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Action Reconsidered

**Cognitive Aspects of the Relation
between Script and Scenic Action**

Erik Rynell

A C T A S C E N I C A 22

Näyttämötaide ja tutkimus

- Scenkonst och forskning
- Scenic art and research

Teatterikorkeakoulu

- Teaterhögskolan
- Theatre Academy

Action Reconsidered

Cognitive Aspects of the Relation between Script and Scenic Action

Erik Rynell

Doctoral dissertation

Theatre Academy

Department of Research Development / Department of Theatre and Drama /

Dramaturgy

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ABSTRACT

ACTION RECONSIDERED: COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF THE RELATION BETWEEN TEXT AND SCENIC ACTION.

Contemporary cognitive science challenges the idea of the human brain as a kind of computer. Instead, the importance of the body for our way to understand and interact with the world has come into focus. Theories about the "situated" and "embodied" character of human cognition have implied that notions like action, consciousness, and intersubjectivity have gained renewed scientific interest. On the other hand, these elements have always retained crucial importance in theatre practice, not least in the actor's process from the written text to action on stage. In the dissertation I apply theories from modern cognitive science to this process, such as this has been described by practitioners in the theatre. My conclusion is that there are important coincidences between findings in modern cognitive science and basic insights in the practice of theatre. I start by indicating how the way in which the actor intentionally relates to the character's situation forms a pattern that largely remains unaltered historically, despite the development of different acting styles. I also find coincidences between this pattern and theories about human interaction with the world as described by philosophers in the phenomenological tradition, such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Zahavi, thinkers who also attract increased attention in cognitive science. I further argue that modern descriptions of human action as forms of "dynamic-systems" could be fruitful ways in which to approach action on stage as well. In a final section I address dramatic writing that is not action-based, and that, hence, cannot in a corresponding way be related to the theories within cognitive science referred to. I find that much experimental theatre in the 20th century shares a reluctance with behaviourism to acknowledge the importance of intentional action. I argue that new findings about the human mind, unlike older ones, do not urge a description of human volition as predominantly directed by outside forces. The conclusion is that intentional action, which an important part of 20th century experimental and avant-garde theatre sets out to question, indeed deserves to be reconsidered.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years increased interest has been attracted by the fact that art is not only a means of communication, but also of gathering and processing knowledge. This has also led to the emergence of a novel kind of research where issues encountered in artistic practice are investigated by methods developed within the practice itself. As a consequence, art has ceased to be only an object of research and has become itself a point of departure for research, and this in its turn has led to the inauguration of masters and doctorate programmes at many art schools.

The development of "artistic research in practice" coincides with a growing interest in "tacit knowledge", which is defined as the knowledge of the practitioner, as exemplified in the skill of the artisan, but also in the unformulated knowledge produced in the artist's work. In recent years important contributions to this field as related to theatre has been made in my own country by scholars such as Järleby, Lagerström, and Sjöström.

Now, as regards theatre and acting the idea that artistic work is a way to process knowledge is in fact far from new. In much modern actor training one has since long emphasized the investigating character of the work on a role, and it is also stressed that the object of this investigation is not mere subjective experiences or fantasies but indeed reality itself. A similar idea about fiction as a way to approach reality can in fact be traced back even to antiquity. Still, the development of specialized artistic research in practice is new to the field of acting methodology as well.

Parallel to this orientation in the practical artistic field towards investigation and research goes an increased scholarly and scientific interest in the pragmatic aspects of human knowledge and communication. An early example of this could be found in the contemporary development of the philosophy of language and in its continuation in the philosophy of mind. It is also extensively characteristic of the development during the last decades of *cognitive science*, a multidisciplinary interchange of knowledge about human mind and intelligence among fields like philosophy, psychology, neurology, computer science, linguistics and anthropology.

One thesis in this dissertation will be that research carried out in some parts of contemporary cognitive science has bearing to a great extent on theatre and acting as well, and that this is due not least to the revaluation taking place in this field of features related to human action, which is also a central element in theatre and acting. In 2006, in the final phase of the work on this thesis, Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart issued an anthology, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies After the Cognitive Turn*, which establishes the cognitive approach as a specific domain within theatre research. Moreover, the essentially pragmatic character of this cognitive approach also provides access to new connections between theatre theory and the practice of acting and performance, which also coincides with the aims of this thesis.

This dissertation has been conceived in close contact with the practical aspects of playwrighting and acting. It originated, first and foremost, in twenty-five years of educational experience gathered at a theatre school, Malmö Theatre Academy (MTA). The Academy, which is an institute at Lund University, is one of four schools in Sweden that are commissioned by the Swedish state to educate actors. It offers education in acting and dramatic writing at bachelor, masters and PhD levels. The dissertation originates in questions I have come across in my work as a teacher of Theatre theory and with responsibility for the Dramatic writing programme. The work has been inspired by a series of seminars, organized by the school in collaboration with professional theatres, on acting in new dramatic forms.

The investigation will deal with issues that actors come across during their formative years as well as in their professional practice, issues that for the same reason are also crucial for a playwright. This does not imply that the thesis itself is a representative of artistic-research-in practice. Rather, its aim is to investigate preconditions for artistic knowledge. It will do this in the form of an academic treatise. But it will also make use of methods and approaches developed within the field of theatre practice. An overall aim is to find new ways to deal with fundamental questions related to the development of new expressive means in theatre.

COGNITIVE SCIENCE

The word "cognitive" is used in the subtitle of this dissertation in the rather general sense that the actor's work on the text activates different cognitive abilities. According to the *Medicine Net* the word "cognitive" could be defined as "Pertaining to cognition, the process of knowing and, more precisely, the process of being aware, knowing, thinking, learning and judging". Such capacities are studied in Cognitive Science. They are also part of the actor's work with the part. Cognitive Science, which has its origins in computation science, has during the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st developed into a multidisciplinary approach to the human mind, involving disciplines such as psychology, linguistics, computational science, neuroscience and philosophy. It has also aroused interest within other disciplines, including both theatre research and the practice of actor training. In 2008, one of the contributors to Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart's anthology, Rhonda Blair, published her own work *The Actor, Image, and Action. Acting and cognitive Neuroscience*. But in 1998 Sharon M. Carnicke had already qualified the actor's analysis as described by Stanislavski in *Creating a role* as a "cognitive analysis" ("Stanislavski's system" 23). In this way "cognitive" has grown into a legitimate part of the vocabulary of theatre and theatre research. The emergence of cognitive science brings with it a novel approach to the human mind, challenging the behavioristic views that long dominated the scientific discussion about the human mind. It will be argued that the significance of the emergence of cognitive science for theatre and theatre research is that concepts like action, intention, consciousness and intersubjectivity have gained ground in the scientific vocabulary after long having fallen into disrepute, and that this opens up new connections between knowledge about the actor's working process and contemporary research on the human mind. A new interest on the part of cognitive scientists in phenomenological philosophy will also be addressed in this dissertation. Finally, it will be argued that the new approach in contemporary science to the human mind and human world-interaction challenges views that were influential in the development of new theatre forms during the 20th century.

Cognitive science is not a coherent field of knowledge. There are also diversities as to how this notion is defined in different quarters, due not least to the many disciplines involved. Thus there are some definitions of cognitive

science that comply with my description above, whereas others still reflect a more mechanistic approach. I will discuss this more in detail in Chapter 4. As for the general use here of the terms "cognitive" and "cognitive science" I agree with Bruce McConachie that cognitive science "can offer empirically tested insights that are directly relevant to many of the abiding concerns of theatre and performance studies" (McConachie and Hart x). In the same book Rhonda Blair argues that issues of consciousness, feeling, and action/behavior "are central to both acting and cognitive neuroscience" (Blair 170). Accordingly, one aim of this dissertation is also to discuss coincidences between significant notions in acting and actor training and notions that have attracted interest in important parts of cognitive science. Examples of these are intention, consciousness, intersubjectivity and empathic understanding. This also means that my references here first and foremost include cognitive scientists who are apt to deal with such notions. Examples of these are Evan Thompson, Eleanor Rosch, Francisco J. Varela, George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner, Pierre Jacob, Marc Jeannerod, and Peter Gärdenfors, who will all be given more extensive presentations later on. Important research in support of the acknowledgement of such phenomena as those mentioned has been conducted by neurophysiologists like Giacomo Rizzolatti, Leonardo Fogassi, Vittorio Gallese and other scientists at the University of Parma, who are credited with the discovery of "mirror neurons", i.e. cells in the brain that engage in the understanding of the action of others. Contributions have also been provided within the field of cognitive linguistics after Ronald W Langacker with the stress on the importance of language use for the emergence of meaning in language. Another researcher who will be more extensively referred to is the developmental psychologist Michael Tomasello at the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Psychology in Leipzig, who subscribes to the cognitive linguistics school of linguistic theory and who has treated what he calls the "cultural origins of human cognition". Another scholar who is extensively referred to in connection with the cognitive aspects of theatre and acting is John R. Searle, in spite of the fact that he actually became famous for his critique of cognitive science. On the other hand, the target of his critique was the assumption, long nourished within cognitive science, of human mental activity as a form of computation. In this way he actually paved the way for a

more mentalistic understanding of the human mind, and thus also anticipated developments within cognitive science, in the sense in which I use the word here. Another scholar who will be extensively quoted is the philosopher Alicia Juarrero with her questioning of long accepted theories concerning the causation of human agency. The affinities between finds within cognitive science and phenomenology have been extensively discussed by scholars such as Varela, Thompson and Rosch and Thompson.

When listing these scholars I am not maintaining that they all agree in their respective theories. Neither is my objective to provide my own, coherent cognitive theory about theatre. The aim is to address discussions within contemporary cognitive science and philosophy of mind that extensively treat issues and concepts that are crucial in the process from text to embodied action on stage as well. The existence of this discussion within contemporary science about the human mind, and also increasing possibilities today to connect this with empirical research, suffice to alter the landscape of contemporary theatre and theatre research substantially.

Embodied Cognition

In this dissertation the work on an action-based text will be treated as instantiating "embodied cognition". This is how Evan Thompson defines this concept in his *Mind in Life*:

The central idea of the embodied approach is that cognition is the exercise of skillful know-how in situated and embodied action (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991). Cognitive structures and processes emerge from recurrent sensorimotor patterns that govern perception and action in autonomous and situated agents (11).

Under "Embodied cognition" The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states:

Embodied Cognition is a growing research program in cognitive science that emphasizes the formative role the environment plays in the development of cognitive processes. The general theory contends that cognitive processes develop when a tightly coupled system emerges from real-time, goal-

directed interactions between organisms and their environment; the nature of these interactions influences the formation and further specifies the nature of the developing cognitive capacities.

In *Artificial Intelligence* Michael L. Anderson contends:

The nature of cognition is being re-considered. Instead of emphasizing formal operations on abstract symbols, the new approach foregrounds the fact that cognition is, rather, a situated activity, and suggests that thinking beings ought therefore be considered first and foremost acting beings. (91)

All of these descriptions underline the character of embodied cognition as something having to do with *action*, and furthermore with *situated* and *embodied* action. This is also what I am going to do here as regards theatre and drama. I am going to do it to allow for a discussion about differences between action-based drama and drama that is not action-based, what is here called "drama without action". I will first describe how action-based drama is *situated*. I will do this by means of a model I derive from Stanislavski among others, and that will here be called the BSI model. I will argue with reference to writers like Saint-Albine and Riccoboni that this model was already known and practised in the 18th century, and with reference to other writers that in Western theatre it can be traced back at least to the sixteenth century. I will point out, with reference to distinguished writers on the actor's art, how work on action-based drama engages a series of cognitive capacities that today have attracted interest within important parts of cognitive science. I will also, in a chapter dealing more specifically with philosophy of mind and cognitive science thus expand the discussion in the previous chapter about how cognitive elements are dealt with in acting and actor training. I will argue that action-based drama, which is often confused with realism, or "psychological realism", and thus often identified with a certain style in theatre, in fact engages, on a specialized level, a wide spectrum of human cognitive abilities. And that pragmatic considerations underlying the forming of actors are compatible with important recent finds regarding the human mind and cognition.

After this I will turn to the strand within modern drama that is not action-based, and that is also necessary to take into account when one is treating the process from script to scenic action. This drama, by definition, does not build on situated and goal-directed action. Therefore I will find it inappropriate to apply the vocabulary that originates in cognitive science and embodied cognition on this. Thus the reflection conducted up till then about relationships between acting and cognition will also come to a temporary halt.

Generally, this kind of drama is based on scepticism as regards the mere possibility of human action. As this drama does not respond to the cognitive approach that seems rather easy to apply to action-based drama, I will have to change the strategy and view "drama without action" in relation to its own metaphysical and ontological preconditions as these unfold themselves in a historical perspective.

Thus *action* in theatre and drama stands at the centre of the dissertation. The idea is that the contemporary development of cognitive science offers novel *means* to understand this element in drama and acting.

In this case, too, I agree with McConachie, who in the preface to *Performance and Cognition* states that the orientation towards cognitive science does not imply that we "must turn ourselves into cognitive scientists" (xiv). The comparisons made in this dissertation between theatre and cognitive science will be made from a theatrical point of view. This dissertation is in theatre, *not* in cognitive science.

In addition to this another important remark must be made: this dissertation focuses on the relationship text-scenic action as this is described by practitioners of theatre. *This means that it does not preoccupy itself with how, for instance, cognitive science in theatre research relates to other theoretical strategies within this field.* Excellent accounts of this can be found in McConachie and Hart.

The Dramatic Text as a Model of Meaning Production

The idea of the close connection between cognition and language goes back on theories developed within modern philosophy of language. An important proponent of this idea was Wittgenstein.

At the beginning of the posthumous *The Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, where Wittgenstein discusses how meaning emerges in language,

he also makes a remark on the dramatic text. He finds out that the meaning of a sentence depends on the *context* in which it is uttered. And he writes: "The contexts of a sentence are best portrayed in a play. Therefore the best example for a sentence with a particular meaning is a quotation from a play..."(6e)

A complaint, Wittgenstein argues, like "I'm in pain" differs from the mere announcement with this content by its intent and "by the tone" in which it is uttered. Thus Wittgenstein is not only talking about the play in its written, but also in its acted, form. In this way, it could be argued, Wittgenstein addresses a somewhat disregarded aspect of the relationship between theatre and reality: the play as a model of how meaning is produced in human interaction generally.

In his philosophy of language Wittgenstein anticipates what later came to go under the name of "tacit knowledge". Johannessen even comes to the conclusion that an idea about tacit knowledge underlies Wittgenstein's entire late philosophy (82). I find support in the above quotation from Wittgenstein for the idea that a cognitive approach to drama and acting could indeed be justified. This is very consistent with my own educational experience at Malmö Theatre Academy (MTA), where the teaching on the acting as well as on the dramatic writing programme is based on the idea about the work on the script as a way to investigate reality.

Now, there are several ways a play could be constructed, each one bringing with it different ways to contextualise the actions on stage. The decades following the nineteen forties, when Wittgenstein made the annotations later issued in the quoted work, brought with them new challenges to the traditional way of writing for the theatre. In the final year of the 20th century, Hans-Thies Lehmann in his *Postdramatic theatre* envisages the end of the kind of play Wittgenstein probably is talking about. Lehmann claims that "the reality of new theatre begins precisely in the fading of this trinity of drama, imitation and action" (37). Now, if traditional drama is a reflection of human communication pragmatics in general, as suggested by Wittgenstein, what about plays by Sarah Kane, Elfriede Jelinek, Martin Crimp and René Pollesch?

THE QUESTION

Among the three elements in traditional theatre that according to Lehman are "fading away" in contemporary theatre, *action* will here be treated as the most

significant one.

The reason for this is not only the central importance of action in the tradition of Western theatre but also, as Wittgenstein emphasizes, the fundamental importance language *use*, i.e. language in context and action, has for the emergence of meaning.

Acting method is still today extensively action-based. Irrespective of the degrees of "realism" the one who acts in a fictional play remains someone who performs the fictional actions of a character, by means of performing real actions of his own. The word for the written theatre text, drama, originates in a word meaning "action". Similarly, the designation of the theatrical performer in many languages is a word meaning "someone who acts". This testifies to the importance of the element of action in theatre, both in its written and acted form. The central position of the element of action, which is closely tied to the physical presence of the actor, has brought with it the fact that the actor frequently stands out as an obstacle in productions of drama where the element of action in a fictional setting is under question, or "fading away" in Lehmann's phrasing. I will partly deal with this issue as well, but less as a matter of an attitude on the part of the actor than as a structural phenomenon brought forward by the way circumstances presented in the play contextualize the actions on stage.

Traditional drama rests on the presupposition that man is reasonably free to carry out his own decisions. The existence of free deliberation is one of the primal issues under question in modern and contemporary experimental theatre. If one focuses on the element of action it will also therefore be possible to trace what kind of implied ideas about man and the mind hide behind the different types of theatre texts investigated.

During the last fifty years Wittgenstein's practice-oriented approach to the occurrence of meaning has been reiterated extensively within various disciplines. It was further developed by speech act philosophers like Austin and Searle. In an interview in *Le Debat* the latter recounts how his preoccupation with speech act theory subsequently led him to enter the field of philosophy of mind, which eventually in its turn became one of the disciplines amalgamating with cognitive science. Pragmatical as well as cognitive aspects of human language were developed within linguistics in the form of for example Simon C.

Dik's "Functional grammar" and Langacker's "Cognitive grammar". Frequent connections in later years between some philosophy and empirical research have also made it possible to deal with notions such as first person experience, consciousness, volition, intersubjectivity and agency in a way that is not only speculative, but also anchored in empirical research.

New findings within cognitive science challenge established ideas about man and mind. My overall question in this dissertation will be: How could these findings be applied on the actor's process from written text to action on stage?

I will include in this discussion both action-based drama and drama that is not based on action.

METHOD

I will try to answer the above question about the cognitive element in theatre with the help of analyses of different plays. In this I will adapt two approaches, one originating in the practice of acting and one in a set of ideas under development within the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. As for the first one I will draw upon the fact that actors try to situate their characters within the given context of the play, in order to motivate their own actions "as" the characters. There are different tools developed for this. I am going to use what I call "the action analysis", which aims at finding out the possible motivational pattern for the doings of a scenic figure. I look at this not in terms of "psychology", or "psychological realism", which is not an issue here at all, but in the sense of how motivations for actions qualify them as such, and make them intelligible to others. (Talk about motivation is not per definition talk about psychology.)

