygmalion* and *Paper Hearts*.

NICK INNES is new to NT. He has appeared in *Goodbye Jules* and *Night Story* for Theatre Zart in W.A.; & *Bloodlit Butterflies* and *The Silent Years* for Back Chairs Theatre. He toured S.A. & N.T. in *Shakespeare Pizzaro* & in Sydney for *The Proposal* at Downstairs at Belvoir St.

SYLVIA LOETMAN is Queen Of The Wardrobe for New Theatre and spends many a day in the dungeon as her thanks. She has worked on 3 productions here as both set and costume designer (when we let her out of the dungeon) including, *The Father We Loved ... and The Cherry Orchard*. Recently, she added *Art Director of Chapfest* for Pork Chop Productions to her list of credits. She also co-designed the set for *Black Mary* at Sydney St Theatre Space & designed costumes for *Down The Drain* at the Brisbane Festival.

HAROLD KISSIN is a new member and is performing in his first production for NT. He has performed previously in *God's Favourites* at Phillip St, *Death Of A Salesman* and *Knock, Knock* in New Zealand amongst many others.

EMIL LEWIS is new to NT. He's appeared on *Water Rats* and in a short film at the Tropicana Film Festival. He has also performed in *Can't Imagine Tomorrow*.

NARRELLE LEWIS is working on her first production for New Theatre. She has previously worked as SM on *Hay* for the Gate Theatre, London; *Twelfth Night* at the Shakespeare Festival, Oxford; and *Taming Of The Shrew* at Rose and Crown Theatre, London.

MANUELA MACRI was SM earlier this year on *Dan's Party* for NT. She has worked on *Little Shop Of Horrors* and *Going Home* for Belvoir St., *A Fabulous Night At The Trocadero* for STC, and *Speaking In Tongues* at Griffin. She is currently NT's Production Coordinator.

ANNABEL MEEHAN is new to New Theatre. She works as a crew member on short film productions.

JACQUELINE MIKHAIL is performing for the 2nd time at New Theatre having previously graced the stage in *The Cherry Orchard*. She has also worked as ASM on *The Father We Loved...* Jacqui has also written and directed *Jaz's Diner With Excerpts From Stephen Sewell's The Blind Giant Is Dancing* at The Harold Park Hotel.

PETE METTELL has appeared at NT in 3 productions including, *The American Clock* and *Our Country's Good*. He's popped out to perform in *Sweeney Todd - The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street* at the Seymour Centre and he wrote and directed *Loving The Alien* at Stables Theatre.

BENJAMIN O'REILLY has been a member of NT for 6 years, during which time he has performed in various productions including, *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear* and *Unidentified Human Remains... He's also Died With A Falafel In His Hand* for Cyclone Productions.

GABRIELLE ROGERS is joining NT on this production, having previously performed in *the Slap* for Pymble Players Theatre, *Red Cross* at the Wagga Wagga Festival and *As You Like It* whilst at High School.

ANNA RONCA is a new member here at NT. He is studying BA Theatre at Nepean Uni & has performed & been ASM with *In Your Space* at Nepean.

IMOGEN ROSS is in her first production for NT. In the last year she has designed *Beowulf* for SCG, *Peer Gynt* for N.E.T.C & *Charity* at Belvoir St.

IMARA J. SAVAGE has performed in Newtown High School of Performing Arts' productions of *The Golden Age*, *Abelard And Heloise* and *Gods Of War*. This is her first production for New Theatre.

SIMON SHAW is a Landscape Architect and Urban Designer who works for Clouston. He's currently supervising the redevelopment of Hyde Park & has completed *An Actor Prepares* at The Actors Centre.

LEA-ANN SUTHERN was the 1995 Hairdressing Apprentice of the Year and did the hair, makeup and costumes for *HMS Pinafore* and *Les Miserables* for the Canberra Philharmonic Society. This is her first production at New Theatre.

JOANNE TARANTO is new to NT, having performed previously with many orchestras including the Western Youth Orchestra and also in *Santa Meets The Bush ranger* at the Zenith Theatre.

