Postmodernism and Theater

Theater places us right at the heart of what is religious-political: in the heart of absence, in negativity, in nihilism as Nietzsche would say, therefore in the question of power.

Jean-François Lyotard

In the first half of the twentieth century, in theater the proliferation of confrontations and conflations continued - by philosophers, theater scholars, or practitioners and their projected and rejected ideas - among and between art and science, authenticity and artificiality, body and mind, nature and nurture, life and nolife, life and extinguished life (death), the macro and the micro, meaning and nonsense, facts and fictions, tradition and invention, space (near and far) and time (past and future), center and margin, and
insides and outsides. But in the second half of the twentieth century, theater
defied many of these dichotomies and binary oppositions head on, recognize-
ing that our modernist, positivist heritage of separate and hierarchical clas-
sifications no longer satisfied emergent cosmologies embracing process, chaos
and complexity.

If the condition of modernity is the notion that the history of thought
is an advancing “enlightenment” which moves toward a much more perfect
appropriation and reappropriation of its own “foundations,” then modernity
can be defined as “a consciousness of an ‘overcoming’ of past understand-
ings and a striving toward future ‘overcomings’ in the name of a deeper
recognition of that which is fundamentally legitimating and ‘true,’ whether this
is within science, the arts, morality or any other realm of thought or prac-
tice.” In this sense, as the prefix “post” would seem to suggest, postmodernity
will be characterized by a departure from the modernist “striving toward
foundation.” Postmodernity, thus, will question the modernist faith in “legiti-
macy.” The postmodern, here, as a phenomenon which defines, confines and
undermines the cultural products, perspectives and premises of modernity
turns to be complex and multiple. So to speak, one can claim that the
postmodern cannot be completely free of the modern, for the postmodern
takes the modern as a ground on which it stands, a ground with which it
is in debate and on which it is able to evaluate and question itself. As
Lyoard argued, it might be tempting then to claim that one must focus his/
her attention on the modern in order to come to the postmodern.
Modern art can be interpreted as striving, through struggling claim and counter-claim, towards an exposure of art's fundamental terms and values. The "modernist theater," in this context, is one that is keen to define itself, that "overcomes" the dramatic work of the "recent past" in a "form" towards "foundation," towards an exposure of its own unified and legitimating terms as "theater." The modernist theater, then, tries, in its address to peculiar dramatic works, to take part in an unearthing of the fundamental terms by which theater operates.

Indeed it is striking to note that the separation from the idea of the "legitimating foundation" is a key to description of the postmodern theater. If we accept that the modernist theater strives toward foundation, then the "postmodernist theater" must precisely happen as an anti-foundational disruption of the move towards "categories," "categorizations," "forms" and "meanings." So, in order to describe the postmodern in theater, critics seek to define the "postmodernist theater" as "that which is disruptive of categories and categorizations and which finds its identity through an erasion or disruption of conventions."

Let me clarify that one cannot, with respect to this perspective, start an investigation into the nature of the postmodern in theater by bearing in mind a prescriptive view of what "postmodern theater" is. Here it is much more convenient to say that what "postmodern theater" is not. As far as one can judge, this idea of the postmodern cannot be in tune with "conventional" theater and drama. The aesthetic strategies and forms used by prac-
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tioners of postmodern theater and performance are “unconventional” and “experimental” challenging the notion of what theater is. The postmodern avoidance of definition and category lures both critics and artists to cross “disciplines,” “categories” and “established boundary lines.” It is worth briefly noting that “the very idea of ‘theater’ is disruptive of the ‘modernist’ attempt to entrench the work of art within a set of unique and exclusive terms, and that the ‘postmodern’ occurs as unstable, ‘theatrical’ and, in certain senses, ‘interdisciplinary’ evasions of definition and foundation.”

In the following section, I aim to sketch the key paradigms taken by either modernist philosophers, theater scholars, or practitioners which, I believe, can be useful in the development of postmodern theater.

I

The Modernist Paradigms in Theater

To identify paradigms that represent the modernist thought and discern their role in theater, seven approaches- theater as staged literature, theater as sign system, theater as phenomenon, theater as art form, theater as performance, theater as play and theater as mode of cultural production - must be discussed briefly here:
Theater as Staged Literature

The tradition of a theory of theater as "staged literature" is a legacy traceable to Aristotle's description of tragedy as "a species of mimesis or imitation" in the Poetics. For him, tragedy, as a genre of poetry, embraces six elements—plot (mythos), character (ethos), thought (dianoia), diction (lexis), song (melos) and spectacle (opsis). Aristotle, then, argues that only the last two elements—song and spectacle—are directly related to theatrical performance and serve as decorations. He attributes the power of tragedy mainly to its dramatic structure.

The influence of Aristotle's Poetics on dramatic theories continued to dominate the main goal of the Renaissance theorists through the Enlightenment. A variant of Aristotelian view took the same history of establishing rules and values for the perfect construction of tragedies and dramas from the sixteenth century by Julius Caesar Scaliger to the eighteenth century by Voltaire.

Out of regard for the Poetics, in the nineteenth century, the Romantic critic Charles Lamb claimed that William Shakespear's dramatic works just occur completely on the page, and that performances destroy the text's purity. In the eyes of a generation of theater scholars developing from World War II, the leading paradigm for evaluating dramas was "New Criticism, which treated plays as extended metaphors to be subjected to 'close readings,' minimizing the significance of even such quasi-theatrical features as the sequence of the dialogue and its attribution to specific characters."
Theater as Sign System

In the twentieth century, a theoretical attitude toward the relation between theater and semiotics can be said to run through the structuralist semiology of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the pragmatic semiotics of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. The crux of semiotic theories of theater revolves round the idea that the main role of theater is communicative and that theater creates a particular system of signs with its own syntax and semantics. Theater semiotics has appeared in two mainstreams.