As regards cognitive science an important point of departure is the idea formulated by Suchman as first and foremost *situated*, an idea I find support for both in the quotation from Wittgenstein and in important writings on theatre. Action will here be defined in terms of intention and consciousness. Of these two notions the latter in particular has long been absent from important parts of the discussion about the human mind, while retaining central importance within the phenomenological tradition in philosophy. It will be argued that elements within phenomenologic thought, such as for instance those expressed by Paul Ricoeur, are compatible with experiences within theatrical practice, as these have been put forward by important writers such as Stanislavski, Donnellan and Cohen.

Attention will also be paid to the discussion about identity and first-person perspective conducted within the phenomenological tradition, connecting to views developed within theatre practice and anticipating the discussion about these elements in modern philosophy of mind and cognitive science.

Cognitive science is an interdisciplinary domain rather than a fixed discipline. My aim is therefore also to indicate openings between theatre and this domain rather than to make an exhaustive penetration of the subject. The character of the treatise will inevitably be interdisciplinary. This means that I have to include the same warning as Alicia Juarrero attaches to her *Dynamics in Action*: "Interdisciplinary books are notoriously problematic: sections that appear overly simplistic and old hat to one audience strike another as brand new and difficult" (10). Another problematic feature about multidisciplinarity is the more restricted possibilities to go in depth with any of the disciplines involved. I deliberately choose to accept such disadvantages for the benefit of introducing relevant knowledge from other fields into the debate about practical knowledge in theatre. The aim of this is to help conceptualize elements in the relation between text and scenic action, which have hitherto mainly been matters of "tacit knowledge" and which gain central interest in the development of and discussion about new ways for the theatre.

The chief merit with the cognitive approach is the one of opening up novel descriptive possibilities. In this way it contributes to eluding how artistic practice as such can be a means of investigation and reflection, and thus also how it can be a means to communicate knowledge. An important portion of the text will be devoted to what will here be called the "BSI model", which is a term for the narrative form of drama framed by the tenses past, present and future. The reason for this is not a preference for traditional dramatic forms. Rather, it is that the BSI model also lies at the bottom of ventures to do away with this pattern, in the sense that it is still largely traditional forms of narrative that make up for the expectations of the public. Thus my focus on the BSI model serves the purpose of putting words on features that are also crucial in work on untraditional theatre texts. In order to investigate the cognitive aspects of theatre it seems wiser to first look at them in their basic application to what here is called BSI drama, before dealing with them in those forms where they are challenged.

THE PLAYS

The plays I will use as examples are partly selected from the traditional Western canon. Strindberg's one acter *The Stronger*, in particular, will be used as a model example for "drama with action". As for more untraditional writing for the stage the selection includes

- Maurice Maeterlinck's *Intérieur (Interior)* 1891
- Arno Holz/Johannes Schlaf's *Die Familie Selicke (The Selicke Family)* 1890
- Oskar Kokoschka's *Mörder Hoffnung der Frauen (Murderer, Hope of Women)* 1909
- Vassily Kandinsky's *Der gelbe Klang (The Yellow Sound)* 1909
- August Stramm's *Geschehen (Event)* 1915
- Lothar Schreyer's *Kreuzigung (Crucifixion)* 1920
- Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby* 1980
- Peter Handke's *Die Stunde da wir nichts von einander wußten. (The Hour we knew nothing of each other)* 1992
- Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* 1997
- Sarah Kane's *Crave* 1998

One principal aim has been to present such plays where the element of action is strongly under question, and where are also exemplified alternative ideas as to what the relation between text and scenic work could be like. It has been important that the selected plays represent a high degree of radicalism. The overall aim is that the plays should be reasonably representative, too, of the search for alternative theatre and writing forms, from early modernism onwards.

DEFINITIONS

Key words in my discourse will be concepts like "context", "meaning", "identity", "action", "action-based drama", "the actor" and "action analysis". I will therefore clarify my use here of these concepts.

Context

In accordance with the definition made by Patrice Pavis in his *Dictionary of the Theatre* we could characterise the context in a play as "the set of circumstances surrounding

the production of the linguistic text and/or the performance ...". (78)

But in contrast to Pavis' view in *Dictionary of the Theatre* (78), according to which the understanding of a situation in a performance is a matter of calculation or symbol processing, it will here be viewed as a matter of infinite openness to various interpretations of a given semantic content. In my view it is this openness that justifies the analogy in the quotation from Wittgenstein between the theatrical situation and situations in real life. Thus it suffices here to see context, and hence contextualization, in theatre as primarily the features that make the theatrical performance understandable by this analogy. "Situation" is one of the most used notions in the education of actors, the question "what is the situation?" being the key to any understanding of a line in a dialogue or of a character's doings. Thus also, as will be addressed in more detail later on, a concept like the "creative if", i.e. the question "what would I have done in the *situation* of the character?" stands at the centre of Stanislavski's writings about the art of acting. Another notion for this is the one of the "given circumstances", which are crucial for an actor to find out in order to understand what he and others are saying and doing in a given section of the play. In Chapter three I will address different experts on the education of actors. As it will turn out, all of them basically agree with Stanislavski on this point. Given that "situation" is a well established way to designate context in connection with the actor's work, "context" will therefore here be understood as "given circumstances" in the senses given to this notion by, for example, Stanislavski and Jovet. In the vocabulary of actor training "situation" and "context" are often treated as synonyms. As is also the case in, for example, Stanislavski, situatedness and context will here be treated as framed by the tenses past, present and (intended, expected) future. In phenomenological philosophy this temporal character of situatedness is reflected already in the basic idea that the past (retention) and the anticipation of the future (protention) influence on the "primal impression" of the world. The temporal character of the context is also addressed in the phenomenological idea about the *historical* self, i.e. of the self as crucially influenced by the individual's past. Phenomenological philosophy has been subject to increased interest within cognitive science, not least in connection with the discussion about consciousness (Thompson, Varela and Rosch, Thompson). It will also here be treated as providing important aspects of "situatedness" and "context".

Meaning and Identity

According to Wittgenstein in the quotation above, meaning depends on the context. A thesis here will be that drama with and drama without action represent different ways of contextualizing meaning.

It will be argued that an action-based way to approach the dramatic text has features in common with hermeneutical and phenomenological ideas about meaning, due to the emphasis in traditional drama on the narrative, or the plot, and, as regards acting, on the "circumstances" suggested in the dramatic text.

In modern ideas about meaning, the embodiment of human understanding is taken into account to the point of reducing the discussion about meaning to processes in the central neural system.

But Wittgenstein's comparison between the meaning of a sentence in a play and the emergence of meaning in language also prompts me to review other ideas.

When it comes to drama "without action", Elinor Fuchs in her *The Death of Character* stresses the crucial significance of Nietzsche's thinking as an ideological backdrop to the development of new theatre forms. In principle I agree with Fuchs on this point, without disregarding other thinkers who in a similar way have influenced modern Western theatre.

Thirdly, I will discuss action in relation to dynamic mental processes and interactions such as these have been described by Alicia Juarrero in her *Dynamics in Action*.

By "identity" will be meant here personal identity, such as appears in theatre in the form of the identity of the character and in that of the actor, respectively, as well as in how the one relates to the other in the situation of play. It will be argued that in action-based drama this "amalgamated" identity is formed basically by the constraints imposed by the circumstances suggested in the play, which on the level of acting become *assumed* constraints.

Action

As a point of departure for the discussion about action I select a definition made by the theatre semiotician Keir Elam in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. The definition does not actually originate in semiotics, but draws upon formulations by philosophers such as Rescher, Von Wright, Danto and Van Dijk. The definition

goes like this: "there is a being, conscious of his doings, who intentionally brings about a change of some kind, to some end, in a given context." (121)

Elam in his definition first and foremost establishes that there exists something like human action, as opposed to mere events, and that an intentional agent is a prerequisite for this to take place. This person should also be "conscious of his doings". It is further established that actions take place in a context, and that they result in a change. In conclusion, necessary elements in an action are, according to Elam, intention, consciousness, context and change. A more detailed discussion of these elements will follow in Chapter four.

I will adopt this definition to start with, while adding the following specifications as to its applications to different parts in the work on a text in theatre.

- By action *in a play* will be meant the doings of the *dramatis personae* as laid down in the plot and implied in the dialogue.
- By action in *acting* will here be meant those actions as transformed to the play-actions on stage.
- By "fictional actions on stage" will be meant actions intended to be part of a fictional context, the staged play, but which are, in fact, real actions in real time, performed by living persons, the actors.

There is often a habitual divide made between fiction and reality that is prevalent in both theatre theory and practice. An interesting analysis of the relationship between reality and fiction has been made by David Z. Saltz in an article called *Infiction and outfiction*.¹ I am going to return to this later.

In connection with the above definition Elam also states that "the basic action-structure and logical cohesion of the drama is accessible through analysis of the written text." (99)

I agree with Elam on this point. Support for it is that it is exactly this "basic action-structure" and "logical cohesion" that are searched for by means of the actor's analysis of the text. As a consequence, it will not be necessary here to base the discussion about the relationship between text and acting on actual stagings. An analysis of the written text suffices to uncover the basic means implicitly suggested in the play for building the scenic action. At least this holds true for the instances where the text of the play is intended to bring with it

a basic concept of the performance. As I here discuss the relationship between the text and the actor, this is the kind of text I am dealing with.

Action is an important notion in the philosophy of mind, along with related concepts such as intention, consciousness and will. Actions are not only what humans do to achieve their goals. Actions are also their most important means of communication, and arguably human actions include language use in all its aspects as well. If a person's actions stand in opposition to his words, the action is generally given more prominence. In this way actions are also crucial for the forming of a personal identity in a social context.

But "action" is also an elusive concept, and some dictionaries in psychology do not even have this entry. As Ingmar Persson states in the Swedish National encyclopedia, will, and hence intentional action, extensively lacks an established place in contemporary scientific psychology, presumably because the concept is alien to the mechanistic view of traditional psychology.

But in many definitions the elements of intention and/or consciousness occur as necessary prerequisites, quite in accordance with Elam.

Intention and Consciousness

In his *Acting power* Robert Cohen writes that "the actor is tied to the character through an understanding of what goals or victories the character strives towards in the future" (32). The quotation could also serve as subsuming innumerable similar accounts of the importance of intention in theatrical action.

Now, the stress on the importance of intention does not, of course, imply that theatre deals exclusively with intentional acts. Actions conceived as intentional simultaneously have unintentional sides, for example in the sense that we can intentionally give a present to someone, at the same time as unintentionally neglecting someone else. Rather than being mutually exclusive intention and unintention often appear as two sides of the same acts. According to Goldman in his article in *Consciousness and cognition* a person's generalized condition at a given moment is conscious "if and only if he possesses at least one conscious partial state at that time" (364), which implies the possibility of possessing simultaneously also unconscious states.

I will return to the complex issues about the relationship between intention and consciousness later on in this thesis.

Action-based Drama

Drama with action is the traditional form of drama. Importantly, though, this does not mean that it complies with any idea, formulated beforehand, about how a drama should be written. Thus a medieval play like *Everyman* is a drama with action although it does not conform to any known pattern. Thus the definition of action here conforms to the wider of Szondi's two definitions (12–13), "drama" within quotation marks, designating everything that is written for the stage. The "dramatic" in Szondi's narrower sense is not an issue at all in this thesis.

"Drama with action" will here be defined as a narrative, conceived as a written text intended for scenic use, a text which is fictive, mimetic in some sense, and has the form of a contextualization of assumed human actions, verbal and non-verbal. These actions, carried out by fictive *dramatis personae*, are intended to be acted in real time by living persons – actors – in front of a public.

The actor then embodies not only the sayings and doings of a fictive person, but also the background, situation and objectives of this person, as well as of his sayings and doings.

An important part of Western drama from the ancient Greeks to Lars Norén complies with this description. This means that it also holds true for a great variety of styles in playwrighting and acting.

The theatrical performance that builds on a written text is the result of the work of three agents and thus of three general actions:

- That of the playwright when writing the text
- That of the director when implementing his conception of the text
- That of the actor when elaborating the role (in the whole period of preparation, rehearsal and play).

Besides these agents there are, at times, other claims that influence a production, such as the policy of the theatre, political prescripts, demands of authorities, sponsors etc. Although such factors could also be seen as important intentional acts influencing on the theatrical performance I have to leave them outside this account.

It is the actions of the dramatis personae as performed by the actors that will stand at the centre here.

The Actor

By "actor" will here be meant a person, male or female, who works on a qualified and professional level. She is an artist, open to different demands professional life puts on her. She is capable of being an active collaborator with her co-actors as well as with different stage directors, from the point of being herself a creative, not only reproductive, artist. Frequently nowadays this means that she has undergone a specialized education².

In the modern media world a person might very well practice the profession of actor without having any contact with theatre. In spite of this it is the theatre actor that will stand in the focus here.

Acting as Text

This idea about the actor is set against the idea put forward in recent structuralist and post-structuralist theory of the theatrical performance as a "text". Sonesson in his "The Concept of Text in Cultural Semiotics" maintains that the whole history of Modernism could be seen as a process of transforming non-texts into texts. I agree with him when he argues that "every use of the term 'text' outside verbal language is subject to the perils of 'ontological and epistemological panlinguisticism': i.e. of either presuming that all meaning is built on the model of language, or that it is only accessible to use by the mediation of language" ("The concept of text" 87). Furthermore, making the actor a part of the "scenic language" blurs the fact that the actor is himself rather a "sender" in the communicational process.

The Actor and the Stage Director

Given the dominant position of the director in the modern theatre it could seem reductive to talk about the theatre text mainly in its relation to the actor. On the other hand, it is difficult to describe the relation between the text and the director in general terms in the way this can be done as regards the actor's work. Alan Ayckbourne, himself both a playwright and a director, makes a blunt formulation of the problem in his *The crafty Art of Playmaking*: "The only sure-fire thing to be said about directing is that the rules change not just from director to director, but from play to play, actor to actor, production to production" (99).

What could be said, however, is that the director generally substantially influences what is here called the circumstances of the play in its staged form. If the director lets for example Macbeth be played in a modern setting, in a mafia milieu, say, the actors have to adapt to the altering circumstances this brings with it by situating their play accordingly.

A director also influences the acting of a play by making cuts in the text or adaptations of it. In these cases it is still a question of altering the given circumstances, which in the end does not necessarily make any fundamental difference in relation to performing the text with the circumstances provided by the author. However, the important shift in relation to the discussion carried on here occurs when the actor becomes more dependent on the director's instructions than on his/her own understandings of the given circumstances.

Again, "actor" will here mean a person, who retains an ability to base his work on his own understanding of the circumstances under which he acts scenically.

In accordance with the quotation from Ayckbourn this is something that can change from production to production. Still this remark must be made in order to set some limits at least to the discussion.

Importantly, the view of the actor presented here is not set in opposition to the director's work. The idea about an actor as a responsible artist in his own right could very well be consistent with Uta Hagen's demand on the actor in *Respect for Acting*: "The director's concept must be followed, and your job is to make it live. It is your job to justify, make throb, and make exist that which he asks of you, whether you agree or not. You must be flexible enough to go *with* him." (198)

When not expressly talking about other kinds of actors I talk about one who can make his own decisions not only as to the fictional circumstances implied in his script, but also to the factual circumstances related to the production, i.e. as to the presence and the actions of his co-actors, the instructions/suggestions from the director, the setting, different conditioning factors in the space, etc.³

Martin Esslin writes in *The Field of Drama*: "The actor thus is the essential ingredient around which all drama revolves" (59) . A similar central position for the actor is to be found in Eric Bentley's definition of theatre: "A represents

X while S looks on", which is also the definition Erika Fischer-Lichte uses as a point of departure in the opening of her *Semiotik des Theaters* (1: 25). Extensively it is this idea about the central position of the actor in the theatrical process that will also be adopted here.

The Actor in the "Long" and in the "Short" Perspective

When we see the actor X we see the fictive character Y in X's actions. Or, with an expression borrowed from John Searle's *Rationality in Action*, "X counts as Y in (context) C" (56), where "X" is the actor, "Y" is the character and C is the stage in a given theatrical performance. This is also consistent with ideas put forth by Saltz about fiction in acting as a matter of *infiction* and of the relationship between the actor and the role as a matter of "conceptual blending" (Fauconnier and Turner).

Importantly the process of impersonation goes beyond what is referred to as the "theatrical moment" to which the ordinary theatregoer is given access. The work on a role is extended over time, often encompassing today at least five or six weeks of preparation, analysis and rehearsals. I call this the actor "in the long perspective". In the long perspective, acted fiction is not only a matter of how someone experiences someone else in a given moment or sequence of events. Fiction here is a matter of a creative process, which is given an individual colour by every actor, but nevertheless is subjected to certain general conditionings. These and different ways to deal with them practically belong to the realm of actor training. In this regard, as Abirached points out in his *La crise du personnage* ..., the actor's work is more akin to that of an author elaborating a short story or novel over time, making gradual changes and corrections, choosing some solutions and rejecting others (77). In this perspective, acting is considerably more complex than the question it is frequently reduced to: the one of applying or not applying empathic emotionality at the moment of performance.

Acting a play from a text thus involves the following factors: 1. the script 2. the actor who goes through the process of assimilating the text and who relates to his role in a first-personal perspective, and, 3. the actor as seen by the public, by which the public experiences the outcome of the actor's assimilation of the text and experiences him and the role in a third-person perspective.

By means of this distinction one can also highlight the difference between the

act of engaging oneself in the theatrical game in the first-person perspective and that of seeing it in the third-person perspective, as these positions also mark a basic difference between the actor's commitment in the play and that of the audience⁴.

In Gilles Fauconnier's and Mark Turner's *The way we think* the authors discuss what they call "conceptual blending", a cognitive capacity that enables one to mix "conceptual spaces" from different areas. One of their ways to illustrate this idea is by means of a riddle about a Buddhist Monk who supposedly climbs a mountain upwards and downwards at the same time of the day. The question is: when and at which point on the path will he "meet himself"? The story makes sense and it is possible to calculate the point where the encounter would take place in spite of the basic impossibility of the operation itself. It is possible because it depends on one's ability to blend different aspects of the account (Fauconnier and Turner 39–50).

According to the authors acting on stage is also a matter of conceptual blending, taking place between the actions of a character and those of a living person, the actor. "In principle", the authors argue, "actors are linked to characters by virtue of performing in the real world actions that share physical properties with actions performed by the characters in a represented world" (266). Fauconnier and Turner also make a similar division as I do above between the actor as seen by the public and the actor as working in the entire staging process, when they argue that the actor's conceptual blending is different from that of the spectators (267). The idea about conceptual blending not only does not contradict the idea about the three factors put forward above. It is also in accordance with experiences made in connection with the education of actors, as put forward, for example by the writers referred to in Chapter three. Unlike Fauconnier and Turner these writers do not develop a *theory* of conceptual blending, but describe how this takes place in the practice of acting, i.e. how, "in the blend" the objectives of the actor become those of the role, and how actor and role merge in *action*, a concept that is central for all the writers mentioned. In accordance with them it could also be argued that the actions an actor performs on the stage share not only *physical* properties with the actions of the characters, but also, importantly, *intentional* ones.