DENISE YOUNG has worked in New Zealand and Perth performing in *Wild Honey* for WA Theatre Co.; *Otherwise Engaged* at the Regal Theatre, Perth & *Uncle Vanya* for The Playhouse, Perth. She is a recent member of New Theatre and this is her first production.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

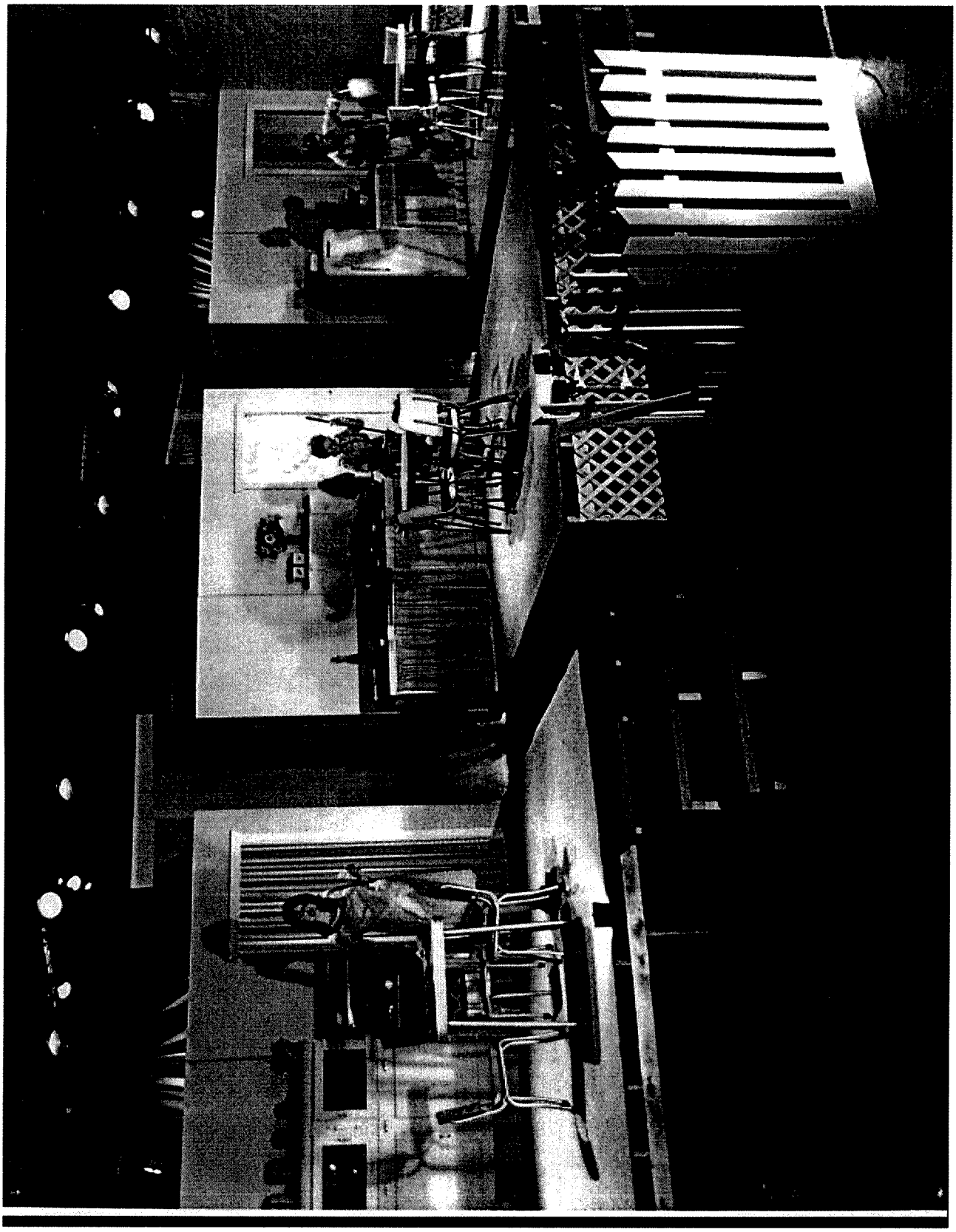
New Theatre is able to receive donations through a listing on the Register of Companies under section 78(1)(a) of the Income Tax Assessment Act of 1936.