The first came to light in Prague during the 1930s and 1940s, when members of the Prague Linguistic Circle laid stress on the “conventional” and vivid nature of the dramatic signs: a single signifier, like an actor, can express effectively any kind of meaning, embracing information about a character or place. This early semiotic project emphasized the “conventionality” of the theater event, like puppetry, and folk and experimental theater. On the pretense of Socialist Realism as the only authentic approach to drama and theater, it came to an end after the sudden rise of Communist Party to power in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

The second mainstream occurred in the late 1960s and encompassed a global interest in theater semiotics. Theater semioticians like Tadeusz Kowsan and Patrice Pavis attempted to specify a systematic description of the theatrical sign system. This program intended to disintegrate theater into component sign systems such as language, gesture and costume. The primary
goal of such an analysis was to establish a method in order to define how these component systems work both separately and together. Such theater semioticians even took a step more and tried to pinpoint a minimal syntactical and semantic unit similar to words in verbal language. Generating dissatisfaction outside and inside semiotic theater because of its linguistic mappings, this semiology of theater was criticized by many "self-described theater semioticians" who "had abandoned the effort to identify universal features of the supposed 'language' of the stage, turning instead to issues concerning the ideology and historical contingency of theater practices" in the early 1990s.

**Theater as Phenomenon**

The decline in dominance of global concepts of theater semiotics was mainly generated by its failure to explain the physical or intellectual vigor of human presence on the stage. In reply to this problem, some theater theorists, such as Bert States and Stanton Garner, introduced a new theoretical orientation called "phenomenological approach."

In view of a semiotic account, a live actor is only another sort of signifier, and there is also little difference between theater and film. Indeed, for some semioticians, theater is a subset of film, which embraces effectively all of the sign systems of theater and has additional systems like montage.

According to a phenomenological perspective, however, live performance and film are quite different. An important feature of such a phenom-
enological approach to theater is that it denies the idea of theater as a medium for communication and puts the different dramatic and performance strategies under close scrutiny to uncover the way in which such strategies influence spectators' perceptions of the performance event, "and in particular their subjective experience of time and space, their sensitivity to the elements of risk and spontaneity implicit in live performance, and their awareness of the corporeality of the actor's body." 6

The stress on the body agrees completely with issues in feminist theory such as "gender construction" 7 and "the gaze" 8 and theorists including Judith Butler and Peggy Phelan who have applied different views of the phenomenological approach in order to evaluate the influences of performance on spectators' perception of gender and sexuality.

**Theater as Art Form**

Not every philosopher of art would agree with the relationship between theater and literature. Many of them such as Susanne Knauth Langer, and Richard Wollheim analyze theater as an art form, placing emphasis on theater's similarity with other art forms. They assume that it is possible to speak about theater with comparing it to other forms of art like painting and sculpture, because theater, as a means of representation, has much in common with both painting and sculpture, especially scenery includes elements of both these media. In this sense, one might consider an actor as "a sculpture made of flesh." Simultaneously, there are many nonrepresentational aspects
of theater which link it more closely to music.

The importance of relatedness of theater and music is stressed by the fact that both theater and music concern a “temporal dimension” and the idea of “performing a work.” Now it is true that theater can use “flesh-and-blood human beings” to stage human beings, and real actions to stage fictional actions. So to speak, it lessens the perception of the boundary lines between reality and representation in a way in which no other art form can do. Actors act at once as an artists and media, similar to both the musician and the music, at the same time expressing dramatic language and evolving into aesthetic objects independently.

**Theater as Performance**

Performance studies has generated important debates in the United States and abroad since the mid-1970s, when the experimental theater director Richard Schechner and the anthropologist Victor Turner located theater in the heart of a vast body of both Western and non-Western theater traditions encompassing dance, performance art, circus, shamanistic rituals, sporting events, political rallies, parades, wedding ceremonies, and medieval tournaments.

Performance studies bases its arising emphasis on multiculturalism in all fields of the arts and humanities and received its populist, antiliterary inspirations from 1960s avant-garde theater and performance art. To follow Schechner, performance is “restored behavior” which by definition means
any behavior that can be practised and repeated. This definition contributes significantly to identifying numerous points of similarity and dissimilarity within a limitless range of phenomena.

A pattern central to the performance studies paradigm, which owes a great deal to the “Cambridge school anthropologists” Gilbert Murray and F. M. Cornford, appeared in the early twentieth century. They maintained that Greek tragedy and comedy, respectively, developed from pagan rituals staging the myth of the Year-Daemon. Although this idea was repudiated by most classical scholars, the proposal of analyzing theater from an anthropological view rather than a literary or aesthetic one has had great impact on theater studies.

Another key figure of performance studies was sociologist Erving Goffman who used theater as a leading metaphor to examine a broad range of social behavior, indicating the value of an extended idea of “performance.”

**Theater as Play**

Hermeneutics and cultural history are intertwined in the creation of “theater as play.” This is the view that is suggested by the cultural historian Johan Huizinga and the hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer.

They regard theater as a kind of play, grouping theater with “children’s games of make-believe” and other games that include a feature of role playing. In this sense, the performance studies approach can be classified
under the general principle of this paradigm, because it involves any game played for spectators within its realm.

Theater as Mode of Cultural Production

Although there is a touch of the postmodernist idea in this paradigm, it can be subsumed under the modernist paradigm of theater, for it seeks to define and categorize theater.

The core of this approach is concerned with the de-aestheticization of theater. It analyzes theater as a “mode of cultural production” along with practices such as television, popular music, news report, and advertising. This paradigm highly influenced by Marxist theory, particularly in the writings of twentieth-century cultural materialists such as Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and the Frankfurt School. The writings of Michel Foucault on “history” and “power” are also of particular importance to this approach. “Theater as mode of cultural production” tries to trace the way in which theater, both as an institution and through peculiar works, plays a part in the propagation or subversion of the “dominant ideology.”

Chief proponents of this approach place emphasis upon the need to “historicize” theory, in other words, to ground it in “an understanding of a particular cultural context,” and so attempt to establish a skeptical view towards “essentializing” claims about the nature of theater.
II

Problems with the Modernist Paradigms

The crucial part of problems is developed early in the definition of theater. According to the Western tradition, theater, out of respect for which paradigm is taken in the analysis of it, is formed of "one or more actors performing a play for an audience, which in turn entails conveying a narrative by means of role playing."

It is, then, clear that every element of this general definition will not be accepted as a necessary condition by various theater theorists. Some theater scholars take the view that the existence of "play" is optional. They give way to improvised forms of theater—although special definitions of "play" impose specific kinds of improvisation.

For others, "narrative" is optional. The idea gives rise to Happenings and other kinds of avant-garde performance—in spite of the fact that many avant-garde performance groups sustain some trace of "narrative" content, regardless of how fragmented or ambiguous, to be necessary to theater. Perhaps the most remarkable example of the case is Alan Kaprow who created the term "Happening" in the late 1950s. He argued that "Happening" should not be considered as theater.