Fauconnier and Turner give numerous examples of how "conceptual blending" manifests itself. The one that is perhaps most interesting from a theatrical

point of view is the one the authors call "The debate with Kant" (59–61). In the example a modern philosopher in the course of a seminar engages himself in a fictional discussion with the German. He is then able to give his own argument, counter with the ones of Kant, and then after the debate has gone on for a while, win the debate. This means that he establishes Kant's philosophical positions as "given circumstances", constraints, which he himself responds to. This seems akin to the process an actor is going through in the work on a role, only that the actor must relate himself not only to someone's ideas, but more globally to the *actions* prescribed for the character, and the kind of demands on coherence this also gives rise to. All this testifies to how theatre indeed could be integrated in the discussion about conceptual blending.

It is important, when one is talking about the actor, to be aware in what sense one applies the notion, in the sense of the "short perspective" or the "long perspective". Clearly the aim of the actor "in the long perspective" is to become the actor "in the short perspective", as the final aim is to appear before the public. But what primarily will be dealt with here is the cognitive process of the actor in the long perspective. Authors writing on the actor's art that will be referred to here argue that the way an actor in the long perspective finds out and integrates the meaning of the scenic actions in the embodied context is crucial for how the role is experienced in the acting-spectating perspective.

Importantly, the sequence of performances of a play are also integrated in the "long perspective", in the sense that new insights gained throughout the period of acting a part develop the acting accordingly.

In Chapter three I will review a series of teachers expressing themselves on acting and actor training. Notably, all of these authors talk about what I here call the actor in the long perspective. Hornby writes about Stanislavski that his method does not have anything to do with the public at all, but that it is only aimed at the actor (96). This obviously by no means implies that the spectator is unimportant to the actor or the teacher. Cohen explains this by means of a comparison with sports (38). During the play the athlete does not give the public a glance, but establishes the relationship by focusing on his task and his preoccupation. This is also what the actor often does.

In the case of the actor this also means that there must not be any symmetry between how the part is experienced by the actor and the way the public

experiences this. The work on a role is different from the experience of this role as manifest in the actor's performance. Louis Jovet stresses that the actor has to focus on the actions of the part in the given circumstances, and that it is not his but the public's part to put these actions together into an idea about a "character" (39).

In the "short perspective" mimesis is a simple matter of "conceptual blending": actor and role become one in action, as Jovet stresses. In the long perspective, on the other hand, the actor has to choose his means, he has to decide from a first-person point of view as to what constraints in the situation prescribed for the role (what Stanislavski and Jovet call "the circumstances") influence the actions of this role – and how – and the ways the lines accorded to the role make sense in the sequence of situational settings. In the short, actor-to-spectator perspective, reality and fiction merge in action, in a way that suspends the difference between the two. In the long perspective the actor must keep track of his doings from a reality point of view, assessing the doings and sayings of the role in relation to situations that are only assumed as real. Thus the fiction-reality divide plays a greater role here, in the process of preparation, while subsequently disappearing in the performance. None of the authors writing on the actor's art reviewed in Chapter three look upon the scenic actions as standing for absent actions in a fictional world. All stress the reality of the scenic events. The actor has to go through, "at the table" or "on the floor", the hermeneutical process of understanding the doings of the role in their assumed situational context and in the light of possible objectives. It is this process that is described by the authors writing on the actor's art that I refer to in Chapter three of this dissertation. It is also this process I describe as a *cognitive process*.

In this dissertation the actor is generally viewed in what I call "the long perspective", i.e. in the entire process of preparation and playing, not in the actor-spectator relationship during a separate performance.

ACTION ANALYSIS

Wittgenstein's idea in the quotation builds on the basic similarity between a scenic situation and a situation in real life. It is through the analogy between the scenic situation and a real situation that the comparison can also be made

between the use of language in the respective contexts.

Given that actions are dependent on situation and objective, the material we have to talk about is such material in the play that builds up different situations and intentions. This can be found by means of an analysis that uncovers these situations and intentions by relating them to different circumstances presented in the text. It is this kind of analysis that will here be called "action analysis". "Action analysis" is not an established concept in all theatre practice. Arguably it was Stanislavski who was the first one to stimulate actors to write down analyses of the situations they were about to act. Stanislavskian approaches to acting have also attracted new interest in connection with what has been called the "Cognitive turn" in theatre research. (See for example McConachie in his Foreword to *Performance and Cognition*, ix). However, as will be demonstrated later, the action analysis originates in a kind of praxis that has long been applied more or less systematically and more or less consciously by actors. Arguably, the point of departure for the action analysis is the kind of conventions lying behind theatrical fiction everywhere, and which presuppose a basic consistency in the relationship between the actions of the play and the set of fictional circumstances they relate to. For obvious reasons fictionality always presupposes modality and basic cohesion.

Our use of "action analysis" takes its point of departure in the following understanding:

The basic questions are these: "What is the situation?" "What does the character want to achieve in the given situation?" The question can be applied to the text in its entirety as well as to separate situations suggested in it.

Now, given that the character is only a construct, lacking a real personality of his own, how could one talk about what he "wants" in a specific situation? The objective of the analysis is not to give a definitive answer to this question. The aim is not to attribute any fixed properties to the character, only to make it possible to situate him in such a way that makes his actions according to the script make (basic) sense. The only demand is that one finds some kind of objective which is consistent with the text as a whole. On the level of the actor's work this only serves to find an intentional direction of his doings in order to obtain personal control in the first-person perspective. This intentional direction is often elementary and is aimed at being specified in practice, not

in theory: "Hamlet wants to know if the ghost is right"; "Iago wants to take revenge on Othello"; "Oedipus wants to find out who killed the former king". Such assumptions about the objectives of the characters serve the purpose of contextualizing the doings of the fictional constructs in the narrative as a whole, and of contextualising the actor's doings on the stage with the totality of his own doings, as well as of that of his fellow-actors' doings.

Such intentional directions of the fictional persons, and of the actors themselves in the assumed situations, could in the end produce very different results. Thus the way to interpret Hamlet's wish to verify or falsify the ghost's claims, Oedipus' wish to administer justice etc. could be varied *ad infinitum*, without contradicting the formulation of the basic problem/intention. The analysis builds upon the assumption that there is always some kind of intention involved in what humans do and that these doings are related to sets of circumstances. But it does not provide any theories as to the nature of intentions in an epistemological perspective or the relationship between intentions and circumstances or between intended doings and the unintended ones. Neither does it necessarily provide any suggestions as to the playwright's intentions with the play, nor about philosophical or other ideas behind it.

Again, the aim of the action analysis is not to hammer down propositional truths, but to contextualise the game the actors are about to be involved in by uncovering the modal parameters in the fictional text.

Background, Situation and Intention (BSI)

Now, by situation is commonly meant something taking place at the present time. But the present time is dependent on events in the past time. Oedipus has tried to escape a prediction and as a consequence he has ended up in Thebes. His situation at the beginning of the play thus contains elements of his past. I call this past "the background", and I can thus form the concept "background-situation-intention" (BSI) as a general description of the kind of material offered by the text and used by the actor as a basic context for the actions of his character, including his own spoken lines. As will be shown later this notion is consistent with many methodological approaches to acting. The reason why I introduce a special term for this phenomenon is to make the account unbiased by connections with any specific method.

The material forming BSI is partly given as basic information in the play. If we meet Oedipus at the beginning of Sophocles's drama we can all find in his past, by means of the text and the myth, the prediction of his gruesome fate, as well as the killing he later involved himself in, on the person he did not know to be his own father. We can also extrapolate from the fact that he is the king of Thebes the intention to deal with the plague haunting the city, in order to find its causes and do away with it. Finally, we can draw conclusions from the text as to general information about the persons. We can readily conclude, according to the circumstances presented, that he for example is a grown up man, which in its turn entails a certain set of consequences etc. Such "facts" are assumptions we can make with more or less certainty from reading the text, in accordance with Elam's claim above that the basic action-structure and logical cohesion of the drama is accessible through analysis of the written text. As many, including all those who take part in the staging of the play, share this material, it also ideally forms a consistent spatio-temporal whole. As such, they are possible to agree upon and to give the status of something similar to the rules of a game, susceptible to a shared agreement to which all actions relate.

Now, again, it is one thing that such circumstances/rules are presented in the text and agreed upon. It is quite another thing *how* they are interpreted by the individual actor, something that is open to endless variation. Importantly it can also be a question of different ways to understand the role. One way for an actor to approach the role could be from the point of view of a *character* with a more or less fixed set of properties and personal traits ascribed to the *dramatis persona*. Doing this is in fact not the same as to disregard the given circumstances in the text, but only to impose on them an additional layer of interpretation. Another way to approach the role is for example the one Stanislavski advocated, as Louis Jouvet did also with great emphasis⁵, to focus on the given circumstances without a détour to an idea about a fixed character.

The given circumstances, the "facts" of the play, are open to anyone who reads the text. Another way to extract these circumstances is to apply to the text the so-called "five Ws", an alternative way to actually do the same job as with the "action analysis".

It is not difficult to see that the "action-analysis" corresponds to Stanislavski's idea about the "given circumstances". It is, in fact, a means to uncover these

circumstances in the text. The analysis also complies with Aristotle's idea of a "creative mimesis". Theatrical representation in this sense is not necessarily a way to produce mimesis in a depicting sense. Rather, mimesis could be seen as a product of a game taking place between the actors. Illusion in the "third-person perspective" is then not illusion but *game* in the actor's perspective, which conforms to Diderot's (1778) idea that illusion is something that occurs in the mind of the spectator, and not in the actor.

In spite of this correspondence between a widespread practice and Aristotle's idea about mimesis this is not an "Aristotelian" feature in the sense Brecht gave to this notion. It is not specifically "Stanislvskian" either. Arguably there is no significant difference between this kind of mimesis and the one applied in children's' games, such as in the example "If you are the policeman and I am the thief (given circumstances, "creative if", modal assumption) I shall try to escape you (objective, intention)". In a similar way, without any reference to Aristotle or Stanislavski, adventure games and "live games" build on a basic principle about fictional actions as related to given circumstances and objectives. The difference is that in theatre the play also provides the actors/participants with a dialogue, which is assumed to be engendered by the given circumstances it in itself implies. Another difference is the presence of an audience.

BSI is applicable to most theatre texts as well as to the art of acting, and it also opens up comparisons with theories developed within contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science. Thus I will here use the notion of BSI for the bridging of two gaps, the one between the written text and the work on stage and the other between the work on stage and the theory of action.

It will be argued that the BSI pattern is possible to apply to practically all drama "with action", regardless of degrees of "realism". It will also here be applied to "drama without action" in order to map the material this provides the actor with, or denies him/her.

Drama without Action

The very essence of what we call "drama without action" is that it lacks the conditionings sought for in the action analysis.

Arguably, drama without action is no drama at all, but another form of text intended for performance use. The reason why I nevertheless retain the

notion of "drama" here is primarily that this is still applied to theatre texts notwithstanding their relation to the element of action. Plays such as *Ohio Impromptu*, *The Hour* and *Attempts on her life* are still talked about as dramas, and Beckett, Handke and Crimp as dramatists.

A "drama without action"⁶, the extreme example of the questioning of action dealt with in this dissertation, typically has the characteristics of a scenic text

- Where the doings of the figures appearing are not steered by an accounted for teleological pattern of finality, personal will, purpose and objective.
- Where the unfolding of scenic events is structured by other means than mere mimetic accounts for human deliberation.

A drama without action could also be described as a disjunctive negation of Elam's definition, i.e. a play, where the important figures appearing are not conscious of their doings or do not "intentionally bring about a change of some kind, to some end in a given context", or alternatively where the consciousness of the figures appearing, their intentions and the possible changes they bring about are subordinated to other aspects of the scenic events presented.

However, lack of action in a play could also be a matter of degrees. Lehmann's use of the expression "fading away" rightfully suggests that action is not always done away with altogether.

Despite many attempts to develop alternative acting methods there does not as yet exist any method that actually does away with the problem about acting non-action. Still, without really solving this aporia, actors have tried out ways to circumvent it, in order to be able to cope with this kind of play at all. But the means to achieve this is rather a matter of practical theatre work "on the floor" and thus not a major concern here.

Drama and acting will not be viewed here as subordinate to theory, but as communicative means in their own right. The role of theory in this context is seen as one of putting words to practical experience and, by producing a suitable vocabulary, facilitating reflection.⁷

Action as it appears in theatrical work should not be confounded with action theory, which consists of formulated ideas about man and human interaction. The element of action in theatre as such is not related to philosophical ideas,

even if numerous philosophers have tried to *describe* this phenomenon. In theatre practice issues about intention, action, identity and will are dealt with by *instantiating* them rather than by supplying theories about them. The way human actions and their conditionings are researched in theatre is through practice rather than in the form of theories. What I will try to do here, however, is to bring the two modes of investigation a little closer to each other.

The two, the practice of acting and the above mentioned contemporary discussion about the human mind, are also extremely different fields. This inevitably raises the question as to who is the reader I have in mind when writing this text. My answer is that this dissertation is written for a class of readers that perhaps does not exist as yet, but that the dissertation and related efforts aim at promoting: the expert on theatrical practice who takes an interest in a highly relevant contemporary discussion about the human mind, as well as the scholar taking an interest in the promising cognitive aspects of theatre and acting.

But inasfar as human action in the sense of reasonably free deliberation is a central issue in theatre, and the existence of such an entity in the real world is a more general human concern, the thesis addresses itself to anyone interested in theatre.

Again, the objective of this thesis is to investigate the element of action in theatre from a cognitivistic perspective. I will research examples of "drama with action" and "drama without action" from this approach.

The thesis is divided into six sections, which in their turn are divided into separate segments. The operations I will engage myself in can be summarized as follows:

In the second section, "Context and situatedness", I go more deeply into what is here understood as "drama with action". I will show how the BSI model for a fictional narrative corresponds to *situatedness* such as this term is defined by Lucy Suchman in her work *Plans and situated actions*. One way to uncover situatedness in dramatic text is by means of "action analysis". I apply this analysis to a play and give a more detailed presentation of what I call the BSI model. I also address the idea that in the actor's work with the text there is a pattern that remains unchanged throughout Western theatre history. I identify this pattern as acting according to BSI. I find that arguably there are elements of a BSI pattern to be found both in the older

oratorical style of acting and in the idea about a reformed acting mode elaborated in the middle of the 18th century. I also agree with Fuchs in her *The Death of Character* that Nietzsche is an important representative of ideas that implied a seminal break with the BSI pattern (28–29).

In the section entitled “Methodology of Situatedness” I will demonstrate with the help of influential writings on the method of acting that there is an element of research present in the actor’s work with a fictional text according to a BSI pattern. Finally, I will set this work in relation to ideas within phenomenological philosophy, notably the ideas about “the historical self” and Ricoeur’s idea about “the world of the text”.

The next section, “Action, Mind and Cognition”, is devoted to an overview of recent ideas within cognitive science and the philosophy of mind that are compatible with the BSI model. I demonstrate how elements connected with action and action understanding, such as consciousness, intentionality and intersubjectivity are subject to renewed interest within the disciplines addressed, in contrast to the mechanistic ideas that earlier dominated scientific dealings with the human mind.

In the section “Drama without Action” I address experimental theatre texts in a selection from early modern texts onwards. I review how in these dramas different means are developed to replace the element of action, as well as the ideological backgrounds of this.

The investigation is summed up in the section “Summary and concluding remarks”.

2. CONTEXT AND SITUATEDNESS

SITUATED ACTION

In the previous chapter I quoted a passage from Wittgenstein where he takes a play as a model of how meaning emerges in a sentence. The passage is consistent with the general tendency in Wittgenstein's late philosophy to see meaning in language as a result of language use rather than in terms of some pre-established correspondence between propositions and the outer world.

A similar "turn" towards contextualisation took place within computer science at the end of the nineteen-eighties. One aim of this discipline was to construe models of human thinking, Artificial Intelligence (AI). In this way computer science was actually at the origin of what later came to be called "cognitive science". As will be addressed in more detail further on, this endeavour started in an idea about human thinking as a kind of symbol processing. The human brain was thought of as something like a computer, or rather like a "Turing machine", which before the actual creation of the first computers was a set of basic symbol-manipulating devices that could carry through the processes of a computer.⁸ Later, this view about human mind lost ground to an idea more akin to Wittgenstein's about the context-dependency of meaning and understanding. In 1987 Lucy A Suchman issued a book entitled *Plans and Situated Action: The problem of human-machine communication*. Suchman unites two specialities, the one in sociology, the other in computer science, most particularly in the field of *human-computer interaction*, for which she provided the intellectual foundations. The objective Suchman sets for herself in the above mentioned book is to research not only the mental processes behind human action, but also how these processes in different situations interact with the world. In doing this, Suchman puts human *activity* in the centre. She emphasizes the importance of the context, or what she calls the *situatedness* of human actions. To illustrate her view she opens her account with a comparison between two ways of navigating the open sea, one represented by the way this is done by an Indonesian of the Trukese people, and the other by a European.

According to Suchman's image, the European begins with a plan, a course that

he has charted in accordance with general principles. Throughout the voyage he ultimately tries to remain "on course", and if unexpected events occur, he first has to change his plan, then respond accordingly. By contrast, the Trukese navigator begins with an objective rather than a plan. He sets off towards the objective and has a more ad hoc way to respond to conditions that arise. He can point to the objective, but he cannot describe his course. While the objective is clear from the outset, his course is contingent to unique circumstances he cannot anticipate in advance. Suchman concludes that however much we may talk like Europeans it is rather the Trukese navigator who illustrates how we actually act (vii-x).

According to Suchman, all actions, however planned, are *situated actions*. By situated actions she means actions taken in the context of particular, concrete circumstances. This is her own definition of the concept:

I have introduced the term *situated action*. That term underscores the view that every course of action depends in essential ways upon its material and social circumstances. Rather than attempting to abstract action away from its circumstances and represent it as a rational plan, the approach is to study how people use their circumstances to achieve intelligent action. (50)

Even though it may seem obvious that human minds develop in social situations, Suchman argues, cognitive theories of knowledge representation in different milieus have not been responsive to questions about these relationships. The need for responsiveness, she argues, has become salient in the context of the rapidly developing computational media, as well as through the fact that these "reshape the frontiers of individual and social action" (xiii). In the final section of her book she applies ideas about situated action to man-machine communication.