All donations of $2.00 or more are eligible tax deductions.

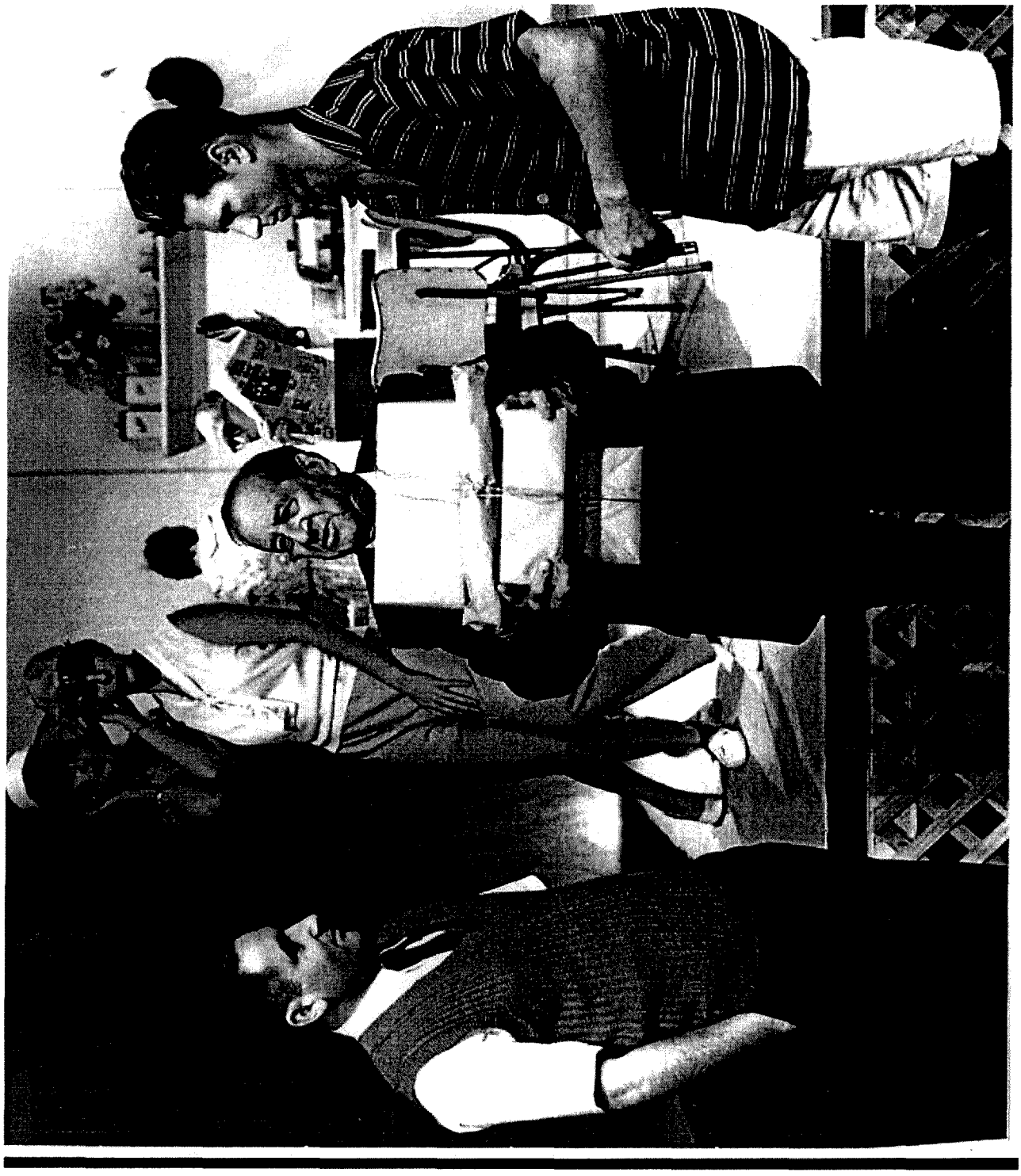
Donations should be made payable to "New Theatre Fund" and sent to The Administrator, New Theatre, 542 King Street, Newtown, NSW, 2042. Telephone enquiries 9519 3403.