Some cast doubt on the need for "audience." They set the scene for completely "participatory event" which denies a distinction between per-
Nearly all philosophical debates on theater, however, originate from the way in which theater theorists identify the basic elements of this definition and the exact relationship between these elements as well. The most important debates have dealt with the relationships between play and performance, performance and narrative, and actor and role.

Play and Performance

In the growth of a long, slow wave of criticism of the fundamental assumptions of Western thought, semiotics has a unique part to contribute. And in the development of aesthetic theory semiotics also contributes to throw light on patterning in music, literature, and theater as well.

Semiotic theories differentiate the “dramatic text” that a reader comes upon the page from “performance text” that an audience comes upon in the theater. The relationship of performance text to dramatic text, on the strength of this “two text” pattern, can be specified according to six exclusive approaches:

I. An “incorporation theory” (such as Jiri Veltrusky’s) views the dramatic text only as the “verbal component” of the performance. The relationship between play and performance, according to this perspective, is one of part to whole: a performance, as well as including other kinds of
signs, comprises the dialogue of the play.

II. A “translation theory” (such as Pavis’s idea) proposes the link between dramatic text and performance on account of what they represent. Performance seeks to say in the language of stage what the text says in words.

III. A “realization theory” (such as Jean Alter’s) is much the same as a translation theory, but it disregards the dramatic text as the “representation of a fictional narrative.” This approach looks upon the dramatic text as the “representation of an idealized performance.”

IV. An “interpretation theory” (such as Fischer-Lichte’s view) comes into view as a response to the fact that performances do not only to copy content previously appeared in the text or that once occurred in the mind of the playwright- as the translation and realization theories suggest. Instead, it includes a massive amount of information, containing, but not confined to, the particular appearance of the props and scenery and the actor’s rhythm and movements. These creative ideas demonstrate the various interpretations of the play received by actors, designers, and directors.

V. An “adaptation theory” (such as Benedetto Croce’s and Ingarden’s) focuses on the range of a production’s cre-
ative interpretation, but maintains that the final production should be considered as a fresh work, similar to a film based upon a novel.

VI. An "execution theory" (such as John Searle’s, De Marinis’s, Anne Ubersfeld) deems the dramatic text as a set of directions, commands, or suggestions to performers and theater designers, however, proponents of an execution theory put forward different proposals concerning the particular illocutionary force of the stage directions and dialogue.

A large number of contemporary analytic philosophers of theater would not map out completely on the same theoretical grid with semiology. They regard plays as logical "types" whose "instances" are performances. This notion, first postulated by Wollheim in *Art and Its Objects* (1968; 1992), was obviously at odds with the two-text pattern, which combines the idea of the "play" with that of the dramatic text. At the heart of this proposal is the argument that the relationship between a play and its performances is less like that of a novel to its translations than a novel to its copies. On the basis of this view, it is possible to say that the concept of a "play" does not demand the existence of written dialogue, as long as it can provide a chain of principles that enable both actors and audience to establish what considers as a performance of the work.
It is not, then, surprising that this contention gives rise to the emergence of the “type-token” theory. This theory rests on two crucial foundations. First, a performance may stop being an “instance” of the play and turns out to be a new work. Second, audience has to make choice between the type (the play) and the token (the performance) as the most important object of aesthetic interest. For Wollheim, the play is the aesthetic object and the performance is a means to access to it. Paul Thom, by contrast, believes that theatrical performances are not artistic work, as plays are, but regards them as the most important object of aesthetic interest. The theory also provokes many issues, such as the importance of the “production.” A play such as *King Lear*, for instance, has a lot of productions by various directors, designers, and casts of actors, and every of these productions usually includes many performances. Consequently, a theatrical performance deemed as the token of two types: a play and a production, and, at the same time, productions themselves are tokens with regard to plays and types with regard to performance.

**Performance and Narrative**

Undoubtedly, the question of how exactly theatrical performances convey narrative information is one of the most significant bones of contention in theater theory. A lucid elaboration of Peirce’s semiotic theory attempted to set forth the essence of a solution to the problem. The Peirce’s relative role of three references to a sign: “symbols” (convention), “icons” (equivalent),
and “indexes” (connection) would build a framework for evaluating the issue. Prague school semioticians laid stress on the function of convention. The American playwright and theorist Thornton Wilder is one of the proponents of this notion. According to many more contemporary semioticians, such as Umberto Eco, iconicity plays the major role, and some, such as Elam, insists on the function of indexical signs.

Other theater analysts, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Walton, have advanced nonsemitic theories of theatrical representation giving an emphasis to audience’s imagination. For Walton, for instance, representational art acts generally by functioning as “props” in the audience’s “games of make-believe.” if we take the type of “props” as criterial, then we can say that what makes theater distinguish from other art forms is its frequent use of “reflexive props.” Thus, to take an example that necessarily conveys a more clear concept of the term, in King Lear, when audience watch an actor playing King Lear, they not only visualize that they are seeing King Lear, as they would if faced with a painting of King Lear, but they conceive of “the actor” that “he” is King Lear.

Apart from evaluating how theater functions as a medium of representation, some theater theorists examine the feasibility of a nonrepresentational theater. Some theorists, such as Michael Kirby, Josette Feral, and Jean-François Lyotard, maintain that “de-semiotic” strategies of performance can catch signification through feelings and desires and create a theater of pure “surfaces” or “libidinal energy.” other theater critics, such as States,
Marvin Carlson, and Herbert Blau, claim that such strategies destine to an unsuccessful end, and nothing is clearly able to be “itself” on the stage. So to speak, it is not hard to understand that the theatrical framework inescapably admits a process of signification or illusion.