Situated action, Suchman argues, is not made explicit by rules and procedures. In this she criticizes Emile Durkheim's theory about the objective reality of "social facts". Rather, Suchman maintains, rules and procedures in society are used for making actions *accountable* (my italics). The idea about an objectively given social world is replaced by the idea that "our everyday social practices render the world publicly available and mutually intelligible" (57). Suchman

describes it thus: "... the environment of our actions is made up of a succession of situations that we walk in to, and to which we respond" (54).

It is noteworthy that Suchman sees mind-world communication as a matter of actions, and not primarily of thinking. This is consistent with the idea about "embodied knowledge" anticipated by Merleau-Ponty in his *Phénoménologie de la perception* and subsequently developed further by Lakoff and Johnson *inter alia*. It is also this feature that makes it suitable to apply her theory also on theatre and acting.

Suchman supports an idea developed within ethnomethodology that denies that there is such a thing as a social reality. The outstanding question for social science, she maintains, is not whether there is an objective base for social facts, but rather how such basing is accomplished. Suchman sees objectivity as a product of systematic practices, as "members' methods for rendering our unique experience and relative circumstances mutually intelligible" (57). Insofar as scenic events reflect social practices, the quote could also be used to account for how meaning is created in the actor's work on the stage.

An important specific trait in the dramatic text is that it comes with its own contextualization, or its own situatedness. And the way this comes about is essentially analogous to how it takes place in real life. Similarities in the implications of scenic events "as they were in real life" are crucial for the understanding of them, their intelligibility, in Suchman's words. The attribution of someone in a play to the property of being a baker, a clerk or an officer takes its meaning not from a system valid only within the play itself, or within theatrical conventions, but from the world outside the play. This can be said without any decline to reductionism⁹.

Conforming to Suchman's description, on the stage one also walks into situations, identifies their features and matches one's actions to them. This means that the concrete situation, at least to some basic extent, must be "recognizable as an instance of a class of typical situations" and "the behaviour of the actor must be recognizable as an instance of a class of appropriate actions". Suchman argues that the participants in a situation must define this and the actions included in essentially the same way in order to make it possible for rules to produce coherent interaction over time (63). Disparate understandings of situations could be seen as conflicting sub-cultural traditions and idiosyncratic

deviations from the general scheme that makes the situation intelligible. According to Suchman, the stability of the social world is not due to a preceding stable structure, but situated actions "create and sustain shared understanding on specific occasions of interaction". Such rules are not taught or encoded, "but are learned tacitly through typification over families of similar situations and actions" (66–67). Suchman takes the example of the normative rules of greeting, according to which one does not initiate greetings with someone one is not acquainted with. If one greets someone who is not an acquaintance, we can conclude that either the greeter broke the rule, or he or she was treating the other as an acquaintance.

If this holds true in life, it does so no less in theatre. If someone greets someone else, the mere doing it and the way it is done are instrumental for the understanding of the relation between the two persons, on stage as well as in real life. The rules that according to Suchman are not taught or encoded are also applied to theatre situations. Thus, behaviours like shaking hands, insulting, laughing at, hugging, etc. are essentially the same on stage as in real life. And even if they are performed differently on stage than in life, once identified they convey the same information as to the relations of those involved, as they would do in real life.

The similarity between stage and the world does not in the first case consist of the mere mimetic depiction of real events. No such depiction in fact takes place, unless the scenic events are actually intended to illustrate real events. The fundamental similarity between stage and reality consists in the fact that an important part of the means by which meaning emerges in the respective contexts is the same.

According to Peirce's definition of "index", the sign not only relies for its significance on the event or object that it indicates, but actually constitutes this referent. Accordingly, Suchman argues, language is not only anchored in, but to a great extent *constitutes* the situation where it is used (62).

There is a striking similarity between the way Suchman exemplifies situated action with the two navigators and the way Strindberg in his *Preface to Miss Julie* explicates the forming of the characters in his play. Strindberg starts with a criticism of how roles are generally portrayed in theatre, as stock characters. He argues that the mere notion of "character" is tied to an idea about something

stable, about recurrent characteristic traits, and that people who do not comply with such general patterns, on the stage and in life alike, are regarded as lacking "character". In contrast he himself aims at describing his characters as more adaptable to the situations they are put in. Like Suchman, Strindberg makes use of the image of a sailor, "the skilful navigator on the river of life, who does not sail with fixed sheets but veers before the shifting winds and then sails back against the wind again". Strindberg writes about his protagonist:

I have motivated the tragic fate of Miss Julie with a whole variety of circumstances /... /

This multiplicity of motives I would like to boast of as being modern. If others have done it before me, then I congratulate myself for not being alone in respect of these 'paradoxes' (as all new discoveries are called).
(xiii–xiv)

Strindberg abstains from any claim to innovation here, not unlike Stanislavski, who some decades later makes the same discovery about the basic importance of the circumstances, or the "given circumstances", for the interpretation of the scenic character.

Despite its concentrated form *Miss Julie* is an extremely complex and many-faceted play. The "quart d'heure" *The Stronger* from the same period is also very complex, but being condensed into just a few pages it is a more manageable specimen of Strindberg's way to treat the relationship between character and circumstances.

I will use *The Stronger* as an example here of a "drama with action" by demonstrating how it responds to the "action analysis", and how, ultimately it corresponds to Suchman's idea about situatedness.

As will be recurrently addressed in this account, an actor more or less systematically and more or less consciously tries to uncover the circumstances which motivate his actions on the stage and which provide him with the intentions that make it meaningful to him to utter them as the character. In modern actor training this search for the circumstances in the play has been systematized into a special kind of analysis, which the student/actor applies to the text. When doing this, he might find that the text for some reason does not provide

such material or sufficiently such material, and that as a consequence he must approach it differently, or make an alternative use of the analogies between the suggested situation and reality that are inevitably present after all.

In actor training at many schools, and extensively in the practice of the actor's preparation, one makes use of a kind of analysis which is destined to uncover more systematically the circumstances in the play which make the actions on the stage make sense in the way also described by Suchman. I call this form of analysis "action analysis". Before applying it, or rather parts of it, to Strindberg's *The Stronger* I will make a short presentation of it.

Capturing the Situatedness: Action Analysis in Practice

Action analysis probably originates in a form of analysis introduced by Stanislavski in *Creating a Role*. Prompted by an idea from Nemirovich-Danchenko, Stanislavski here subsumes the act of the play *Woe from wit* by Griboyedov under headlines, which in their turn sum up the successive stages in the development of the plot (14–16). In its later usage "action analysis" is further defined as adding up, in a basic sense, what character A does in relation to character B in a particular segment of the play, and sometimes also the action B performs in response to this.

There are different ways to use "action analysis", even if the aim is the same. It could also be that the elements researched in the text by means of action analysis are sought by some actors or directors in other ways or that these elements just present themselves to them without this procedure. It might also be that some actors are so familiar with the analysis that they do not have to go through it in its entirety but can do similar work intuitively. Again, the fact that actors did not always think about the circumstances in the play in full methodical awareness does not imply that they did not do it unconsciously.

Regarding "action analysis" as well as the BSI structure here, this will not be done in order to indicate a method for or even a pathway to the art of acting. BSI will be a means to name the temporal character of narrative, and the "action analysis" is presented here as one out of many possible ways to approach this, the way considered most suitable for our purposes. The mere idea that one reconstructs reality in theatre makes it necessary to instal a logic, which is understandable on the basis of background knowledge about reality. This,

on the other hand, does not mean that it must duplicate this logic.¹⁰ Thus the situational setting of a scene or a play entails a certain basic structure, which the actors have to acknowledge and find some way to grasp¹¹.

The action analysis could be carried out in a theoretical as well as in a practical manner. It will be used here for uncovering the element of action in the theatrical text in terms of the underlying backgrounds, situations and intentions of its characters.

The form of action analysis I will apply is one that is taught at MTA, both within the acting and dramatic writing programmes. I am here drawing upon my own professional experience regarding how it is applied at this school¹². The action analysis as I make use of it here could include the following steps:

1. One finds out and summarizes the plot of the play.
2. One finds out the basic conflict, or that which is at stake in the play, and tries to link the conflict to the wills of specified characters.
3. One tries to find out the antecedents of the plot, events that are salient to the action and, according to the text, have occurred before the action of the play starts.
4. One tries to specify salient elements in the situation out of which the action starts.
5. One goes through the list of characters with a view to their class, social status, age etc.
6. One goes through the actions of the plot, subdivides it into shorter segments seeking in each one an answer to the following question about the figures that appear: "What does A do in relation to B in the situation X"? The answer inevitably includes a purpose, an intention.

The overall aim with the analysis is to read the play in terms of actions, i.e. purposeful doings, including sayings of the characters, and to find out the intentions behind them. The aim is to make these actions manageable to the actor in a first-person perspective. But insofar as human beings are set on the stage floor and given that it is not possible for a human being in an awakened state of mind to avoid acting it does not seem possible to disregard their actions entirely, and hence neither the identification, specification and analysis of these actions.

The "action analysis" in this form is a game, as it were, with clear rules. The most important one is this: conclusions about situations, character or actions in the play must always be supported by the text, i.e. one cannot refer to ideas or *theories* which are inconsistent with *data* given or implied in the text, in their assumed understanding as plain facts, out of which plain deductions can be made. This, on the other hand, still allows a great variety of interpretation. The situatedness thus unearthed leads to new understandings of the dialogue, which then again lead to new understandings of the context, etc.

In this sense the "action analysis", rather than being a literal analysis, is akin to a forensic investigation of a crime scene. In both cases it is a question of uncovering an action out of a more or less limited set of traces. The overall question as regards the theatrical text is this: given that such and such words have been uttered, what was the context? Or, using Suchman's phrasing: how are they situated?

It is important here to note the difference between the situatedness required for just related actions to make sense, on the one hand, and on the other hand the situatedness required for these actions to make sense in their acted form. Understanding a situation from a third-personal perspective is different from doing it from a first-personal one.

Stanislavski used a similar analysis as a means to uncover the "given circumstances" in the text. Later, he partly substituted the analysis "at the table" for what goes under the name "the analysis on the floor". In this the actor instead of just imagining the situation upon reading the text enters physically into the assumed situation, and then instead of just imagining the reactions of his character starts himself to react physically. This has proven to be a more suitable approach for actors, but the aim remains the same as in the "analysis at the table": to find out the situatedness of the actions, and hence their way to make sense¹³. In this work here, which is a verbal reflection, it is only possible to adopt the more intellectual version of the analysis. But I would also call attention to the fact that both variants can be used by practitioners for the same end: to find out the situatedness of the suggested actions. This testifies to the accuracy of "action analysis" for the practice of acting and to its usefulness as a way to bridge the gap between text and practical work.

Finally, it should be said about the action analysis that irrespective of the rigor

with which it is applied the objective is not to find out a truth or "the truth" of the play. It is practical exactly to the extent that the aim with it is to transfer actions entailed in the text into real, physical actions on the floor. It is used to serve a working process, not to be read as a piece of criticism. The result of two applications of the analysis, thus conducted, can diverge. One of them could appear as being more justified according to the "rules", but the final test is always pragmatic, its usefulness for the work on the stage.

The analysis is not an end in itself and it is therefore always incomplete. Typically it, for example, does not deal at all with thematical or ideological issues (at least not intentionally, whereas an assessment of its unintentional outcome in a given application might reveal that it indeed is biased in this way!). Making an action analysis of Ibsen's "Doll house" is not to deal with philosophical or political matters about gender, but a way to find out the actions of the characters which might later, in their acted form, become the basis for such a discussion. And in as far as people in the audience are not only capable of discerning in the activities on the stage individual objects or to combine individual signs, but also to immediately experience wholes, they are also capable of discerning human actions in their contextualized physicality. The action analysis, rather than being aimed at finding out any kind of "essence" in the play, aims at eluding what can be showed on a stage, as well as delineating the context that transforms the actors into characters. This is not the same as to say that its basis is realism. The action analysis relates to the element of the real in the performance. It is justified by the actors' knowledge about reality, which is partly personal, partly shared between the actors and between them and the audience. In both cases this knowledge is idiosyncratic. It is objective in the sense that it is destined to be intersubjective, but obviously not in the sense of being a general truth.

In this sense, what actors and public share is something *incessantly provisional*, which can be altered for both parts, in the staging process as well as in the process of repeatedly playing the performance.

Again, the result of the analysis is not the most important thing, but what is important is its function as a part in a practical process. Similarly, the interesting thing about the action analysis as used in this thesis is not that it is a pathway to the essence of a play. It is used only to show *wether* a given play responds or not to such an analysis.

Another way to uncover elements in the text sought by means of "action analysis" has already been mentioned here, the "five Ws". Just like the action analysis there are some variations as to how one formulates and makes use of them. This is one of them:

Who am I?

Where am I?

What am I doing?

Why?

In what time?

In actor training the "Ws" are at times more than five. Uta Hagen lets the number of "Ws" amount to nine, when in her *Respect for Acting* she designs an improvisation for training an actor to "recreate two minutes of existence" (82).

Yat Malmgren, founder of the Drama Centre London, has set ten points on his list:

1. What do I want in the scene?
 2. What do I want in the play?
 3. What do I want in life?
 4. To whom or to what am I doing it?
 5. What is my obstacle?
 6. How or by what means am I doing it?
 7. Where am I doing it?
 8. When am I doing it?
 9. Why am I doing it?
 10. Who am I?
- (Luterkort 76)

In the examples the questions are meant to help find out the framings for human action in terms of identity, time, place, intention, also to some extent in terms of relationships between persons. In both of the examples quoted the word "obstacle" stands as a marker for the element of conflict. As lists of this kind are used in practical scenic work to help the actor/student uncover

background, situation and intention in the play it is also useful when one is specifying differences between drama with and without action.

An Application of the Analysis: Strindberg's *The Stronger*

I am going to apply the action analysis to Strindberg's *The Stronger*. As the analysis in this case is not thought of as actually leading to a staging of the play, I confine myself to the basic points 1–5 in the above description. (A reader expecting new, intriguing aspects of the play might become disappointed. I will return to this later on.)

Strindberg's The Stronger

The play could be summarized in this way:

A woman tries to persuade another woman, with whom she is associated in a friendship fraught with conflict, to spend Christmas Eve with her and her family. She gradually finds out that the other woman exerts far-reaching influence over her via her own husband. Despite this she finally asserts herself to be the stronger of the two.

The basic circumstances are these:

- *Time*: the action takes place on Christmas Eve, arguably in the time when the play was written.
- *Place*: a café.

We can conclude about one of the women, Madame X, that she is married, that she has three children, is employed as an actress at a theatre, and that her husband is or has been some kind of official with influence over the theatre. The family lives in an apartment in the city and owns a place in the country.

The other woman, Mlle Y, is also an actress. She is unmarried, she has for some time been employed at the same theatre as X, and she has recently for a short period been engaged to a man. The place where the two women meet is Y's favourite café, where she often spends her time.

As to their relationship one can understand that they have known each other

for several years, that there is rivalry between them and that this affects both careers and love lives. Bob, who is now Madame X's husband, has appeared early in the history of the relationship between the two women. We are also informed that Y might have reason to suspect that X at some moment has outmanoeuvred her from the theatre where both have been employed.

All this in the past has built up the tension between the two women at the present time, which coincides with the duration of the play, approximately fifteen minutes. Along with the development of the plot X tries to collect information about circumstances that concern her: the "friend's" unexpected refusal to visit her and her husband, the suspicions of a secret affair between Y and her own husband. Finally, X gets the confirmation that her suspicion is indeed justified, and reacts vehemently.

Encoded in the text we find a situation that propels the doings of the characters. This situation as understood by X depends on how it is confirmed by the reactions of Y. It is only a small, albeit basic amount of the given circumstances that is possible to read from the script. Others are open to be added in the course of the process of rehearsing the play and from one representation to another. Thus there is a set of circumstances given in the text and there is the development of these into new ones throughout the period of production. Now, not least due to the variety as regards how different stagings give room for this process we shall only talk about those circumstances already given in the text and the way these relate to intentions made feasible by the text.

X's initial intention in relation to Y is to persuade her to come and spend Christmas Eve with her and her family. It also becomes clear according to the text that X vaguely suspects something extraordinary to be lurking behind her friend's behaviour. Her insinuating way of interrogating Y at the beginning of the play allows for this conclusion.

Y's intentions are more difficult to assess, as she remains silent and, apart from sparse stage directions, we are here entirely dependent on X's way to understand them on the basis of her wordless reactions. Is the appearance of X in the café expected or even calculated by Y? X suggests this. It becomes important for the tension of play that below a friendly surface each of the two women shares an intense will to defeat the other.¹⁴

The play builds on a combination of information and suggested intention. The

one reinforces/explains the other in a way susceptible of rational, hermeneutic analysis. There is a causal connection between the elements of the play that is not exclusively psychological, but commonsensical in terms of empirical and logical likelihood. (For example, X and her husband can afford to have a summer place, and thus they are probably rather wealthy; X met Y for the first time, was married only afterwards and has three children of different ages, and thus X and Y have known each other for several years, etc.) In a way reminiscent of a forensic investigation different clues can be put together to form a conspiratorial pattern, which in the eyes of the audience could justify X's reaction. Importantly the way for the reader/audience to understand the story is to build up the logic of the play on the basis of the information successively provided, according to each one's achieved sense of reality (sense of logic as well as life experience) and to understand the actions of the two characters via the capacity to "put oneself in the shoes" of either character. The story is presented as if it was real and it is also understood in this mode, with the actors as conventional substitutes for real persons in the assumed situation.

The play nicely responds to the "five Ws", and despite its condensed form provides good information as to the time and place of the action, the basic identities of the main characters, their intentions, and their relationship to one another. The two women act entirely on their own behalf, what they do is more important than events that just happen to them, and at the end of the play the situation has undergone a significant change in relation to where it started.

Now, for the actress who is to play one of the parts it becomes first of all important to understand the motives behind the doings of the character. Such an understanding could present itself even after the first reading. But an understanding of X's sudden reaction, the turning point of the play, presupposes a close reading of the background, the part of the story anterior to the two women's encounter at the café. Such an approach is also necessary if the aim is to understand the play on the basis of analogies with real life. Thus, independently of the style of acting one chooses, whether for instance playing X "realistically" or with "estrangement", with subtle means or with sweeping gestures, one has to understand her motifs in order to make her doings take on a meaning in the given context.