Appendix 8: *The Season at Sarsaparilla*
(from L to R): (background) Lyn (GIRLE), Jacqui (PIPPY), Imara (DEEDRE), Denise (NOLA)

Appendix 9: *The Season at Sarsaparilla*
(from L to R): Kate (MAVIS), Lyn (GIRLIE), Denise (NOLA)



Appendix 10: *The Season at Sarsaparilla*
(from L to R): Stephen (RON), Shae (JULIA), Gaby (JUDY), Lyn (GIRLIE), Harold (MR ERBAGE), Peter (CLIVE), Steve (ROY)



Appendix 11: Production List for *Reg*

c a s t

Graham Harvey	*John*
Steven Tandy	*Guy*
Sean Hall	*Eric*
Peter Flett	*Daniel*
Jonathon Mill	*Bernie*
Anthony Phelan	*Benny*

c r e a t i v e / p r o d u c t i o n t e a m

Tony Knight	*Director*
Murray Picknett	*Designer*
Tony Youlden	*Lighting Designer*
Pene Quarry	*Production Administrator*
Felix Williamson	*Production Co-ordinator/ Co-Producer*
Peter Flett	*Producer*
Brigid Collaery	*Stage Manager*
Marco Fraietta	*Assistant Stage Manager*

Appendix 12: Script Synopsis of *My Night With Reg* (my own synopsis)

Setting for all three Acts: Guy's apartment in London.

Act One
Guy, John and Daniel (now in their mid-thirties) were at university together. Guy and John have not seen one another in ten years, and Guy has invited him around for a dinner party. Eric, a young house-painter, is busily painting a wall in Guy's flat. Unbeknownst to John, Guy was and still is in love with him. Daniel (who is partnered with Reg) unexpectedly arrives. When he leaves, John confesses to Guy that he is having an affair with Reg.

Act Two (after Reg's funeral)
John, Daniel, Eric, Bernie, and Benny are at Guy's. Benny and Bernie (partners) separately confide in Guy that they have each slept with Reg. Bernie leaves after having an argument with Benny. Benny and John kiss and leave together. Eric (Guy's young house painter and friend) guesses that Guy loves John and tries to convince Guy to confess to John. Guy doesn't, and instead he makes advances towards Eric. Eric tells Guy of a man he once slept with, and we are to guess that it is Reg.

Act Three (late at night after Guy's funeral)
John and Eric have spent the evening together. In his will, Guy has left the apartment to John. Daniel arrives, drunk, and asks John whether he was having an affair with Reg. John denies it and Daniel leaves.

Appendix 13: Mission statement for *Reg*

Mission Statement.

"MY NIGHT WITH REG" by Kevin Elyot is an exciting new play - a smash hit on the West End in London, and currently running off Broadway in New York. The play was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1994 and won the Writer's Guild of Great Britian Award for Best Fringe Theatre Play in the same year. It soon transferred to the Criterion Theatre on the West End, (the first play to transfer directly from the Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court to the West End since The Rocky Horror Show), where it played to capacity houses for over two years.

Jack Tinker in *The Daily Mail* wrote, "MY NIGHT WITH REG...is one of the most sublimely moving, genuinely funny and exquisitely observed of plays...a play of genius." Paul Taylor in *The Independent* wrote, "Painfully undisclosed emotion, played off against a tragi-farcical flurry of sexual revelations, is at the heart of Kevin Elyot's sharply witty and humanely wise drama about gay manners and morals in the age of AIDS."

"MY NIGHT WITH REG" is about love and betrayal amongst a group of old friends, united in facing the ever present spectre of AIDS. Extremely moving and deliciously bitchy, the play covers a two year period in the life of these friends. By the end, with all the deceit and hurt, there is still the power of love which stands as a testament to the nature of true friendship in this time of AIDS.