**Actor and Role**

No other controversy upon theater is so replete with enthusiastically conflicting issue as “actor and role,” for it examines the degree to which actors should think of in connection with their roles. Denis Diderot’s *Paradox of Acting* (1930), a text widely regarded as the key document for the issue, offers a fruitful attempt to explain the relationship between actor and role. In this book, Diderot argued that actors should be psychologically separate from their characters and deeply sensitive to their audience. Simultaneously, they should create the illusion of identification with the character and absorption in the fictitious scene, giving the idea that an unseeable “fourth wall” detaches the realm of the stage from that of the spectators. Diderot’s active support of “fourth-wall realism” in theater is in tune with his illusionistic theory of painting, which Michael Fried brightly puts into words as “dramatic,” and predicts the realistic aesthetic that was to rule over the Western stage by the end of the nineteenth century. Concurrently, Joseph Roach (1985) has found a close link between Diderot’s idea of acting and the claims about, feeling, sensitivity, and spontaneity advanced in his works about physiology and biology.
By the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Russian director and actor Konstantin Stanislavsky (1948) established a methodical procedure for training actors known plainly as the “System.” He aimed to assist actors in reaching constantly a condition of intuitive creativity and powerful emotional engagement in their roles. His pseudo-scientific endeavor to bring to light timeless laws of acting was inspired by the growing science of psychology, especially in the work of the French psychologist Théodule Ribot. Stanislavsky maintains that the “illusion” of identification is not enough; actors must play “truthfully” and “become the character.” For Stanislavsky, a commitment to “inner truth” does not demand a realistic aesthetic; quite the opposite, this led him to give effort to making the System in accord with his involvement as director shifted from Naturalism to Symbolism. As a result, Stanislavsky’s view repeals Diderot’s: since the former stands its ground on the identification between actor and character but not the illusion of external realism, the latter stands firm on the illusion of reality but repudiates actor-character identification. With the help of its appropriation and modification by members of New York’s Group Theater in the 1930s, however, the System has come to be closely connected with realism, especially American domestic realism. The different American types of the System became known commonly as the “Method,” and catapulted to global fame through the impressive film achievement of Method-trained actors such as Marlon Brando. Method performances have shown beyond doubt that they are suitable for film, because they cannot only bear the close scrutiny of the camera, but
they play a vital role in camera's capacity to reveal the delicacy of expression and subtext. Film's stress on the visual elements of the performance presents suitably the decline of language's role in lots of modern and postmodern theater.

One of the most leading theorists of theater in the twentieth century is Marxist German playwright, poet, director and theoretician Bertolt Brecht. Brecht’s view on drama will probably always be mentioned as “epic theater,” however, he abandoned it towards the end of his career in favour of “dialectical theater.” Epic theater had the didactic aim in making the audience ponder on the social conditions of their lives. Brecht argued that the audience must be forced to stand outside the action in order to become an objective observer. For him, the spectator should replace thought, understanding, and decisions with sensation, experience, and feelings. Brecht labeled this process “verfremdung,” a term that is usually translated as “alienation.” The term signifies Brecht’s wish to make the familiar strange. If the audience was to grasp a character or an action as unfamiliar, even striking, then he or she would be able to see it with fresh eyes. This “alienation effect” (A-effect) would permit the audience first to escape from their social and political conditioning, then to understand the truth in their social situation, and finally to change it. To achieve the A-effect, actors in epic theater must reject impersonating character in the way that Stanislavski suggested; they must separate themselves from the character and the action, reading their lines as if reporting a historical event. To communicate his social meaning, Brecht
maintained that the actor had to discover a social "gestus." According to him, a "social" gest is one that allows the audience to see the social attitudes and the meaning of the scene in which it occurs.

Diderot, Stanislavsky, and Brecht are different in their practical premises (e.g., on what procedure for acting most successfully obtains the spectators' empathy) and artistic aspirations (e.g., whether spectator empathy is to be supported or rejected), but not in the variety of "possibilities" for which their hypotheses provide. Brecht, for instance, assumes the possibility of identifying with one's character, just as Stanislavsky assumes the possibility of accepting an "objectified attitude" towards one's character. At the heart of all these theories lie unsettled philosophical issues focusing on the concepts of both character and identification. What is the nature of a theatrical role? Is it similar to literary character? Is it identical with all types of theater? Although art philosophers formulate loosely general hypotheses on fictitious character so as to extend the realm of theater, not much philosophical attempt has been made to describe these questions directly. Both Diderot and Brecht characterize theatrical characters as social types; Stanislavsky, in contrast, supports a humanist idea of characters, directly telling actors not to play general types and demanding them to create details about the character's biography. This notion of character brings Stanislavsky into close association with nineteenth-century literary critics like A. C. Bradley, who searched Shakespeare's plays for clues on the character's lives. Bradley considers literary characters as autonomous human beings, whereas
Stanislavsky does not finally give characters an autonomous life. Eventually, Stanislavsky believed that actors should act themselves, playing truthfully as if they were in the character’s specific conditions.

The brilliant director and theater theorist Jery Grotowski (1968), who was influenced by Antonin Artaud’s view of a “Theater of Cruelty” similarly views character on stage as a role that the actor must truthfully accept, but he “depsychologizes” the idea. Instead of stating precisely the role regarding character’s fictitious condition, Grotowski explains it as a “score” of exact bodily actions, and visualizes the actor’s orderly performance as a “ritualistic” practice, namely an act of self-sacrifice with symbolic hidden meanings. Although Grotowski’s method has been defined as “apolitical,” he portrays his stagings in the Soviet-dominated Poland of the 1960s as revolutionary rituals of liberty and self-expression within a dictatorial society. Grotowski’s approach characterized by rough, inflexible sentimental emotion and physicality as well as the rejection of realistic conventions had different importance in the United States during the 1960s. It launched a major attack on the standards and limitations of the bourgeois “establishment,” and a utopian endeavor to gain a more legitimate form of being.

A second philosophical debate upon whether the actor should identify with the character deals with the idea of “identification.” Many theorists have explained the notion of “becoming the character” with an eye on emotional empathy. The philosophical issue then is to define what gives rise to an actor’s emotional empathy with a character. Although art thinkers have given this problem little attention, the numerous contradictory theories on the na-
ture of a spectator's emotional involvement with music and fiction certainly have a relevance here.

In his later work, Stanislavsky cast doubt on the importance of emotional identification and maintained that the crucial challenge for the actor is to enact truthfully a character's actions. This idea creates one of the few well-defined philosophical debates on acting's rational limitations. Some art philosophers have argued that actors do not enact real actions on stage, but only pretend to enact actions. Searle's status of speech acts plays a vital role here, however, a number of art philosophers believed that all action on stage is pretense. Searle asserts that the fictitious framework of a theatrical performance eliminates the illocutionary force of every utterance given throughout the time of a play. Theater semioticians usually look on this argument with favor, because it explains the semiotic idea that everything existed on stage is a sign. If Searl's view is right, then Stanislavsky's claim that actors "really" enact actions becomes idealistic, and reduce to a direction for actors to make a specially efficient illusion of real action. The notion that the theatrical framework suspends illocutionary force, however, can not explain the function of speech acts in improvisation, where, for instance, one actor's command that a co-actor stand up often does make the co-actor stand up. If speech acts performed in improvisations have some touch of illocutionary force, therefore, at least under specific conditions, speech acts may be performed in "scripted performances."
III

Postmodern Style in Theater Arts

While these problematic issues have been viewed with alarm and dismay by some philosophers, theater scholars, or practitioners, they have also stimulated creative revitalization of the field (theater) and have introduced new theoretical orientations and new problems to be solved. In this sense, the postmodernist theater is perhaps an inspired move.