The reader might find the above specimen of an action analysis rather

commonplace. It just retells what happens in the play and the circumstances behind it, without adding anything new to what could be found out by any careful reader. Now, instead of being a flaw, this is actually the very point. The analysis extracts from the text only the things to be done by those who act it. The analysis is not theoretical, not philosophical, but aims at concreteness. Its point of departure is the view of the actor as the one who engages in his work the most concrete thing there is, his own bodily presence. The departing point for the analysis is that concreteness is the very nature of the actor's art. Therefore, too, in the work with the text, concreteness is considered more valuable than mere ideas, however brilliant. Or rather, if playwrights have persisted with the repertoire, for centuries and more, this could extensively be due to their capacity to transform their ideas into concrete acts¹⁵. The analysis aims at finding out the action in the play, as opposed, for instance, to speculations as to the "true personalities" of the characters, "the character's feelings", the relation between the text and biographical data about the playwright, his/her philosophical ideas, religious beliefs and so on, as well as ideas about "the play as a sign system" or "cognitive aspects of the relation between script and scenic action". Such features might be interesting in other contexts, but are not as well suited for cueing scenic action on the floor. The action analysis is not intended to find out the "Truth" within or about the play, neither does it rule out other forms of analysis carried out for other purposes.

The aim with the "action analysis" is not to subsume the essentials of a play, but to extract, in terms of situatedness and intentionality, the elements that are possible to *act*, while also excluding other elements. The action analysis is a tool, a ladder maybe, which is useful particularly at the beginning of the work on a text, and which can be thrown away once its purpose is served, and textual situatedness has been transferred to the scenic one.

Elements of Situatedness in the Process from Text to Acting. BSI

I have earlier proposed a general model of a scenic narrative with focus on the three elements of past, present and an intentional projection onto the future, what I call the BSI model. I will clarify here this idea in a little more detail, once again using Strindberg's *The Stronger* as an illustration.

The context of the play could be summed up in three parts, each representing

a temporal dimension of past, present and future: a background, a situation and an intention.

Background, situation and intention are interconnected by causal bonds: Y has earlier spent Christmas Eve with X and her family. This year, for some reason, she refuses to do this. Thus X visits her at the café. X finds out details in their past that earlier escaped her attention. Hence her strong reaction when she becomes aware of them etc. Without one of these temporal constituents the context we call *The Stronger* would cease to make, or create, sense in the way it does. Without the story underlying these elements neither X nor Y would be the persons we know them to be. The background, situation and X's objective also form the context for the other figure appearing in the play, Mlle Y.

There is a basic temporality in the play, covering the tenses past and present and framing the projection of the events onto the future.

Background	The previous life of the two women and the history of their relationship
Situation	At the beginning of the plot: X's appearance at the café. The monologue that starts to unfold itself. Y's reactions
Intention	X's attempt to find the reason behind Y's refusal to spend Christmas Eve with her and her family

An actress playing the part of X can do this in many different ways, and the staging history of the play indeed bears witness to this diversity. The actress might be acting in front of a crowd on a stage, or to herself just to follow the steps in the development of the story; she might do it with a lot of emotional involvement, or coldly and mechanically. But there are limits: in so far as the drama presented is the one by Strindberg the actor cannot possibly act a person for whom the background as described above would not be valid. Nor could the situation deviate from the one described. Nor, again, could she, from the text, possibly imagine another basic aim for X than the one mentioned. These constituents rule this specific narrative. It could be possible to infringe one or more of these parameters. It could be possible to give these circumstances a different setting, by for instance letting the piece be set in a bar in Milan. But this would be nothing other than replacing the constraints provided by

Strindberg in the original text with others, which would ultimately function in an analogous way.

Thus for the actor, too, there is a similar set of parameters related to the character which inscribe her doings in the temporal frame of past, present and future.

In daily life we are inclined to understand a person's intentions by interpreting her doings as intentional acts. We seek the intentions behind the actions, because we can cognitively connect these with other actions, previous or virtual, out of our capacity as human beings to understand other human beings in a way similar to the one we understand ourselves (150–156).

From this point of view, when finally the audience sees the actress performing on stage, they see a person with the background, situation and intentions of Strindberg's *The Stronger*. These are opened to the understanding of the audience in a way reminiscent of how people in the audience would have met the person in real life¹⁶. The capacity in question is the means, emotional and intellectual, to mentally put oneself "into the shoes" of another person, to understand the doings and sayings of the actor/character in the same way as one understands fellow people in normal life. This understanding, it should be noted, is not purely "psychological" as it entails aspects of necessity – logical and others –, probability, possibility, and so forth.

Now, what we are talking about is the existence in a narrative of a past, a present and a conscious anticipation of a future, not the successive order to present them. Thus a play might also very well comply with the scheme when the present situation contains retrospects to earlier events. As a consequence, too, a play where the succession of individual scenes is uncertain or optional, as in for example Büchner's *Woyzeck*, this text can nevertheless comply with the BSI scheme.

But as one can come across very different uses of background, situation and intention, and as other definitions of these notions will also appear in this thesis, I will make the following clarifications as to my use of them here.

Background

By background will be meant what has happened before the action of the play commences, and then what has happened before a given moment in the play. Thus for X the background at the beginning of the play includes the first meeting with Y,

the acquaintance with Bob, their marriage, her "friendship" with Y, their relations throughout the years etc. But it also includes such facts as the one that they live in a big city, arguably the capital of the country, as well as facts that belong to Y's background, like for example her engagement to another man, and so forth. In brief: the background is everything in past events and more stable circumstances that form the present situation, the fictional here and now of the action.

Situation

The situation is the present situation of the play, the here and now of the fictional events in their successive unfolding from the beginning of the narrative. In the case of *The Stronger* it is, for example, X's appearance in the café.

The situation also has a non-fictional aspect, as the actions of the actors take place in real time and as, in order to represent the fictional actions of the characters, they are in themselves real actions, produced and carried out by real actors "here and now" from a given moment on.

Intention

By "intentional" will be meant here "with a purpose". In this sense a person acts intentionally if and only if he/she acts towards a goal of some kind. This goal always lies in future time. In *The Stronger* X's objective is to find out what lies behind the unexpected behaviour of Y.

There are many writers on the art of acting who apply a similar subdivision of the aspects of action into three temporal dimensions, most importantly perhaps Stanislavski in his *Creating a role* (16). Strictly speaking, we could confine the perspective to situation and intention, as the only aspects of the past that really matter for the narrative are those somehow embedded in and made actual by the present situation. But we have chosen to retain in this scheme the dimension of the past, because temporal setting also represents an important aspect of causality, and the coherence of the fictional narrative, to the extent that causality is an irreducible element of narrative. Thus, for example, it might become important not only *that* something has happened, but also the exact situatedness of the event in its temporal setting. We see a clear connection between what is called "situation" in theatre and acting and what Suchman calls "situatedness".

Action and Situatedness. A look at Theatre History

In this section I will look a little closer at what is here called the BSI model in its historical perspective. I will ask myself if BSI is really a stable, persistent pattern in Western drama. The overview cannot be exhaustive, for obvious reasons. Still, it seems possible to suggest, with support from some significant examples that a BSI thinking could be applied, and probably has been applied, to acting for a very long time in Western theatre history. Acting styles might alter rather fast, but the art of acting cannot be reduced to the application of different styles. Acting is a narrative mode of its own. Thus certain basic patterns could remain unaltered throughout the ages, just as is the case in epic story telling.

As stated earlier, both Stanislavski and Strindberg maintained that their ideas about the forming of characters in writing as well as in acting were only rediscoveries of truths that had been well-known for a long time. Michel Saint-Denis once noted, after having attended one of Stanislavski's stagings in Paris: "If Stanislavski's system is applied literally, it leads merely to realism, but applied selectively, with discrimination, it can be made 'the grammar of all styles' that it aspires to be" (38).¹⁷

Michael Redgrave comes to a similar conclusion: "The Stanislavski system is really only a conscious codification of ideas about acting which have always been the property of most good actors of all countries whether they knew it or not" (405).

It seems as if Stanislavski's focus on basic narrative elements in a play – background, situation, intention – could lie behind and actually justify St Denis' and Redgrave's observations. With his "creative if" and his idea about "given circumstances" he might have put words to basic elements, which actors, despite individual and time-bound differences, have extensively complied with "whether they knew it or not".

Rhetoric and the "Paradigmatic shift" in 18th Century Acting Ideals

It would be far beyond the possibilities offered in a work like this to seek support for this thesis in extant material. Still, when ascribing a kind of basic status to the BSI pattern in the relationship between dramatic text and acting it seems incomplete to leave the long-term historical perspective entirely out of consideration. I will therefore restrict myself to discussing the issue in

connection with a development within Western acting that is widely considered to be of particular importance: the shift taking place in the 18th century when an older ideal based on rhetoric canon gave way to a more realistic acting mode. Roach in his *The Player's Passion* does not hesitate to call this a "revolutionary paradigm shift" (56). Fischer-Lichte devotes an entire volume of her *Semiotik des Theaters* to the relation between theatre and rhetoric.

The shift in the 18th century from the oratorical style to a more realistic ideal has also been dealt with extensively in Chaouche.

It should be stated that whereas Roach in his learned and elegantly conceived treatise on the relationship between acting and rhetoric approaches theatre and acting from the point of view of the history of ideas, more focus will be laid here on the practical aspects of this relation.

Even in the ancient history of both rhetoric and theatre there were close contacts between the two. Subsequently, rhetoric was part of the basic *trivium* studies in the medieval schools. It was also through the education system that rhetoric canon found its way into the theatre of the Renaissance. As Bertram Joseph writes in his *Acting Shakespeare*, Elizabethan schoolmasters spent a good proportion of their time teaching their pupils to perceive clearly the detailed organization of a poet's language, and to use voice and gesture so that the details were not lost to an audience. Classical dramatic texts, such as the comedies of Plautus and Terence were used in this education (*Acting Shakespeare* 6, 15). In this respect also there was a similarity between the theatre of the Renaissance and ancient theatre.

Chaouche makes an interesting survey of the connections between the art of rhetoric and French theatre in the 16th and 17th centuries. She underscores the importance of the notion of *actio*. According to her the end of the 18th century saw a radical shift in the apprehension of the element of action, marked primarily by the writings of Rémond Sainte-Albine and Antoine-François Riccoboni. Chaouche argues that this shift is linked to the one taking place between the oratorical acting style characteristic of the traditional theatre and a new aesthetic of sensitivity. It was, she maintains, in this period that the word *jeu*, game, came to be used as a word for acting, something that had practically never occurred earlier (9–12).

In general, too, texts aiming at some kind of realistic reflection of ordinary

speech also call for different acting modes than versified text by authors to whom realism in our understanding was never a formulated ideal. Joseph argues in his *Acting Shakespeare* that "the words which Shakespeare has given his actor to speak would not be spoken by anybody in real life outside the theatre" (82). But, he continues, even in this unrealistic art character and emotions can be played with truth and reality. This is well known to actors even today, who play Shakespeare differently from Chekhov, without altering their approach from the very basis.

The general importance rhetoric elements had for acting, not least through the aforementioned connection between theatre and education, is undeniable. But this does not imply that out of knowledge of this canon we can deduce how acting actually looked like in the periods when this canon was applied.¹⁸

In early writings on theatre definitions of action have generally been connected with the dramatic text. In writings from the Renaissance action is generally understood as the construction of the plot as an imitation of human action (Minturno 1563, Scaliger 1561, Castelvetro 1570).

When applied to acting the term is used in a different sense. In writings from the beginning of modern theatre in the 16th century "action" with reference to the actor means largely the same as *actio*, a basic concept within rhetoric, synonymous with *delivery*, i.e. oral recitation in combination with gestures and facial expressions. The frequently repeated formula is presented in its purest form in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. The way in which Hamlet in his speech to the actors underscores diction and gestures and the ideal interrelation of these conforms to Quintilian's *actio* concept. Thomas Heywood makes explicit reference to a basically rhetoric scheme of classical origin in his *An apology for actors*.

As Thomas Heywood among others states in his *Apology for actors*, classical drama was extensively acted not only at schools but also at universities as a means to train the students in public speech. What makes Thomas Heywood particularly interesting in this context is the fact that he was a man of the theatre, distinguished both as an actor and as a playwright. In the review of actors who, according to him, are of special interest for practitioners of the art of elocution he mentions some of those active in Shakespeare's company. By advocating temperance and "nature" he not only comes close to Hamlet's

speech to the actors, but also to other commentators. The idea that action, or *actio*, is constantly under threat of being hampered by excess goes in fact like a red thread through writings about acting as well.¹⁹ Interestingly, Heywood, like Hamlet, seems to evoke classical influence in a formulation strikingly similar to Quintilian's when the latter writes that "his /the pupil's/ gesture may be suited to his voice, and his looks to his gesture" (1.11). Heywood writes about the use of theatre texts in education that it "instructs him /the pupil/ to fit his phrases to his action, and his action to his phrases, and his pronunciation to them both" (31). In Hamlet's well-known words: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature" (III.ii). Heywood demonstrates how features in acting reinforce the persuasive qualities of a speech, i.e. those elements that transform it into a kind of *action with a purpose*, namely the one of exerting a special kind of influence on the minds of the audience. It also becomes obvious from the citations that the formal parts of rhetoric are subjected to the overall purpose. However, persuasion is not always accepted as a suitable naming of the desired effect. Persuasion as an end in itself is also a characteristic of demagogy, a fact that constantly threatens to discredit the art of rhetoric. Aristotle found a way out of the dilemma in the following clarification: the aim of rhetoric is in fact *not* persuasion.

It is rather the *detection of the persuasive aspects of each matter* and this is in line with all other skills. (It is not the function of medicine to produce health but to bring the patient to the degree of well-being that is possible; for those that cannot attain to health can nevertheless be well looked after). (The Art of Rhetoric 1355 b.)

Now, irrespective of which formulation of the overall aim one prefers, the upshot remains the same: the intended act, the action, stands in the centre in rhetoric action as well.

On the continent the Jesuit schools exerted an important influence with their use of dramatic texts as an element of their teaching in rhetoric. Erika Fischer-Lichte uses the Jesuit priest P. Franciscus Lang's *Dissertatio de Actione scenica* from 1752 as an important reference concerning "rhetorical" acting

in the 18th century (Semiotik des Theaters 2: 42). According to Chaouche, all students who had studied with the Jesuits in the seventeenth century had been instructed in the theory and practice of *actio*. The objective was to teach the students good reasoning, aiming at its application in different professions, which could be barrister and preacher, but also actor, when the student, like, for example, Molière chose to enter upon this “infamous” way. The study of Latin writers, Cicero and Quintilian in particular, was a vital part of the teaching (Chaouche 26).

The teaching of the Jesuits was typical of a general trend in France from the 17th century on to let classical writers influence elocution. As Chaouche points out, the development of this canon was slow throughout the centuries, and many of the treatises just repeated the overall disposition of the classical works. According to Chaouche the oratorical action is the background of the considerations of the rhetoricians in the seventeenth century, then, in the eighteenth for those of ordinary people and actors. “‘L’action’ oratoire reste bel et bien l’arrière fond sur lequel ont cogité tout au long du XVII^e siècle des rhétoriciens, puis, au XVIII^e siècle, des particuliers et des comédiens.” (11)

The beginning of the 18th century was a time of transition, where an old idea about action coexisted with a new, reformed, and, as it turned out, more modern one. As yet, on the other hand, it was rather a kind of hybride, not sufficiently independent to cut the ties with the rhetoric *actio*. Chaouche sees Sainte-Albine and Riccoboni fils as founders of a veritable “poetic” of theatrical action, with modern traits, advocating the staging of a role, an elaboration of the “silent” play, increased use of gestural and pantomimic features, a realistic spatial setting of the scene. And, most importantly: according to these ideas the actor should stage his own “action”, which should be “reasoned” and scrutinized by reflection. Questions as to what person, what rank, what place, what partner, what sentiment to express, should be carefully considered before the actor entered the stage (Chaouche 14). This must in fact be understood as a new concern with what was later to be labelled “the given circumstances”.

The shift from the older, rhetoric-based acting mode to the new one stands out as a decisive event, bringing with itself an altered view of the very concept of action. According to Roach a contemporary writer, Richard Cumberland, exclaims after having attended a performance by David Garrick that “old things

were done away with, and a new order brought forward” (Roach 56). When Saint-Albine maintains that the truth of the expression depends on the truth of the action and the truth of the action on that of the recitation – “La vérité de l’expression dépend de la vérité de l’action et de la vérité de la récitation.” – he still seems to conform to the old ideal. But the next sentence could indeed be seen as announcing a new era: “Avoir l’action vraie, c’est la rendre exactement conforme à ce que ferait ou devrait faire le personnage dans chacune des circonstances où l’auteur le fait passer successivement.” (Sainte-Albine 232)

Here Sainte-Albine formulates the relation between text and acting as a kind of conditional. The actor’s point of departure should be the assumed circumstances of the character as laid down in the text. The actor should ask himself what he would have done, given that these circumstances actually were present. The formulation, in fact, bridges the gap between the 18th century and Stanislavski, whose most basic idea is the strikingly similar one of “given circumstances”, also expressed in the idea about what he called the “creative if”. Stanislavski in *My Life in Art* defines this concept thus:

The actor says to himself:

‘All these properties, make-ups, costumes, the scenery, the publicness of the performance, are lies. I know they are lies, I know I do not need any of them. But *if* they were true, then I would do this and this, and I would behave in this manner and this way towards this and this event. (466)

As Stanislavski states in *Creating a Role*, the notion of the “given circumstances” goes back to a quote from Pushkin: “Pushkin asks of the dramatist, and we ask or the actor, that he possess “sincerity of emotions, feelings that seem true in given circumstances.” Therefore, the purpose of analysis should be to study in detail and prepare given circumstances for a play or a part ...” (9)

According to Dieter Hoffmeier the Stanislavski Archive includes a copy of Saint-Albine’s *Le Comédien*, with Stanislavski’s own commentaries and underlinings (260).

For Sainte-Albine as for Stanislavski it is also important that the actor assume the intentional directedness of the character according to the given circumstances. Sainte-Albine expresses this in a story about an actress and

her teacher. The teacher says about a scene her apprentice is about to play: Put yourself into the situation of the deceived mistress. If you were abandoned by a man you loved tenderly ... Wouldn't you ... " (216). Thus the three elements – background, situation, intention – are present. With this work Saint-Albine takes a major step towards the formulation of an observation about acting that was to become the core of an important part of modern acting pedagogy still today.