THRESHOLD PRODUCTIONS, in association with PAMEDIA (Aust.) and BEHAVIOUR ENTERMAINMENT (U.K.) is mounting a major production of "MY NIGHT WITH REG" for the 1998 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival. The production will be directed by Tony Knight, the Head of Acting at The National Institute of Dramatic Art and director and producer of ELEGIES. The cast will include some of Sydney's top actors - Andrew McFarlane, Peter Flett, Graham Harvey, and Anthony Phelan. This is an ensemble play which requires skilled and detailed playing. The style is farcical, in a similar vein to Joe Orton, but the emotion needed makes the play a far more deeply rewarding night at the theatre.

This will be the first Sydney production of the play, and is especially exciting, given that it is one of the major gay plays of the 1990s. THRESHOLD, who produced ELEGIES FOR ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS for the 1996 Mardi Gras Festival, is thrilled to be once again associated with Mardi Gras and is undertaking this project specifically for the 20th Anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

We propose that this major production of "MY NIGHT WITH REG" will play at the Upstairs Theatre, Belvoir Street, one of the most prestigious and centrally located theatres in Sydney, throughout the Mardi Gras Festival in February 1998. Considering the pedigree of the play, the producers, director and cast involved, this promises to be be one of the major performing arts events of the 20th Anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and a theatrical event not to be forgotten.

Appendix 14: Media release for *Reg*

esoteric media release

esoteric entertainment presents

my night with reg

by Kevin Elyot

"My Night With Reg.. is one of the most sublimely moving, genuinely funny and exquisitely observed of plays.. a play of genius." - *The Daily Mail, London*

"Smart, diverting and affecting.." - *The New York Times*

"... the best new play I've seen since I started reviewing." - *The Independent, London*

My Night With Reg, by **Kevin Elyot**, is a provocative new comedy opening tonight at The Newtown Theatre.

A smash hit on the West End in London, and enjoying recent success in New York, **My Night With Reg** first opened at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1994. It moved to the Criterion Theatre on the West End (the first play to transfer directly from the Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court to the West End since the Rocky Horror Show) where it played to capacity houses.

My Night With Reg won the 1994 Writers Guild of Great Britain Award for Best Fringe Theatre Play. On the West End it went on to win the 1994 Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy and the 1995 Laurence Olivier Award for Best Comedy. Kevin Elyot won the 1995 London Critics' Circle Award for most Promising Newcomer. His new play, "The Day I Stood Still", opened at the National Theatre of Great Britain in January 1998.

My Night With Reg is about love and betrayal amongst a group of old friends, united in facing the ever present spectre of AIDS. Extremely moving and deliciously bitchy, the play covers several years in the lives of these friend. By the end, with all the deceit and hurt, there is still the power of love which stands as a testament to the nature of true friendship.