Postmodernism is less precisely described in drama and theater, partly because of the distinction between literary text and performance. It is also noteworthy to mention that we cannot regard postmodern theater as having been completed. Hence, the best understanding or interpretation of it will also be its best completion. It follows that disputed points of interpretation cannot always be divorced from current issues in theater studies. So far as proponents of the postmodernist theater are headed in the right direction, disagreement about what they meant should prove to be fruitful for new theatrical insights.

It is not, then, surprising that there is no systematic presentation of the aesthetic strategies of postmodern theater. Although there may be a
temptation to use the notion of specific aesthetic strategies as “the vocabulary of postmodern theater,” we have to take the more conservative view in saying that the aesthetic strategies of postmodern theater are numberless. They also represent a résumé of postmodern theater, including the indeterminacies—“ambiguity, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, randomness, revolt, perversion, deformation”—and the deformations—“decreation, disintegration, decenterment, displacement, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition, de-definition”—that can be identified as pivotal to postmodernism.

Several strategies dealing with specific aspects of postmodern theater, namely, undecidability, temporality, heterogeneity, reproduction, and politics of authority, which still characterizes recent work in the theater, are also useful in understanding postmodernism. These include pastiche, bricolage, deconstruction, appropriation, and technological mediation (from video to effective environment).

In order to breathe life into these strategies, before detailing postmodern theater, an illustration of each will be given.

**Pastiche**

Pastiche concerns the tendency of many postmodern dramatic works to imitate the style of another historical era. According to Linda Hutcheon, pastiche and parody acting in the postmodern work both confirm and undermine the states of history: although the desire to historicize is attested,
history is revealed as a contingent narrative.

For Fredric Jameson, however, pastiche is totally lacking in positive meaning of any sort. Adopting Baudrillard’s notion of the simulacrum—the copy devoid of an original—Jameson regards the reappearance of older cultural styles not as the reappearance of history but as the reappearance of the will to a history at the most, after history proper has been reshaped in the hollow image of late capitalism.

Bricolage

Bricolage, forged in the writings of the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, can perhaps best be described as “the use of a roughly suited conceptual tool when no other means is available.”

In 1949 Lévi-Strauss published his highly influential book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. The basic assumptions in the book are the definition of “nature” as that which is universal, spontaneous, and not depending on a peculiar culture or norm, and “culture” as that which is depending on a system of socially controlling norms and which differs from one social structure to another.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a school of philosophy and literary criticism associated closely with French philosopher Jacques Derrida and the Belgian / North American literary critic Paul De Man. It refers to a theory of reading which
tries to subvert the logic of opposition within texts.

According to Derrida, this demands a close analysis of the basic "distinctions" and "conceptual orderings" which have been formulated by the predominant tradition of Western philosophy. In a series of discussions on philosophers as various as Plato, Hegel, Rousseau, Kant, Husserl, Austin, and Lévi-Strauss, Derrida embraces a strategy or reading which throws doubt on the presumptions and limitations of textual meaning by uncovering how the uncertainties and certainties a text has presented have indeed been formed through a chain of "perferences" and "repressions" which own advantaged special ideas, values and arguments above others.

Derrida's idea here is that what has been put forward as a dichotomy (binary opposition) in Western philosophy, such as masculine / feminine, is only a difference which has been influenced by a hierarchy. Reshaping Saussure's notion of binary oppositions, Derrida argues that in each pair one term is "suppressed" and one "privileged." Derrida aimed to demonstrate how the privileged term relied on the suppressed for its meaning. Derrida's idea does not seek the termination of analytic distinctions altogether, nor he deals with a simple reversal of hierarchical oppositions. As Derrida and some of his more keen followers well know, "positing difference against identity succeeds only in falling back within the very logic of binary opposition their deconstructive enterprise tries to resist." As an alternative, Derrida tries to substitute and recast concepts into larger and more inclusive contexts. His procedure simply embodies use of the meaning and potentiality
of a concept against the limits within which it has been formulated. Therefore his doubt on the “structurality of structure,” the cause of the cause, or the context of the context attempts to uncover the metaphysical termination / limits of Western philosophy.

Derridean deconstruction reveals the logic, assumptions, and structure which construct the predominant tradition of Western philosophy. Deconstructive criticism does not assert that it can clear up textual conflicts and contradictions in a perfect Hegelian synthesis. On the contrary, it argues that there is something inherent to the structure of language (for Derrida-writing) which perplexes any attempted textual unity. Derrida’s terms “differance”\textsuperscript{13} and “dissemination”\textsuperscript{14} point out to both the possibility and the impossibility of defining a lucid, certain meaning of a text.

Derrida’s reorganized notion of writing plays the role of a metaphor for the “absence” of both a “unified subject” and a “constant referent” in any text- it is not important if spoken or written. For Derrida, such absences are the inescapable aftermath of using “signs” which produce and communicate meaning.

The involvement of the linguistic sign separates the “subject” and the “referent” from themselves, and it is such separations and absences which create the possibility of textual “misinterpretations” and “misunderstandings.” The desire for these systematic incoherences and unmanageable ambiguities in meaning can be regarded as the best characteristic of deconstructive criticism. Derrida’s readings demand a careful concentration on textual evi-
idence and logical contradiction where the act of writing may undermine the interpreter’s desire for a unitary meaning.

What Derrida tries to explain in his readings of Western thought is the unavoidable “logic of supplementarity” which participates in every claim toward specific conceptual distinctions. According to Derrida, there is always something which escapes the grip of conceptual self-identity. There is inescapable lack existing in every identifying instance, a lack that is innate in the very structure of language which must be used to describe concepts. It is something systematic which is easily traceable even in the texts of those philosophers who are extremely meticulous in their conceptual work.