The other treatise considered by Chaouche to be of key importance for the changes taking place in the 18th century is *L'art du théâtre à Madame* *** by François Riccoboni, issued in 1750, three years after Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien*. Riccoboni still holds on to some traits we connect with oratorical acting, at the same time moving in a more "realistic" direction. He turns himself against the use of oratorical "tone" and advocates the use of one's own voice. He takes as an example the acting of Michel Baron, which according to him did not have anything of declamation in it. And he concludes that the pronounciation should naturally follow the inherent thoughts of the text. The perhaps most innovative section of Riccoboni's text is the one entitled "L'intelligence". In this he maintains that intelligence is the "first talent in Theatre". Like Sainte-Albine he advocates acting according to the given circumstances. Riccoboni's formulation deserves being quoted verbatim: "Il faut concevoir à chaque instant le rapport que peut avoir ce que nous disons avec le caractère de notre rôle, avec la situation où nous met la scène, & avec l'effet que cela doit produire dans l'action totale." (730)

Obviously by "l'action totale" Riccoboni is here not talking about action as a physical means to deliver the text, but as something encompassing the totality of the performance. It stands out as the action of the plot transformed into the doings of the actors on stage. Riccoboni also maintains that there are a thousand ways of saying *bonjour*, depending on the character and the situation. This could be seen as rules for the kind of versatility that according to a witness was displayed in a virtuosic manner by David Garrick, an example referred to by Diderot in a famous passage of his *Paradoxe*. According to this account Garrick had once put his head between two folding doors and in front of an amazed audience, in the course of five or six seconds, changed his facial expression across a wide range of different emotions. It is further noteworthy in Riccoboni

that by underscoring the importance of intelligence for the expressiveness of the actor he does not make any discrepancy between emotion and thought, but rather implicitly underlines the way the two intersect with each other. I find no reason to question Sabine Chaouche's general view about the significance of the ideas put forward by Sainte-Albine and Riccoboni. Still, it could be argued here that the fact that these two writers extensively deal with the necessity for the actor to adapt to the situations and the intentions of the characters does not necessarily imply that they were the first to make this observation.

The shift Chaouche writes about coincides with the breakthrough of bourgeois comedy, and it is a well-known fact that the theatre of the late 18th century took over realistic features that had long been cultivated within comedy. But there is some evidence that even considerably earlier it was crucial for the actor, regardless of the genre he was acting in, to study carefully and reflect truthfully upon the successive shifts of the dramatic situations. The new turn brought with it the fact that actors increasingly reacted to the given circumstances in a more "life-like" fashion, without the detour around conventionalized gestuality. But this does not mean that the mere presence of "given circumstances" was first paid attention to now.

In this context the *Dialogues on Stage Affairs* written by Leone di Somi between 1556 and 1565 are an interesting feature. Di Somi was a director and chief purveyor of theatrical entertainments to the court of Mantua and thus not only a theoretician but first and foremost a practitioner. This is how he explains the aim of his *Dialogues*: "to record, rather for myself than for others, in due order those more important rules and more necessary precepts of which I myself have often had to avail myself when obeying the commands of the authorities." (253)

The formulation gives a kind of official prestige to his text. Di Somi essentially makes his own interpretation of what rules and implied prescripts theatre was due to comply with at this time. This, however, does not prevent his *Dialogues* from providing a rare example of an artist's personal reflections on his practical experience. They are not only conceived by a humble servant at the court, but by a person who gives expression to his own observations with integrity and self-confidence. Di Somi's *alter ego*, Veridico, is a director and a playwright just like himself. Veridico/DiSomi sees that the overall objective of tragedy and comedy alike is to "reveal those virtues which are to be imitated and those

vices which are to be avoided and condemned". (254) A play should not give an impression of being composed and finished by an author, but rather it should be like a "series of real events" taking shape before the audience (268). Ordinary life serves as a model for theatre. Just as we can learn from the fate of other people we can learn from theatre. Now, in advocating scenic illusion Di Somi apparently is not talking about realism in a modern sense. Like other writers he makes frequent use of the word "mirror", which interestingly does not denote depiction but rather reflection, where, in a literal understanding, reality appears in the picture without intermediary (human) interpretation²⁰.

When it comes to acting, Di Somi has strikingly little to say about elements that could be characterized as "oratorical". He accords great importance to the selection of actors, to the cast in modern terms, in order to make the actors fit. Interestingly, he lets his alter ego demand that the actors read the whole play and not only their own lines. This is an important remark, as it reveals a wish that the actor gain a general idea about the circumstances presented in the play as a whole, and not only about his own role. As for the dramatic text, di Somi has mentioned Horace's idea that the playwright should apply to each character "the qualities proper to their age, position, and profession, as well as to the situations in which they are placed." (258). It then turns out that di Somi's ideal actor is one that adapts himself, not only to the character of the acted figure, but to the circumstances given in the play. He writes about a Roman actress called Flaminia, whom he characterizes as "the most extraordinary" among important actors of his time. He writes about her: "She so varies her gestures, tones, and moods in accordance with the diverse nature of her scenes that every one who sees her is moved to wonder and delighted admiration." (268) He also maintains that "In fine, just as the poet has to hold the attention of the spectators by a seeming naturalness and well-planned vivacious dialogue, so the actor has the business of keeping the variety of his actions appropriate to the situations, of maintaining a constant alertness, and of avoiding a tedious dullness; ..." (268)

The formulations must be understood as advocating an ideal of acting in response to the shifting situations of the play rather than to any kind of decorum or as expressing "passion" as an end in itself.

Furthermore, Di Somi/Veridico talks about scenic action as more important

than words. He continues: "To this corporal eloquence, although it is of tremendous importance, called by some the soul of rhetoric, and consisting in dignity of movement in head, countenance, eyes, hands, and body, we can apply no laws." (268)

The passages quoted entail a rejection of the idea about rhetoric gestuality as the dominant guiding rule for acting. It says that the only key to scenic practice is that which is beyond laws, which is a product of practice itself, and not of a canon or a set of prescriptions.

In his *Elizabethan Acting* B.L. Joseph, on the one hand, acknowledges the great importance of rhetoric for acting and, on the other hand, denies that this stands in any kind of opposition to acting according to given circumstances. He stresses that even Quintilian gives prominence to identification with the persons the orators are set out to defend. Joseph also quotes the 17th century rhetorician John Brinsley, who in his *Ludus literarius* advocates that speakers behave "as if" they were the actual persons. Finally, Joseph maintains that even Bulwer in his *Chirologia* and *Chironomia*, when insisting on the "naturalness" of specified gestures still accords the main interest to 'action' as the natural expression of emotions and intentions shared by all human beings. Again, what Joseph describes is a linking of emotionality with intentionality. This is also the case in much literature about acting throughout the ages that puts an emphasis on the emotional aspect. In contrast to those who see rhetoric canon as a model for actors Joseph claims that the Elizabethan 'orator' looked on the player as his master, and Joseph recalls that this was also the case in Greece and Rome. A similar idea could, as Joseph points out, also be inferred from the fact that the frontispiece of Bulwer's *Chironomia* depicts orators such as Demosthenes and Cicero at the side of the actors Roscius and Andronicus. (Joseph 10–24)

Joseph addresses the apparent resemblance mentioned above between different commentators, including Shakespeare/Hamlet on the one side and Quintilian on the other when treating the ideal connection between speech and 'action'. The reason for this resemblance, in Joseph's view, is that Quintilian was so much read in the schools and universities of the time that Shakespeare as well as Bulwer and others are very likely to have heard his ideas about this "innumerable times". (21)

As Joseph underlines, the word "lively" is recurrently used by writers about

rhetoric and theatre in Elizabethan times to characterize the ideal performance. This he sees as indicating that the acting style of the period was far from “formal” in any sense. What a playgoer wanted to see was a fusion of a rendering of the dramatist’s art with a “lively, natural representation of the character” (*Elizabethan Acting* 34). According to him, Bulwer with his plates of gestures had no intention to prescribe what an orator should do. Rather the illustrations should be seen as interpretations of gestures already being in use. Joseph writes:

His /Bulwer’s/ *Chironomia* and *Chirologia* reveal how an Elizabethan by means of gesture might validly communicate clearly and powerfully, in a poetry of movement, what he was thinking, feeling, and willing to achieve when representing a character in an Elizabethan play. (47)

Of great interest in this context is a passage from *Chirologia*, which Joseph quotes in his *Acting Shakespeare*. Bulwer here once again points to “nature” as the guiding principle for the orator’s art, specifying it as “his /the orator’s/ own nature and temperament”. Bulwer argues that nobody can be anybody else than himself, and that this makes its imprint on the action to the point of giving some the faculty of making “even the vices of rhetoric” comely and pleasing (Joseph 85). This nature, specific for everyone, and not the visual patterns illustrating his book, stands in the centre of the oratorical art. As for the gestures, even if they were conventional, this does not entail that they were formal or exempt from emotional and intentional content. Joseph makes a comparison with the habit of raising one’s hat and uncovering one’s head in the presence of death, which is certainly a conventional gesture, but nevertheless could be really and sincerely felt. What the rhetoricians, and implicitly the actors, did was to place in the forefront of their art the truthful expression in action of genuinely felt expression. As an example of this he cites the Hecuba-monologue in Hamlet (II.ii) including the phrase “and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit”. In the same way the rhetoricians meant that a speaker’s “whole function” ought to suit “with forms” what he was expressing from within (*Acting Shakespeare* 89). Joseph also cites Stanislavski’s criticism in *Building a character* of fluent movements and poses or “attitudes” as they were once called in England. According to Stanislavski they are of no use when they move along “an external superficial line”. But when

they have "some vital purpose, the projection of some inner experience", they become transcendent into "real action with purpose and content" (107–108). Thus Joseph does not see any essential difference between Stanislavski's ideal and that of the Elizabethan era.

Joseph also tries to elude the relation between gestures and personal involvement. According to him, it was regarded as axiomatic before Stanislavski that if an actor wanted to move his public, he must be moved himself. Thus writers on acting focused on external signs, not because they thought that nothing else mattered, but because it was too difficult a task to analyse and teach the inner preparation. There is abundant literature on acting from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries that deals with the connections between human passions and different gestures. But this does not mean that the writers wanted acting to be "formal" in the sense that the word is used in contradiction to "natural". The writers knew that emotions were involved (*Elizabethan Acting* 45). What Joseph aptly demonstrates is that the common distinction often made between rhetoric/form and naturalness/realism could be questioned. Obviously, he thus also weakens some of the "paradigmatic" character of Saint-Albine's and Riccoboni's ideas.

To sum up: The phenomenon covered by the modern understanding of the word "action" in theatre, i.e. acting in accordance with the fictional circumstances laid down in the text, might very well have been a central part in theatrical acting even before the turn toward increased realism in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The central position of rhetoric both within theatre and outside it declined at the end of the 19th century, interestingly in the same era as there came an increased interest in scenic realism. Still, elements of classical oratorical gestuality persisted in acting into the 20th century.

As stated previously, the concept of "action" in drama theory differed from the concept of *actio* in rhetoric and in rhetorical acting.

At first sight there did not seem to be any connection between these two understandings of the word. Poisson establishes that, as he sees it, the art of dramatic writing and acting are clearly separated art forms, representing different aspects of rhetoric (401). Yet dramatic writing and acting were interrelated in the sense that the texts were typically written for declamation, without any aspiration to plain verisimilitude. Realism in the sense of "illusion"

was out of the question. Nevertheless, there could be question of "truth" in some sense, according to many writers. The notion of "realism" came into existence much later²¹.

Acting modes in comedy differed from those applied to tragedy. Apparently, too, the emergence of *Commedia dell'arte* encouraged a more flexible acting mode. But it was not until the breakthrough of bourgeois drama from the 18th century onwards that it came to a veritable contention between the style of eloquence and the one with more emphasis on verisimilitude.

The pragmatic aim of rhetoric is accentuated by the use, already in Aristotle, of the notion of *telos*. It is translated into Latin as *finis*, an expression of the element of causal reasoning in rhetoric. It is a basic concept in Aristotle's definition of action and it is used in discussions about this concept both in general and in connection with rhetoric. As stated above, this idea is also important to Heywood in his *Apology*.

From the end of the 18th century onwards some writings treat action in connection with acting in a sense opposed to the one used within classical rhetoric. "Action" now becomes a question of "true action", i.e. the way the performing actor adapts himself to possible circumstances as laid down in the dramatic text. This is an understanding of the concept that comes closer to a more modern idea about realism in acting.

I have found that "paradigmatic" as the shift may appear in the 18th century from the "oratorical style" to more realistic acting it does not seem to be so regarding elements in acting dealt with here. Earlier theatre and acting forms might as well comply with a BSI pattern.

Adaptation to the background, circumstances and intentions of an assumed other, the character, is a result of a long process, and not just the result of a sudden "identification" at the moment of performance.²² There is a process of preparation followed by the process of repeated representations. It is during this process that the *cognitive* aspect of the work with a role manifests itself.

As demonstrated in the example from Leone di Somi there are records of acting according to "given circumstances" that date back to the 16th century. In addition to the support Stanislavski found for his basic idea about the "creative if" and the "given circumstances" in Pushkin he, in fact, could also find it in many other sources in the history of theatre, and many of them written by

persons who were actors like himself.²³ In *Actors on Acting* Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy have made a comprehensive selection of seminal writings on acting in the Western tradition. Many of those texts explicitly mention the importance of the given circumstances in the text.

Another noteworthy text that is not represented in Chinoy/Cole's anthology, but that, nevertheless, ought to be mentioned in this context is a passage in Lessing's *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*: "Auf dem Theater sollen wir nicht lernen, was dieser oder jener einzelne Mensch getan hat, sondern was ein jeder Mensch von einem gewissen Character unter gewissen gegebenen Umständen tun werde" (55).

The importance of Lessing is not least due to the fact that he made translations of Sainte-Albine and Riccoboni in an era when new trends in German theatre gained increasing importance over the ideals of French classical drama. (See also Fischer-Lichte 1983:2.)

Now, whatever understanding one applies to the word "action", whether *actio* in the rhetorical sense or "action vraie" in Sainte-Albine's sense or acting in a more Romantic sense, as addressed above by Fuchs, there is always talk about intentional doings with a purpose. Thus, the notion of action, nevertheless, stands out as crucial.

If we turn our attention to the period after Garrick, Sainte-Albine and Riccoboni, to the romantic acting of the 19th century, we find new styles and not least a stronger emphasis on emotionality. Throughout the period there are many important actors who despite divergences recurrently emphasize the importance of adapting oneself to the circumstances of the character.

The idea of "acting according to given circumstances" was phrased in this way already by Sainte Albine. But it was Stanislavski who was the first one to make it the nexus of all acting and implement the idea methodically. Once it was done this insight could influence acting method and actor training in a more conscious way. Naming and formulation of tacit knowledge is a way to make possible for explicit knowledge to integrate with implicit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi). But again, when saying that the adaptation to the given circumstances of the play is typical of Western acting I do not claim to say anything exhaustive about acting. The actor's art, destined to reflect human life, is immensely complex and possible to approach from a wide diversity of aspects in addition to the one focused on here.

Action and Character

In a famous passage of the *Poetics* Aristotle establishes that tragedy "is an imitation, not of men, but of action and life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of tragedy: and the end is the chief thing of all" (VI.9).

Aristotle's idea was repeated in the influential writings of theoreticians such as Scaliger and Castelvetro. The idea of the central position of the element of action has then persisted within Western dramaturgy until modern times. Zola establishes that saying "theatre" inevitably is the same as saying "action" (237). Brecht in *A short Organum for the Theatre* underlines that he agrees with Aristotle on the crucial point that action (in the sense of narrative or story) is the most important element in drama, "the heart of the theatrical performance", "the theatre's great operation, the complete fitting together of all the gestic incidents, embracing the communications and impulses that must now go to make up the audience's entertainment" (*Brecht on Theatre* 183, 200).

In the *Nichomachian Ethics* Aristotle describes action as intended acts, and numerous writers on theatre have given expression to similar ideas.

As Butcher points out, Aristotle's much discussed idea of the precedence of action over character can be given a purely pragmatic understanding: by means of showing a person's actions in different situations we can give an image of his character. In so far as character is the set of intrinsic processes taking place in a person's neuronal system it is not within the reach of everyday observation. The most viable way to make it visible is by means of what the person actually does, i.e. in his actions.²⁴ This is also an important point in Cohen (1978) and Donnellan.

In the first chapter of Fuchs the author makes a survey of the idea of character as well as of the relationship between character and action in the history of Western theatre. Fuchs' own idea of character is inspired by the Buddhist idea of *anatta*, or no-self, the precept of the non-existence of any continuous self, and the thought that it is erroneous to grasp for an illusory permanence of the self. Interestingly, she describes Aristotle's contention in the *Poetics* about the relation between character and action as rather similar to this idea. She maintains that the Aristotelian character in fact is not an "inner man" but one of "bare doings", with an ethical colouring, and that in Aristotle the "sum

total of 'doings' amounts to character". In Fuchs' words, too, "the actor seeks the actions, not the coherent personality that commits them" (24). She sees as typical of the great Greek tragic roles a lack of this psychological unity, whereas by contrast a figure like Shakespeare's Hamlet is possible to imagine apart from his tragic circumstance. Fuchs maintains that from the eighteenth century onwards theorists modelled their ideas about the inwardness of character on Shakespeare's figures. Even prior to romantic theorists, writers such as Luigi Riccoboni, Marmontel and Lessing "began to link character, actor, and spectator in a mutual play of subjectivity" (25). Finally, with the German *Sturm und Drang* movement at the end of the eighteenth century, the classical ideal collapsed. External representation was replaced by a turmoil of emotionality, while writers such as the young Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Schleiermacher and Schelling in support of this concept elevated subjectivity to a transcendental principle. Fuchs here sees an essentially Christian trait in romanticism, a mysticism, which takes possession of the whole inward man. With Hegel's lectures on aesthetics in the 1820s romantic inwardness achieved the power of religious revelation. Hegel, according to Fuchs, comes close to replacing Aristotle's soul of drama, the plot, with another soul, Character. He extrapolates from Shakespeare the principle of the primacy of character as well as the principle of unity of character.

Next, Fuchs addresses Nietzsche's theory. Nietzsche, according to her, breaks the connection between character and the Absolute, and in his conception individual subjectivity instead of being a gateway to universal psychic forces becomes a barrier to this. Self-consciousness, represented by The Apollonian plastic forms gives way to self-abandon, sublimated to aesthetics and represented by the Dionysian element of music. To Nietzsche who revolts against the individual and the "characteristic", character becomes the hallmark of bourgeois theatre. In Nietzsche's view rationalistic individuation is a destroyer of tragedy.