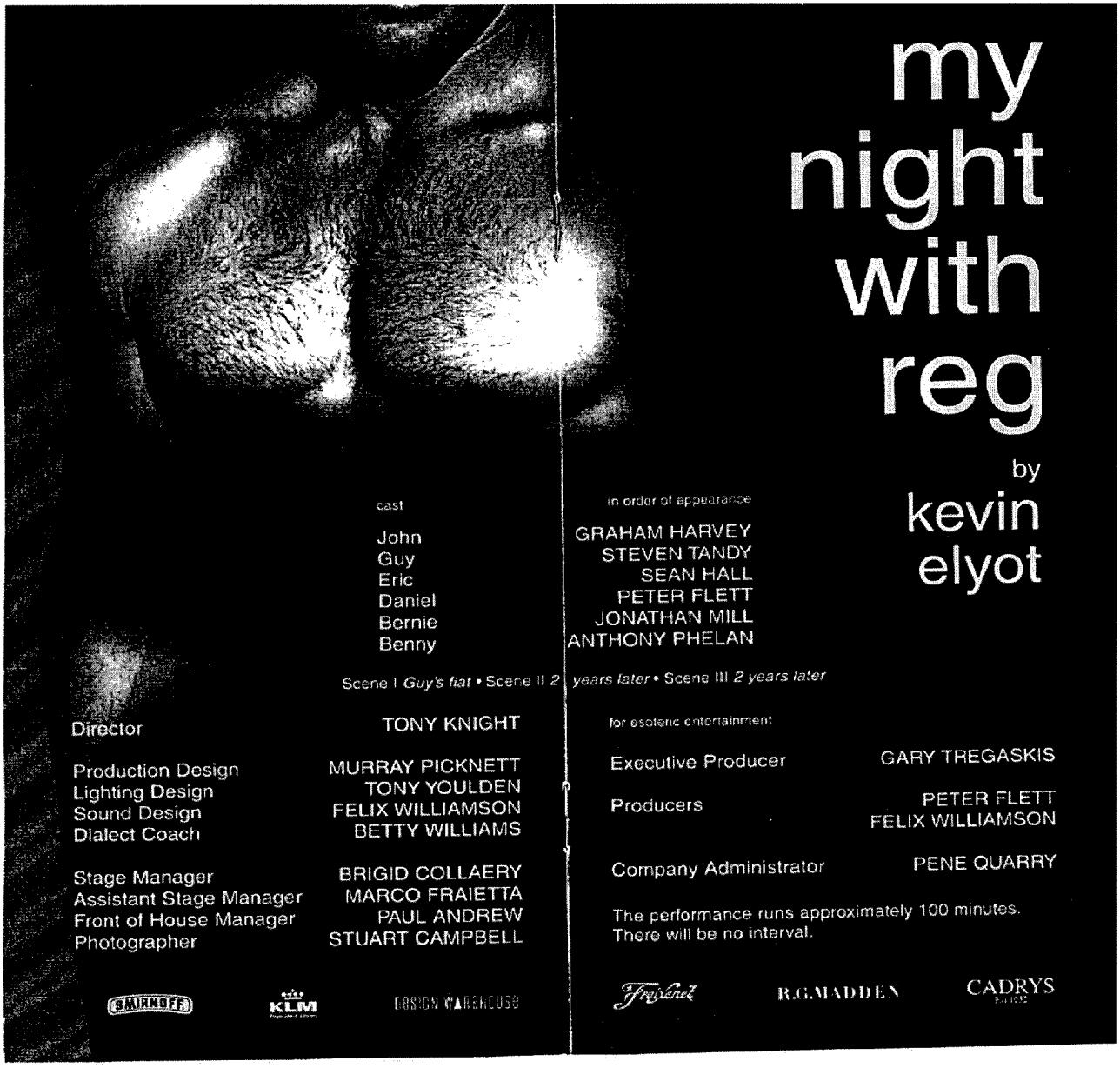
The production is directed by **Tony Knight** (Head of Acting at NIDA), the cast being **Peter Flett, Sean Hall, Graham Harvey, Jonathan Mill, Anthony Phelan** and **Steven Tandy.**

This will be the first Sydney production of this highly regarded play, and will be a highlight of the **1998 Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival**, at the refurbished Newtown Theatre, located in the heart of Sydney's thriving inner west.

Venue:	Newtown Theatre, 354 King Street, Newtown
Opens:	Tonight, Tuesday 3 February at 8pm.
Times:	Tuesday to Friday at 8pm, Saturdays at 6pm & 9pm, Sunday Matinee at 5pm Note:- Thursday 26 February and Friday 27 February at 6pm & 9pm Saturday 28 February at 2pm only, no perf. Sunday 1 March
Prices:	Full $35, Mardi Gras M'brs $30, Concession $27
Bookings:	Ticketek 9266 4800 (booking fees may apply) Box Office enquiries 9565 5070

For further media enquiries and production photographs contact :-
Bruce Pollack Publicity 40 Victoria street Paddington 2021 telephone (02) 9331 5276 facsimile (02) 9331 5355

Appendix 15: centre page of *Reg* programme



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