Undoubtedly, Paul de Man was the most striking deconstructors of the North America. According to de Man, deconstruction demanded a complete reading of the rhetorical structure of a text. De Man’s typical deconstructive practice centers on those points in a text where the logic of an argument grows perplexing and subverted by the figural language of the text. For de Man, this opposition of meaning between the literal and the figural is a constant event in the texts of Western philosophy. His readings of the main texts of Western culture explain how philosophy cannot avoid the weight of figural language, no matter how hard it tries to claim the transfer of clear and unequivocal conceptual meanings. De Man believes that the responsibility of theory (i.e. deconstruction) is not to thrust itself upon a text but rather to complete the literal and figural textual logic to indicate the moments where a text self-deconstructs and opposes theoretical limits, by
getting free from its own determined intentions along with the critic’s best endeavors to define it. According to de Man, there is something unavoidable on the deconstruction of a text and it is the task of the sharp critic to explain these points.

Deconstruction has further developed analysis of the means by which theater constantly undoes its own systems of signification in a play of shifting subjectivities and unstable signs which subverts the performance’s claims to represent reality. Discussions of the politics of realism and deconstruction in postmodernist theaters have especially become involved in theories of race and gender.

** Appropriation**

Appropriation concerns the deliberate use of material (for instance, images in the visual arts, sounds in music) that comes from a source outside the work in the style of the art world of the late twentieth century. In this sense, to appropriate an image means to bring it purposefully into the context of one’s own body of work.

No artist begins completely from the beginning; every artist obtains material from the past. Indeed, dominant themes are traditionally suggested in many cultures, and a true artist is exactly one who is able to reproduce the tradition forms correctly and in the proper way of respect. Mechanical reproduction of images has appeared in many forms, from printmaking to the enormous circulation of images and words in books, magazines, radio, film,
and television. The West has praised "originality" and enthusiasm for tracing origins since Romanticism. The high status of the artists like Ludwig van Beethoven and T. S. Eliot is chiefly established in the idea that these characters remarkably original, that they originated perfect cultural movements. Such characters are believed to be enigmatic to their contemporaries, a head of their time, exactly because of their creation of original forms. In fact, the view of "genius," pivotal to the discourses concerning art in modernity, makes use of ideas of origin and originality.

Postmodern artists and theoreticians have tried to undermine systematically the idea of originality (especially seen as the creation of new forms), and of "genius," being "a head of one's time," and a numerous corresponding ideas. One strategy in this subversion has been appropriation. Much postmodern art reshaped or deformed the appropriated image in various ways. Numerous ordinary or trivial images may be mixed, a single image may be revised or trivialized or repeated on and on, or an image may be shifted from one medium to another.

Such strategies continuously present the possibility that the differentiation between art or high culture and the culture as a whole might dismantle and that different laws might be ignored. That possibility is put forward even more significantly and deliberately by the Pop art movement of the early sixties. Here, we might also see postmodern works as a movement toward or into "conceptualism," where the status of the object is lessened all for appreciation of its philosophy, or the conceptual development that it
Postmodern artists make use of appropriation in many various manners and for many various reasons, but two principles of modernism appear to be the specific targets: the assertion that significant artists are original, and the assertion that aesthetic value is inherent to the form of the work.

**Technological Mediation**

Postmodern theater and performance artists make use of mass-mediational systems in order to disturb the spatial and temporal coherence, subjectivity, metaphors, continuity, narrativity, and actor/audience structural arrangement of traditional theater. Indeed, postmodern theater seeks to create an interactive environment for conceptual investigations of our world. A “reality” is not firmly representable in human or artistic conditions any more, but it depends radically upon technoscientific operations. In this context, it is not, then, surprising to note that the practice of theater is not constructed on anthropocentric and historicist ideas of continuity and tradition.

The excessive use of the disorderly combination of projectors, sound synthesizer, TV, computer-generated signals, video, and high-tech equipment of special effects makes an attack on theater for “representing” life in place of being life. Here, a Baudrillardian notion of mass media culture seems to summarize this neatly:

> In Baudrillard’s nihilistic scenario of contemporary mass me-
dia culture, the whole idea of “theater,” or any representational art, is completely inverted: the distinction between representation and reality has become irrelevant because the real itself has been eclipsed by a self-regulating, global technology of “programs,” “models,” or “genetic codes.” Baudrillard’s favorite example for such a model is Disneyland: the miniature operation of phantasms set up to conceal that all of “real” America is Disneyland.\(^5\)

It is completely impossible, then, to give details of theater without distorting it, for it chiefly attempts to bring forth a temporal, multisensory experience of an authorless, discontinuous world of invisibility which interfaces between heterogenous objects, artifacts, industrial products, and perplexing theoretical constructs.

Towards a Boundless School of Postmodern Theater
Postmodern theater is characterized by a reaction towards the significant fact of “mediatized culture,” mainly simulation, the televisual, and the hyper-commodification of multi-national capital, which call into question romantic and modern paradigms of representation. Postmodern theater can be viewed as a movement towards a deconstruction of the practice of theater production and its innate technologies of representation and ideologies of culture. Theater groups and performers like the Wooster Group, Richard Forman’s
Ontological Hysteric-Theater, Heiner Müller, and Pina Bauch have been establishing the techniques of postmodern theater since the mid-1970s. Significantly, in spite of the fact that the notions of postmodernism are demonstrated in the theory and practice of theater, it is inconceivable to mark a unitary school of postmodern theater. The strategies used in postmodern theater occur in a flexible condition and peculiar ideas are open to discussion in different contexts. It is noteworthy here to mention that we should search for general attitudes and differentiations in order to conclude that the term “postmodern theater” is partially “critical fiction.”

Postmodern theater does indeed have a target in view, but normally that target is the “projects of modernity” specifically, the emancipatory models of the Enlightenment, rationalism, universalism, dialectics, essentialism, consensus, and truth values. With an eye to poststructuralism, postmodern theater regards the metanarratives of philosophy, politics, religion, science, and aesthetics (like Hegel, Marx, Freud, Christ, Art) as “liberation discourses.” As metanarratives establish themselves as ideologies of history, they are deemed to be fictitious and become tactics of “sublimation” and “suppression.” Postmodern theater harbors suspicions about the narrative form, representational thought, and mimesis of reality, looking up them as instruments of the metanarratives and of traditional theater. The theory and practice of postmodern theater propose that the decision on value of detached high and low culture is misleading.