According to Fuchs, an important feature in *The Birth of Tragedy* is the way the author sees cultural change not only as a series of shifts in what is known, but also and most importantly in the "knower", in the way, in this case, *how* human subjectivity is understood to itself of itself. This, in fact, is an "archaeological" attitude that foreshadows Foucault. In Nietzsche's view tragedy actually dies with the birth of the individual. (26–29)

According to Fuchs, Nietzsche also influenced the theatricality of modernism,

not by outlining a formal theory of dramatic art, but in his emphasis on the primacy of the aesthetic through the aesthetic. With symbolism, in Fuchs' account, it came to a de-individualization of the scenic figure in favour of the Idea. The chief obstacle to achieving this ideal became "character as represented by the living actor" (29).

To this brief account of ideas about action in Western philosophy one could add many more. But it could also be argued that influential as they might be within dramaturgy and criticism they have actually exerted at most limited influence on the work of the actors, who were not involved in the development of these ideas.

But, again, exception must be made for Nietzsche. His strong impact on early modernism also made his ideas highly influential in theatrical practice, less due to the actors themselves than through the emergence of the strong director. The importance of this for the development of dance theatre during the years following the turn of the 20th century could hardly be measured.

One should perhaps not exaggerate the opposition between character-acting in the romantic sense and action-acting in an Aristotelian (or Stanislavskian) sense. Even if the actor based his conception of Oedipus on an idea about character, he could still not disregard important historical, situational and intentional aspects of the role. Despite the difference for example Strindberg makes between the traditional theatre character and his own way to form Miss Julie, focus on character and focus on action according to BSI do not necessarily stand in opposition to one another.

If actor B acts according to his personal interpretation of Oedipus' background, situation and intention, the resulting image in the mind of the beholder could in fact be that B actually played the role of Oedipus as a character. And in the public's reception this character could be as thinkable outside the representation of the staged Oedipus as Hamlet in Fuchs' example. The question about the relationship between character and action becomes more complex when viewed in a subject-object perspective. If the public in the third-personal perspective identifies actor B with the character H, this does not imply that B in the first-person perspective does the same.

SUMMARY

In this chapter

1. I have made a comparison between what is here called BSI and *situated action*, a notion used within computer science and cognitive science. Situated action accounts for how our actions relate to the world and how they take on meaning in a social context.

I have found that "situated action" well corresponds to what in theatre and acting is called "given circumstances".

2. I have explained "action analysis" as a way to uncover the situatedness of a scenic action. I have stressed that action analysis is a way to establish a fictional context as a point of departure for the play between the actors. It is used for finding the context for scenic action, not to establish truths about the text, its "intrinsic meaning" or the like.

Action analysis is only one of several possible means to an end, and it does not prescribe how the circumstances should be interpreted by the individual actor. There are as many ways to approach the same situatedness as there are actors.

3. I have exemplified the action analysis by means of a play, *The Stronger* by Strindberg.
4. I have described in a little more detail BSI in relation to the actor's interpretation of the play and the public's reception of it.
5. I have reviewed this pattern in a historical overview from the Renaissance onwards and suggested that acting according to the background, situation and intention of the scenic figure has long been a basic pattern in Western theatre.

One hypothesis that has been put forward is that the way the contextualization of the character in the script is transferred to the contextualization of him in the scenic action has remained largely unaltered in Western theatre from at least the 16th century onwards. The space at my disposal in this dissertation does not suffice to provide extensive historical evidence for this. But some important instances from the history of Western theatre point in this direction. Perhaps support for this could also be found in the fact that actors today can

appear in plays from the older part of the repertoire without altering their working mode substantially from how they act in more recent plays based on the BSI pattern.

As acting has always been a craft handed down through practice I tend to disseminate some doubt over the idea that from tutorials for acting we can get even a reasonably complete image of what acting looked like in a given historical setting. Finally, as regards the relation between rhetorical canon and acting, Joseph mounts additional evidence for the tenet that the influence not only went from rhetoric to acting, but also, and not least, in the opposite direction.

The idea of the "given circumstances", which is just one formulation of the same as is here understood by BSI, was already fully developed in the seminal writings of Saint-Albine and, to some extent, also in those of Riccoboni in the middle of the 18th Century, and obviously they also became well anchored in the practice of acting of the time. But, judging from classical writings about rhetoric, a BSI pattern is also distinguishable in this field. Finally, a rare account of theatrical practice as early as the 16th century, Leone di Somi's *Dialogues on Stage Affairs*, confirms that even in a period when oratorical acting was prevalent, elements relating to the situatedness of the acting in the circumstances of the play were considered more important than the canon of rhetoric gestuality.

Thus, in oratorical acting as well as in the one later advocated in pursuit of the realistic "shift" in the 18th century, the purposeful action stands at the centre. The importance of this element has also been addressed by many important theoreticians on the art of drama throughout the ages.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that this way of contextualizing the scenic actions was seriously challenged. Nietzsche was to exert important influence on the attempts to create theatre forms, which were not based on the idea of action as deliberation.

Before going in more detail about this idea I will look a little closer at the element of action in theatre, as this issue has been addressed by some representatives of an important tradition within Western acting and actor education.

3. METHODOLOGY OF SITUATEDNESS

MODERN APPLICATIONS OF A BSI PATTERN

Previously I have described acting as *situated*, and I have suggested that this situatedness follows an elementary, stable pattern in Western writing for the theatre, the BSI pattern. Before going in more detail as to how this situatedness relates to discussions within cognitive science and the philosophy of mind I will have to account for how it is worked with in the practice of acting and actor training. I will do this with reference to a series of distinguished writers on these subjects.

In connection with these I will first emphatically align myself with Sharon M Carnicke when she writes that Stanislavski should be read as the practitioner he was, instead of as the theoretician he repeatedly informed us that he was not. In my selection of authors, Richard Hornby is a distinguished scholar in theatre theory as well, but most importantly he has been a professional actor for forty years. (One of the practitioners referred to, Radu Penciulescu, is not even an "author" in the proper sense, as all the writings I refer to in his case are based on second-hand notes and recordings from his classes and lecture.) I use these references, because they come from *doers*, and I use these writings not as theories about acting, but first and foremost as reports and reflections from advanced work on the floor with acting and acting education. In this preoccupation one, in fact, has little use for theories. A teacher in front of his students can refer to Descartes and Heidegger just as little as a musical director in front of his musicians, or a tennis coach, say, with his player. Actors are also doers, who want viewpoints on what they do, not instructions as to what they should think. All have ideas, and so have practitioners, but artistic practice is not implemented theory.

Thus I also refer to the authors dealt with here because I need their *experience*. All theorizing in connection with this will be on my own account.

Action stands in the centre in a substantial part of seminal writings on

acting, or rather on the relationship between the text and acting. Stanislavski has already been mentioned. Later examples that will be addressed here are Cohen, Hornby, Penciulescu, and Donnellan²⁵. All these authors in different ways endorse the idea that acting is a matter of goal-directed actions on the basis of given fictional circumstances, an idea that is consistent with what is here called the BSI pattern.

If this is a structure underlying most acting, as some writers argue, this cannot imply, on the other hand, that every actor applies it consciously or methodically.

In accordance with what has previously been stated about Strindberg's *The Stronger* it does not seem possible for an actor taking the part of King Oedipus in a version where the myth of Oedipus is valid to disregard important background features like, for example, the prediction about his marrying his mother and killing his father, or important situational features like the one represented by the plague in Thebes, or Oedipus' overall intention at the beginning of the play to administer justice. Different actors may relate to the circumstances in the play in widely different ways. Some prefer painstaking text analysis. For others, relating to the circumstances is more a question of intuition. The personal way for an actor to relate himself to the circumstances of the role can also diverge throughout his/her career and even in the course of the work on a single role. Many actors never even think in terms of given circumstances. Cohen exemplifies this with John Wayne, who once proclaimed: "I've never had a goddamn artistic problem in my life. I read what's in the script and then I go out there and deliver my lines". This statement, on the other hand, does not suffice to establish that Wayne acted independently of the given circumstances of the scripts and of the films. Cohen's own comment is that different gifts "place individual actors at different starting points" (11). To claim that an actor works in this or such a way does not necessarily mean that he does so as a conscious application of a certain "method".

To be more precise: *what* is needed for scenic fiction is one thing. It is quite another thing *how* individual actors deal with this.

The *what* in Stanislavski's understanding has essentially consisted of the "given circumstances", "objective" and "super objective", i.e. situation (including background) and intention.

Hornby points out that playing in relation to "given circumstances" does not necessarily entail realism. "Realism" is always a matter of depiction, whereas relating to given circumstances is the process of understanding the material in the play. Rather, relating to "given circumstances" is a quest for reality itself⁶, actual or possible. Secondly, the selection of, and the way of relating to, given circumstances are matters of personal choice.

A character in a play or a performance shall knock at a door, say. This door could 1) be present on stage as something resembling a door, and then he just knocks at it, or 2) be absent in material form but brought to our attention by the act of "knocking" at it. In both cases the actor has to perform the same movement with his arm and fist. In 2) he perhaps repeatedly halts his movements in the same position in order to suggest that this is done by a solid object in this location. In both cases he must adapt to the given circumstances. He also generally in one way or another gives expression to an intention to knock at the door. Thus the conditions of "given circumstances" and "objective" are present in both cases, and to equal extent. The art of corporeal mime, which is not considered a typical "realistic" theatre form, is also a way to work with given circumstances. Thus one must have complex physical experience of a real rope before one can make a "rope" present in a mime routine. On a basic level, adaptation to given circumstances can take place, irrespective of the degree of "realism" or "style". A mime actor moves his body as if he was walking against a strong wind, and thus his way of relating to this circumstance in a physical way makes the wind "visible" on stage. Cohen transfers this physical effect to the relationships between the figures in a play: the obstacle the actor/character is confronted with "determines the specificity of the character" (101).

According to Donnellan '*But why say this now exactly?*' is often a shrewd question for the actor to ask himself (221). This could be seen as a condensed description of an actor's work on a BSI play where causality reigns. It is a quest for reason, purpose and situatedness. It is also a quest for identity, as it serves as a means to specify how the conscious individual relates to a suggested situation assumed as real. It is finally a model of how meaning is produced in a sentence in language use generally. Interestingly, one can find a corresponding formulation in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical investigations*:

Ask yourself: On what occasion, for what purpose, do we say this? What kind of actions accompanies these words? (Think of greeting.) In what scenes will they be used, and what for? (par. 489)

What the actor is undertaking could be seen as a hermeneutic quest for the situation that could justify a given sentence in the script. The answer partly presents itself as a conclusion out of other circumstances given in the text. Now, a script seldom goes much into detail as to the circumstances but leaves it open for the actor to discover them himself. The result is a personal choice from among several options, but this choice has also to be incorporated into the general context of the production.

By "possible situation" one must not necessarily mean a situation that could occur in real life. Given that witches do not exist, it would not be possible in the real world for a witch to tell someone that he was destined to be a king. But if one assumes that witches actually exist and a witch tells someone something like this, it could be quite in accordance with our understanding of the world that her utterance nourished this person's ambition. We are capable of building models that do not just reproduce reality but make use of experience for building meaningful models out of assumptions, counterfactuals and fantasy worlds.

Talking about acting as relating to background-situation-intention is, in fact, only to do it in a rough way. If one accepts that there are big similarities between the work of an actor and human life in general, the degrees of complexity must also be considered equal. As a consequence, there is obviously much more to the actor's work than what is covered by such a description. The claim that there is a BSI pattern operating in a fictional story, like a play or a theatre performance, could be seen as equally important, and at the same time as equally mundane, as to claim that a person in real life has a past, a present and an idea about the future. But just as much as this fact is too obvious always to be conscious, its correspondence in a play or in the actor's work is so too. I have no ambitions with the notion of BSI to catch something like "the essence of acting". Or to reduce the art of acting to this. By no means do I claim with this notion to sum up all elements of acting technique. What I am addressing is only one single element in an extremely complex art form. As I mentioned previously, I have for example omitted from this account the personal way an actor relates to the

given circumstances, which is a central concern in so many writings on acting technique. With the notion of BSI I am at most pointing to the most basic element of acting out a fictional play. It is probably because of this that the BSI pattern is applicable to almost all dramatic texts and all forms of acting in the Western tradition, and probably extensively also outside this.

For an actor there are so many elements to be practiced and mastered. It is important for him to move at will effortlessly, to have a strong enough voice and to have the courage to appear before a crowd. Such elements of his profession are not my concern here. What I claim, on the other hand, is that all this only acquires meaning in relation to the overall task to impersonate a character in a play, and that this generally takes place on the basis of the character's background, situation and intention and how these express themselves in action.

Stanislavski

The discovery that an actor should, first of all, focus on the assumed circumstances powering the action of the plot might seem rather obvious. It does not seem a sensational discovery that a person's actions depend on the situation that called for them. Still, the discovery had to be made, in computer science as well as in connection with acting. In the latter case this idea was formulated in the middle of the 18th century, and arguably even earlier. But it is Constantin Stanislavski one must credit with the full understanding of its importance for the methodology of acting. It became Stanislavski's most important achievement to discover that this, the most basic element in acting, stands in the centre of its creative potentialities. One way for Stanislavski to formulate the situatedness of scenic actions is by means of what he calls the "creative if". The content of this idea is that an actor should base his interpretation of the role on the assumption that he finds himself in the role's situation. According to Stanislavski's autobiography, *My life in Art*, the discovery of the "creative if" was no less than the beginning of his system. Another notion Stanislavski uses for the same token is "the given circumstances", which he sees as the element the actor should first of all look for in the text and base his acting on (Stanislavski 1980, Stanislavski 1983).

Stanislavski is not an uncontroversial figure in the debate about theatre today. He frequently stands out as the very symbol of traditionalism, of naturalistic

acting, of emotionalism and psychological realism. By means of disconnected quotations and without even making mention of the central idea of the “creative if” Hayman argues that Stanislavski belongs more to the 19th century than to the twentieth (37). Without any reference whatsoever, Billington claims that according to Stanislavski the actor’s “overriding purpose is to convince the audience that he is watching a slice of reality”, that the audience is seeing Doctor Stockman rather than the actor playing Doctor Stockman (190). Erika Fischer-Lichte sees in Stanislavski a representative of programmatic theatrical illusionism (*History of European Drama and Theatre* 283). Zarrilli sees one of his actors’ incapacity to understand his directorial instructions as a result of “various forms of Stanislavskian-based method acting” (17). Philip Auslander sees Stanislavski’s claim of consistency in the acting as a symptom of “logocentrism” (54) – just to quote but a few comments. A common problem is that one reads Stanislavski’s writings as a kind of theoretical discourse on the art of acting instead of commentaries on a practice. Another problem is the belief that it could be possible to read Stanislavski, or any text on acting method, and then just go out and implement the instructions in one’s acting, a fundamental misconception of the relationship between theory and practice in the actor’s work. Sharon M Carnicke sees a difference between how scholars read Stanislavski and how he is read by practitioners. One source of confusion, Carnicke argues, arises when one understands Stanislavski as a theoretician, which he never claimed to be (*Stanislavski in focus* 66) .

Jacques Copeau is very firm in his critique of the idea of Stanislavski as a representative of a dated realism. Nothing, he argues, could be more wrong and more unjust. “Il n’a été que trop facile, pour les esprits superficiels et partisans, d’identifier la géniale personnalité de Stanislavskij avec les erreurs d’un réalisme périmé. Rien n’est plus injuste ni plus faux.” (Kindermann 9 301)

Kindermann totally aligns himself with Copeau’s view (9 301).

As Kindermann also points out, Stanislavski stresses that the person an actor expresses is himself, not the character. Thus Stanislavski underlines the *reality* of the communicational situation of the performance rather than the realism of the depiction. He brings the actor into focus as a creative artist in contradistinction to the idea of the-actor-becoming-immersed-in-the-character he is often associated with.

Stanislavski is an immensely prolific writer, who in his work on acting inevitably also analyses the relation between the text and the stage. In lieu of dealing with this massive work in its entirety I will concentrate on the basic features relating to what we here call the situatedness of acting. Most of these are covered by Sharon M. Carnicke's *Petite lexique "Stanislawskien"*, printed in Bouffonneries 18/19, one of the documents of the conference *Le Siècle Stanislavski*, Paris 1988.

The entries in Carnicke's dictionary are the following (our translation):

- The theatre of experience
- Segments
- The given circumstances
- Problem
- Action
- The Method of physical actions
- Justification of the text
- The sub-text of the play
- Psycho-technique
- Magic if
- Emotional memory or Affective memory
- The sense of truth, of truthfulness
- Concentration

(5–6)

According to "the theatre of experience" the actor is actively present on stage, a state described by Stanislavski in the notion of "I am". "Segments" are the analytic units the actor divides the text into. Every break or change in the action of a scene brings with it a new segment. The "given circumstances" are all details given by the author that determine the behaviour of the characters (their antecedents, their milieu, in short, the history of the piece). The "given circumstances" pose a "problem" for every "segment" of the play, which must be solved by the characters by means of action. "Action" is what the actor does consciously in order to solve a problem with which the character is confronted. Stanislavski not only puts "action" in the centre of his System. In his view it is also the element of action

that makes the difference between theatre and other arts. "The method of physical actions" is a technique developed by Stanislavski at the end of his career aiming at making it possible for the actor to find an emotional expression and to repeat it. "Justification of the text" means that the actor should find the reasons, the logic and the underlying plans for every action on stage²⁷. By "psycho-technique" is meant an idea developed by a psychologist much in vogue in Stanislavski's time, Théodule-Armand Ribot, meaning that body and mind are unified. The "creative if" is one of the techniques suggested by Stanislavski to stimulate the imagination of the actors. *What should I have done, had I found myself in the character's place*²⁸. "Emotional memory" or "Affective memory" is the idea that an actor can go back to an emotion by means of different triggers. The idea comes from Ribot.²⁹ (Carnicke *Stanislavski in focus* 131). "The sense of truth" or of "truthfulness" means that in order to create a character an actor should condition himself to believe in the reality of the piece, which is notably not the same as to believe that the piece is a truthful depiction, nor that the actor is somehow identical with the role.

Departing from the entries in Carnicke's dictionary I will go into a little more detail regarding the ideas about "action", the "given circumstances", the "magic if", and the "problem". – I chose chose "action" for obvious reasons, the "given circumstances" and the "magic if" because they determine the *situation* in which the action takes place. Importantly, according to Carnicke's own understanding the "given circumstances" include the *background* of the character, i.e. his or her history and social milieu.

Together, these entries make up a BSI structure. One could content oneself with talking only about "situation" and "objective", but in accordance with what has been stated before I find it a good point in Carnicke's rendering to make a division of the situation in what is given in the moment here and now and the antecedents and other causes making up it.