Nietzsche’s writings have had a significant impact on the theory and
practice of postmodern theater. Borrowing notions from his philosophy, postmodern theater casts doubt on human consensus, liberation, and reason as the legacy of the binary need for difference which constructs the divided values of truth / falsity, knowledge / ignorance, nature / culture, and mind body. Nietzsche’s concern with modernity, more correctly, with what he came to see as the nihilistic heritage of a Christian tradition which had reached the moment of self-destruction, marks him out in the eyes of many critics as the father of postmodernism. These issues pivotal to postmodern theater draw our attention to his concept of the “dead of God” as the rejection of modern dogma:

The notion of a transparent singular self is, of course, the cornerstone of Cartesian foundationalist epistemology and metaphysics. Now Nietzsche, as postmodernists rightly observe, is a destroyer of all kinds of foundationalisms. They are right to interpret this as the force behind Nietzsche’s madman’s proclamation of the death of God. It is not simply the Christian world-view that is at stake here but all notions of an external authority that might provide some ultimate guarantor of beliefs.16

What is inspired by these theories and practices is a theater doubtful about its ontology presence, liveness, its means of representation, and its mood of
The Transformation of Modern Drama into Postmodern Theater

Mostly, in the eyes of theater scholars, the transformation of modern drama into postmodern theater can be traced back to a point of origin in postmodern theories of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard. The development is depicted as a shift from a textually centered art involved with the crises of subjectivity and representation (Modern Drama) to a performance centered art involved with the sporadic play of signifiers, the politics of authority, and the deconstruction of the practice of theater production itself (Postmodern Theater).

Jameson’s Marxist methodology of historical study summarizes the paradigmatic change from modernism to high modernism to postmodernism as a chain of responses to the development of capitalism. Jameson sees modernism as a result of a market economy and notions of individualism which is reflected in the aesthetics of realism properly. Theater scholars conceive of Henrik Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck* and *The Master Builder* as perfect texts of early modernism for their realist aesthetic, faith in metaphor, and subject-based narrative. For Jameson, high modernism, then, is a reaction to monopoly capitalism. The aesthetics of high modernism develop a disapproving retreat while leading the collapse of representation and the
established nature of the subject. Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* illustrates the paradigm of high modernism as it portrays the contentions of subjectivity and representation embodied in the existential metaphors of a “fallen” mankind whose narratives and personalities are empty of significance and meaning. Jameson’s narrative proceeds to claim that multinational capitalism has revealed postmodernity, which acts aesthetically in the particular form of pastiche (lacking of humor, blank parody, satire, or critique) and schizophrenia (a lack of memory and a forgetting of history), representing the hyper-commodification and separate boundaries and mixed spaces of what Jameson describes as the “cultural logic of late capitalism” in the late twentieth century. The theatrical art and writing of new methods of appropriated texts, bricolage, and technological mediation of the Wooster Group demonstrate their theater creation (like the trilogy of performance pieces, *The Road to Immortality*, first performed in NYC at the Performing Garage during the 1970s) as a perfect example of Jameson’s paradigm of aesthetic postmodernism.

Baudrillard believes that the postmodern can be regarded as a process of simulation in which the signifier is irredeemably separated from its signified. Simulation disrupts the link between the real and the imaginary by replacing emblems of the real with the real itself. Simulation, as phenomenon, is developed partially by the global attack from the ontology of the televusual which constantly imposes its images of the world while concurrently preventing any exposure of the world to view. Some postmodern theater theo-
rists, like Laurie Anderson, make use of media technologies to present the notions of simulation and televisuality, such as the vanishing of the real. Video and digital technologies employed in the theater, like the cubist reconsidering of representational space on canvas, serve as instruments of alteration, changing the way in which theater scholars and practitioners can form and represent narrativity and subjectivity uncovered in space and time. The invention of cyberspatial / interactive performance platforms (visual environments) have further explained how we regard theater as a temporal and spatially particular phenomenon.

A much more sophisticated version of the difference between modern and postmodern aesthetics dealing with the "unpresentable" is provided by Lyotard, who is influenced by Immanuel Kant's idea of the sublime in *The Critique of Judgment*. The unpresentable is the infinitesimal understanding of the mind to perceive the different logical perception and imagination. For Lyotard, the modernist aesthetic is one of "nostalgia" that illustrates the absence of the sublime and presents the unpresentable as the missing items. Lyotard proposes that the postmodern aesthetic is one that demonstrates the unpresentable in presentation itself. Staging the unpresentable maybe explain the practice of postmodern theater which is careful about the new metaphysics encompassing the unification of the human and the technological. Performance scholars like Stelarc, Laurie Anderson, and Orlan make use of highly developed technologies to comprehend the formation of subjectivity in the space and time of technology. Lyotard's ideas of the sublime
in postmodernism reverse the timeline of modernity and postmodernity by giving the idea that the postmodern is actually premodern or romantic.

Lyotard's view, in contrast to Jameson and Baudrillard, demonstrates the extent to which postmodern aesthetics are often misunderstood, misinterpreted and disagreed. Jameson places weight on a complexity of uncritical pastiche. Baudrillard constructs a model of an absent "real" in recent mediated consciousness that reverses representation. Lyotard demands a postmodern sublime that seeks an uncovering of that which remains hidden. These opposing dictums represent the demand for discussing many postmodernisms in the theater as an alternative to only one postmodern theater.

**A Pivotal Question: Theater or Performance**

Scholars and practitioners of postmodern theater have, in some cases, offered an account of performance, taken the place of the idea of theater, for their main paradigm. The discipline of performance studies often labels the theater as a bourgeois aesthetic confined by imitation, narrative, and psychology, whereas performance is conceived of as a more general term that embraces the performative nature of cultural structures at every status of human behavior. Performance has possessed a weighty impact in the discussion of art in the twentieth century. The study of the Euro-American avant-garde unveils a chain of performative experiments: expressionist and symbolist theater, the futurist *serate* and dadaist *soiree*, surrealist drama, happen-
ings, and performance art. Performance critics like Henry Sayre and Nick Kaye consider performance as the perfect form to impede the modernist ideas (proposed by the art theory of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried) of the autonomous art object withdrawn from the experience of theatricality and the materiality of the body in time and space. Performance experience encompasses a wide range of the theater and galleries in order to deal with the complete development of the televisual, native performance, the intertextuality of the postmodern scene of cities in which we appear daily, the “postorganic” realm of effective surroundings, and cyberspace. The significance of performance, regarding both theory and practice, is broadly acknowledged in the aesthetics of postmodernism as it suggests the disturbing duress of interdisciplinarianism, time-reliance, and the body.

For theater theorist Herbert Blaue, however, it is the theater that always controls performance completely. Representation is inescapable. Another illusion of the theater’s technologies of representation may be demonstrated by the “authenticity” of performance, its immediacy and presence.

Ideal Practice of Postmodern Theater: Bricolage and the Politics of Authority

Bricolage, a metonymic rather than metaphorical organizing device, has proven amenable to describe this style of theater as it refers to a “heterological concern.” The opposing factors in a bricolage which constructed performance are not arranged in order to develop a unified perception or coher-
ence as we might see in the homogeneous idea behind the modernist strategy of the collage. Bricolage, coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*, remarks on the perpetual repetition of the same thing (in tune with Nietzsche's idea). Critic Michael Newman talks about bricolage in similar terms:

...[a] continual reconstruction from the same materials, it is always earlier ends which are called upon to play the part of means: the signified changes into the signifying and vice versa.  

The repeated remodeling of the similar material is clear in the dramaturgical strategies and techniques of the postmodern theater of the Wooster Group and Heiner Müller that frame their performances in such a way as to use pieces of different texts. Under the direction of Elizabeth LeCompte, and beginning with the third play of their *Rhode Island Trilogy, Nyatt School* (1978), the Wooster Group have combined excerpts from traditional modern drama (*Our Town, The Crucible*, and *The Cocktail Party*), popular culture (cable TV, Japanese science fiction movies), personal narratives (family suicide), and the taboo texts of pornography and blackface caricature in order to enhance "a sense of quotation, where texts, sequences and images set against each other in such a way that they come to stand on uncertain and unstable ground." In *Hamletmachine*, Müller employs ideas proposed by the Shakespearean text against images of the Manson family,
East European history, and his own biography. The fragmented and appropriated texts are cut into pieces, revised, and reedited into a broader mediatized performance that constantly reverses its own authority. Adopting from Roland Barthes’s distinction between “readerly” and “writerly” texts, the performances of the Wooster Group and Müller need an lively involvement by the reader / spectator who takes part in the practice (performance) of theater.

A readerly procedure for studying theater questions the structure that a certain reader / spectator employs to concentrate, sort, and distinguish (i.e. ideology, style, history, genre). A suspicion of the structure of differentiation anticipates the withdrawal of the arbitrary differentiations between “high” and “low” art or between “right” and “wrong” politics. The open framework (of différence) anticipates a removal of differentiation, value creation, and morality evaluation, which in turn agrees to the ambiguity of postmodern consciousness. This ambiguity places its perplexity among the dogmatic ideologies of the theater neutralizing them as they are separately questioned, inviting the inactive audience to participate in the process of theater production as an active reader giving steady attention to performance.

The bricolage frame of Müller, Bausch, Foreman, and the Wooster Group often embraces the postmodernist techniques which revolve around the traditional processes of the theater. So, conventional dramaturgical devices, such as the flow of a performance providing a unifying situation, final images serving as solutions or modifications of previous material, ending or
“closure” of actions or notions, or identification of actor to drama character, are separated from within the tradition and are not essentially deleted. While appropriating the elements of modern drama into postmodern theater, it is necessary to bear in mind that if a postmodernist performance uses a modernist aesthetic strategy or ideological structure, this performance will essentially reverse the modernist “idea” linked to the matrix of material. For instance, assume that a theater group appropriates a piece from Pirandello’s *sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* to be added to a larger bricolage of performance actions. Historically the philosophical conceits of this Pirandello text can propose modernist interpretations as to the established nature of subjectivity and the illusion of the “real.” The problems of representation and the formation of the real are pivotal to both modern drama and postmodern theater. What is abandoned in the postmodernist theater, however, is the modernist readings that, regarding Pirandello, would interpret the work as a tragi-comic plight of existential anxiety, the subject based view of the falling man in an antagonistic emptiness. Instead, the postmodernist theater proposes the same infeasibility of separation of the real and illusion but from a view of decentered subjectivity in which differentiation is mirage and “depth of meaning” is left behind in an elimination of referentials (Baudrillard’s idea).

Philip Auslander’s writings and David Savran’s are widely held to present together one of the most influential efforts to discuss the politics of authority in postmodern theater and performance. The question they put forward is that if a really resistant form of art is still feasible, it should be
“trapped,” because we are living in the context of the cultural logic of late capitalism that imposes an expansion of the economic upon all societal fields. In brief, is a transgressive form of performance feasible? These critics believe that a “resistant performance” is feasible through a reversal of performance as the “charismatic other.” The postmodern theater tries to crystallize itself beyond the paradigm of pedagogic education, beyond the traditional performance model of “performing subject” against “spectating subject,” knowing image against decoding response, charismatic other against brainwashed learner.

In *Following Piece* (1969), performance artist Vito Acconci accompanied people without paying attention to the individual or a spectator in order to undermine the system of performance which places audience and performance in opposition. The bone of contention here is that if in a performance work which supports the audience / performance paradigm, by what means and for how long can an ideologically centered charismatic other be deferred from grasping the images / signs presented? The postmodern theater is a theater in opposition to its own strategies of representation, trying to reveal its own ideologies of culture and politics of authority.
Notes on Chapter 2


2 Ibid., P.3.

3 Ibid.


5 Ibid., P.376.

6 Ibid.

7 The gender opposition has begun to be questioned by theorists who argue that our perceptions of biology, nature, or indeed sex, are formed only within language and culture.

8 According to both Lacan and Kristeva, the viewer is not a free observer but rather the captive of the painting which does the gazing, thus turning the viewer into a picture in the ordinary sense of the object of viewing.
10 Gestus (or gest) refers to a kind of fusion of substance, attitude, and gesture: any kind of sign, song, expression, or action.


12 Ibid., p. 136.

13 Différance is a pun in French, combining the meanings of "differing" (as any set of items lined up in space differ from one another) and "deferring" (as in putting off, delaying). Since all texts contain ambiguities and can be read in different ways (la différence), exhaustive interpretation must be forever deferred (la différenciation).

14 Dissemination suggests the process by which, in language, the meaning of any term or set of terms is distributed and diffused throughout the language system without ever coming to a final end.


18 Nick Kaye, P.12.