Finally, in *Creating a role* Stanislavski also puts forth an idea of consciousness that is subsequently to return frequently in his writings: "Through the conscious to the unconscious – that is the motto of our art and technique." (9)

By consciously engaging herself in the character's actions the actor inevitably displays unconscious levels of her scenic acts, which in turn become unconscious levels of the character's acts.

A detailed idea of the actor's approach to the text is also to be found in

Stanislavski's late teaching. According to Benedetti Stanislavski occupied himself with the writing of *An actor's Work with Himself* during the period 1935–36. The text was to be issued in the US in a translation by Elisabeth Reynolds Hapgood. But as the project faced difficulties with the editors, Mrs Hapgood decided to make substantial cuts in the text, in order to get it published at all. Stanislavski, who was also for financial reasons dependent on the publication, had no choice but to consent. In this way his final and maybe most important writings have come down to the American and English readers only in a corrupt form. The book was only one of four that Stanislavski planned for the final presentation of his system, but being old and seriously weakened by illness he decided to find another way of passing over his ideas. He did as he had done before and created a studio. 300 students were auditioned for the project, out of whom 30 were selected for the next three years. Colleagues from the Moscow Art Theatre also took part. According to Benedetti it was the work of this studio rather than Stanislavski's writings that was to form the basis for the training of actors in the USSR. In the mentioned book Benedetti makes an effort to subsume the basic ideas of the studio.

His aim is expressly not to give a history of the studio, and he is sparse with actual references to sources. The usefulness of the book here is thus only that it is an expert's understanding of an important tradition in acting.

The following headlines for the progression of the actor's work with the text reflect Benedetti's understanding of this tradition:

Phase one:

Familiarise with action/storyline

Define provisional supertask

Divide into Episodes

Define basic actions in Episodes

Divide the Episodes into Facts/Events

Define Tasks in Facts

Define Actions to fulfil Tasks

Create Subtext-Inner Monologue, Mental Images behind the Actions

Use Emotion Memory to strengthen and deepen spontaneous feelings

Through-action – the logic of the Tasks and Actions

Phase Two:

Study author's text-style, period. Background research

Physical Characterisation: outer creative state

Phase three:

Planning and Perspective, shaping the production

(Stanislavski and the Actor 12)

In *Stanislavski: an Introduction* Benedetti quotes a passage from the opening section of Part Three of Stanislavski's *An Actor's Work on a Role*, where the author criticises the approach to the dramatic text he earlier advocated, with painstaking reading and analysis "at the table". Stanislavski has now come to the conclusion that this only fills the actors with detailed information, of which some is useful, some not. Instead, he develops another approach to the text, issuing from a physical aspect to thought and from a mental aspect to action. As a result, he henceforth let the work act as a stimulus and made the actors of his studio explore the situations physically on the floor. Benedetti quotes Stanislavski from Toporkov: "Do not speak to me about feeling. We cannot set feeling; we can only set physical action." And: "Start bravely, not to reason but to act. As soon as you begin to act you will immediately become aware of the necessity of justifying your actions." (Toporkov 160, 161. Benedetti *Stanislavski: an Introduction* 64–68)

Benedetti's account of how Stanislavski tones down text analysis in favour of direct staging of the implied situations are of special interest, as they indicate a path leading from a purely text-oriented way of conceiving the content of a drama to a strategy that from the very outset involves embodiment and embodied understanding. This would mean that, according to Stanislavski's observations, human appearance on the stage is inseparable from action, and that hence, "drama without action" is inconceivable in scenic practice, i.e. as soon as the characters are incarnated on the stage by living actors.

A background to Stanislavski's conception seems to have been the confusion originating in the focus on character in the romantic and late romantic theatre. He did not reject "character acting", but he tried to find other means to achieve it. As a result the transition from the naturalistic Stanislavski to that of the

"system" led from character acting with a focus on the personality of the role to a focus on situation and intention.

In the earlier phase of his career Stanislavski was strongly influenced by naturalism, and the theatre he founded together with Nemirovich-Danchenko, the Moscow Art Theatre, always remained a typical exponent of realism. This has widely led to the conclusion that Stanislavski's system is also an instrument for the promotion of scenic realism. In her very instructive article "Stanislavski's system" Sharon M. Carnicke refutes this widespread view. It is true, she maintains, that the experiments Stanislavski made at this theatre in 1907 and 1908 to stage symbolist plays left few imprints on the Theatre's subsequent productions. But in other activities Stanislavski engaged himself in these experiments and tried to research anything that could illuminate the art of acting. Stanislavski's insistence on letting the Moscow Art Theatre continue to draw upon its early successes with realistic stagings is viewed by Carnicke more as a sign of his sense of business. According to Carnicke it was also for the sake of his theatre's financial survival that, when touring the Western countries, he gave priority to the most realistic part of the theatre's repertoire. As for himself he always continued to work with symbolism, opera, Eastern ideas about the mind/body continuum etc. in different studios outside the theatre.

According to Carnicke, when in the 'thirties Social Realism was proclaimed the only lawful artistic style in the Soviet Union, Stanislavski was hailed as a precursor. Stanislavski himself, who went on with his politically incorrect interest in symbolism, Yoga and formal structures of drama and action, had to spend his last years in internal exile, in accordance with Stalin's policies of "isolation and preservation".

To these sources of misconceptions one can add the fact that Stanislavski himself did not understand English and therefore could not assess the accuracy of the English translations. A comprehensive account of the discussion related to the publications of Stanislavski's works in English translation is given by Carnicke in *Stanislavski in Focus* (71–91).

There are several reasons to look with scepticism upon the frequent claims that Stanislavski is a creator of a special "style" in acting, as well as on the idea that his writings about acting in the first case advocate theatrical realism.

Stanislavski and BSI

Stanislavski is here viewed as the one who has most decisively indicated the necessity of contextualisation of the actor's work. In *My Life in Art* he tells how he works with the role of Stockman in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, and how from a technique of just repeating the outer features of the character he arrives at a working mode, focusing on the *actions* of the character in their intentional context.

Stanislavski's idea of action has greater connection with the one of Aristotle's and Hegel's:

So let us learn once and for all that the word 'action' is not the same as 'miming', it is not anything the actor is pretending to present, not something external, but rather something internal, non-physical, a *spiritual activity*. It derives from an unbroken succession of independent processes; and each of these in turn is compounded of desires or impulses aimed at the accomplishment of some objective. (*Creating a Role* 48–49)

And the following:

'Action – real, productive action with a purpose is the all-important factor in creativeness, and consequently in speech as well! 'To speak is to act. (*Building a Character* 123).

Stanislavski maintains that action distinguishes drama from all other arts. In an untitled draft from 1923 he writes: "People on stage act and these actions – better than anything else – uncover their inner sorrows, joys, relationships, and everything about the life of the human spirit on stage." (*qtd. in* Carnicke "Stanislavski's System" 24)

Stanislavski's ideas of the "creative if" and the "given circumstances" as well as the idea of the "objective" and "superobjective" are crucial to the understanding of his System. They also constitute a poignant description of what we here call the BSI-pattern.

Furthermore, Stanislavski talks about a *background*, which he calls the character's past. "There can be no present, however, without a past", he argues, and:

The present flows naturally out of the past. The past is the roots from which the present grew; the present without any past wilts like a plant with its roots cut off. An actor must always feel that he has the *past* of his role behind him, like the train of a costume he carries along.

Neither is there a present without a *prospect of the future*, dreams of it, guesses and hints about it. (*Creating a Role* 16)

The "late Stanislavski", Stanislavski in the workshops conducted in his home from 1934 to 1938, works with something he calls active analysis: before memorising his lines the actor reads the play as a system of clues that imply possible performance. Such clues Stanislavski calls *facts*.

He finally talks about *intention* for example in the idea of action as a way to accomplish something expressed as a problem set by the given circumstances (Carnicke "Stanislavski's System" 24). Stanislavski repeatedly refers to this as the character's *objective* or *superobjective*.

In this sense Stanislavski also becomes a typical exponent of the idea of action in theatre as *situated* action. He hereby initiates a qualified investigation into the preconditions for human action, thus foreshadowing what was later to attract great interest within cognitive science. Stanislavski rejects the idea of a division between body and mind and adopts a holistic view of the process by which the actions on stage take on meaning. He thus also stresses the importance of *embodiment* in this process. This idea, which was nurtured by Stanislavski's reading of the contemporary French psychologist Théodule Ribot, in fact anticipates ideas put forward by recent writers like Merleau-Ponty and Lakoff and Johnson. Stanislavski's description of the communicative process involved in the process from written text to acting displays striking similarities with modern practice-oriented ideas of meaning developed within different disciplines, some of them in pursuit of the late Wittgenstein. (There is more about this in section 5.)

The same BSI pattern as Stanislavski describes recurs in recent writings about the actor's art by important practitioners. I will here review some contemporary teachers who take up and develop a similar BSI pattern.

In these books there is often a striking absence of references to Stanislavski even though his writings are mentioned and analyzed in some of them. The writers develop their ideas in personal ways and with reference to their own

experience of practical acting³⁰. Typical of the writers quoted in this section is the fact that they address themselves to actors, who are able to try out their readings on their own practical work. In accordance with the fact that skill in acting is handed down through practice, it is by being tried out practically, and not in relation to any prior authority or theory, that the writings of these authors can make impact. This also conforms to Stanislavski's own conviction that what he writes about are "facts known since long", which until then had only not found a suitable expression, and to the fact addressed by Carnicke in her article "Stanislavski's system" that the System only suggests pathways for actors which could be personalised and reinvented by each actor himself (Hodge 33). In this sense, it will also be argued here, the BSI pattern Stanislavski writes about could be understood as less of an *idea* or an *ideal* of acting than of a description of a basic narrative structure for bodily mimesis in its theatrical form, which could be experienced and investigated by anyone who engages himself in the practical work of acting.

Stanislavski is often considered the most influential writer on acting method. It is a thesis here that if this be true, it is not due to an ideological authority exercised over a world of believers, but rather to the fact that he preoccupied himself with the investigation of a reality that every actor can recognize. I am now going to review some other writers who like Stanislavski deal with the actor's work from the viewpoint of scenic action as a play structured by fictional situatedness, but who discuss this issue in their own personal ways.

Cohen

In *Acting Power* Robert Cohen takes as his point of departure the idea that acting is real, not because there is no difference between acting and behaving in real life, but in the sense that the differences are not those between "reality" and "unreality". Instead, Cohen stresses the reality of the play. He frequently makes references to the world of sport. A baseball player, he argues, does not try to look like a baseball player. He plays baseball. By the same token an actor does not try to look like someone; he acts according to the situation of the play: "*the actor experiences his character's interactions by the simple way of interacting with other actors*" (38). Thus, for Cohen too, the *situation* comes into the centre. He calls playing the situation the foundation of acting. The situation simply

demands the appropriate characterization (216). Therefore, in playing tactics on stage one should actually use the tactic on the other actor. If one plays Tybalt and is designated to threaten Romeo one must actually threaten the person playing Romeo (79).

Like Stanislavski above, Cohen is negative towards playing emotions. "Emotions cannot be consciously played. An actor who tries to 'show fear' 'shows showing,' which is showing-off" (65).

The most common term for the character's drive to victory is intention (23). Cohen sees intention as an interpretation of future perspectives.

Cohen not only talks about the material supplied to the actor by the playwright but, unlike what is done in this dissertation, also about *how* the actor should relate to it. Like many others who write with insight about acting he addresses himself to the practitioner rather than to the scholar.

Cohen strongly recommends the actor to focus on the aims of the character and to avoid letting himself be too much affected by the character's past. He illustrates his view with a person who is chased by a wild animal, a bear (34). This person, he argues, is more likely to concentrate on how to find rescue somewhere than on the threat itself. Similarly an actor should focus on the ways the character can improve his situation rather than on the causes of this situation. In Cohen's view the inverse would be to fall prone to a deterministic view according to which people rather are pushed by their past than drawn to their future aims³¹.

With this Cohen does not intend to diminish the importance of the past, what we here call the background. He accords great importance to this, but "*only insofar as that past determines and shapes his [the actor's] thinking; only as it guides the fantasies, forecasts, hypotheses, and expectations that lie ahead of him.*" (108) The actor's task is to transform facts about the character's past into dreams, expectations etc. of the character's future. Cohen is not just talking about the material the actor has to relate to, but how he should make use of this in his acting. This is a step further ahead of and beyond what we are dealing with here. When I talk here about the process from text to scenic work I talk about the material as presented in the text, not the way in which different actors assimilate it, make it "their own", which is the personal process of each actor.

To Cohen classics like Shakespeare's plays also build on situational

contextualisation. He shows how Shakespeare even uses the speaking styles of the characters to “enormous situational effect” (155). Concerning the relationship between the actor and the audience Cohen once again illustrates with an example from the world of sport. During the play the athlete does not give the audience as much as a glance. A skier’s conscious concentration on his task suffices to establish the relationship. Yet there is a feedback between the skier and the fans. He experiences their presence; he is affected of their cheers. The essence of the relationship is that “the more he stimulates the crowd with his efforts, the more they stimulate him” (181).

Do Brecht’s actors also “become” their characters? Cohen sees Brecht’s insistence that this is not the case as a mere matter of rhetoric, “needed to distinguish his theory in a striking manner”. “Becoming a character”, Cohen argues, is not a physical transubstantiation, it is not a question of a “fixed, unique, physical presence”, but of “an idea, a compilation of attributes, an abstraction, a person in quotes”. As the character is identical with the interactions he is involved in, the separation of actor and character in Cohen’s view becomes a pure abstraction: “there is but one body, one face, one voice. Impersonation, no matter in what spirit it is undertaken, carries an undifferentiated impact”. According to Cohen this view was also confirmed in the public reception of Brecht’s plays (208). Cohen’s way to phrase the relationship between the actor and the character bears striking resemblances to David Z. Saltz’s notion of *infiction* (Saltz 203).

Hornby

In *The End of Acting* Richard Hornby maintains that Stanislavski is one of the few writers in the history of theatre who has formed a comprehensive theory of acting. Grotowski has given expression to a similar view (530–31). Other writers on the art of acting, Hornby continues, mostly preoccupy themselves with what acting should or should not be. Stanislavski, by contrast, has had no ambitions of inventing any ideals of his own, but only to describe what actors have always done. His writings contain no ideas that an actor can just pick up and use in his own acting, but according to Hornby they take on meaning only after one has acted for some time and can relate them to one’s own practical experience (151–52). Being a theatre critic himself, Hornby criticises his

colleagues for only having "a vague idea of how an actor creates and sustains a role" and, in general, he maintains that "acting remains a largely unexamined art form" (13).

Hornby underlines the fact that Stanislavski has no idea of giving the public a depiction of the world. In Hornby's understanding the method does not have anything to do with the public at all. It is exclusively aimed at the actor, as a way to induce a creative state (96).

Hornby also writes about acting in a historical perspective. Talking about Elizabethan acting, Hornby maintains that people during this period had a more operative approach to language and a more developed sense of doing things with speech in the way an orator does. Thus the actors at that time could adapt to given circumstances without trying to be as natural as possible (137). Reacting to given circumstances in the play is something else, Hornby insists, than reacting to remembered everyday life (169).

According to Hornby Stanislavski's basic theories showed a clear influence of Craig's Ueber-Marionette, Meyerhold's Biomechanics, Vakhtangov's Fantastic Realism as well as Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture, all of which were physically oriented and "saw an emotional and spiritual quality coming *from* the physical" (198).

Hornby does not see any opposition between Brecht's and Stanislavski's views on action. To him Brecht's idea of *Verfremdung* is at least partly a reaction against the bombastic character acting typical of German theatre in Brecht's time. Hornby underlines that Brecht was not an actor himself, and that what he was advocating was rather a "style" than a method. In this there are great similarities between Hornby's view and the article quoted by Grotowski.

Hornby also makes interesting remarks on other acting schools and teachers. Frequently, as in the quote above, he does not see any serious opposition between them and Stanislavski.

Hornby addresses the issue about the actor's emotional involvement, the problem treated by Diderot in his paradox. Hornby here questions the mere way to formulate the problem. According to him, the idea that actors successfully feel exactly what the characters feel is a result of a Cartesian, dualistic belief in the relation between mind and body. By contrast, he argues, twentieth-century aesthetic theory often supports the idea that the emotions an actor feels on

stage differ from feelings in everyday life. An actor's emotions are imaginary emotions. On the other hand they are also strongly and genuinely felt. An actor who hears that a dear person has died differs from the one who hears this as a part of the play he is acting in. Authentic news about a person's death causes unpleasant feelings and might provoke reactions of repression. The actor who only has to imagine his father's death, on the other hand, is free to explore this emotion. In the first case he might think: "How terrible, I wish it wasn't true". In the latter one he might think: "how wonderful! I've got it right". Hornby also points to the different meanings of the word "feel": the simple feeling of warmth and cold, the intuitive feeling of being aware of something, and finally the one of experiencing emotion. He argues that Stanislavski's dictum to "feel the part" is often misunderstood to actually mean undergoing the emotion that the character is experiencing. His own interpretation of "feeling" in this context is rather to "have a feel of the part". Hornby makes a comparison with playing music and exercising a sport: one proceeds via intuitive feel rather than by conscious manipulation. A golfer learns to recognize the feeling of a good drive. Similarly, Hornby argues, an actor in rehearsal learns to gain the feel of the character's emotions. In this understanding, the emotion is the end point of rehearsals rather than their starting point (117–25).

It is important to refer to Hornby's observations in this context, first because they account for the kind of game which creates the fictional universe in the onlooker's mind, and second, most importantly, because they account for the actor's work as a way not only to experience feelings himself but to *explore* feelings. The reception by the public then also stands out as the reception of the outcome of this exploration. "Does the public accept such and such a reaction to such and such an impulse? – Yes, it does so to the point of almost taking it for real." The theatrical communication stands out as that of a joint query into human and social life where the text, as it were, puts the questions, the actors suggest their answers and the audience gives or withholds its consent.

Penciulescu

Radu Penciulescu is a Romanian director and pedagogue with important international merits, who at the end of his career also held a chair at the Malmö Theatre Academy.

Unlike the acting teachers referred to so far, Penciulescu developed his working mode in contact with his students and actors without as yet having left any written material in his own hand behind him. The sources I will use here consist of records of lectures given at the conference *Le Siècle Stanislavski* at *Centre Georges Pompidou* and *Centre d'action culturelle de Montreuil*, Paris November 1988, a lecture he gave at the seminar *Les penseurs de l'enseignement* in June 2000, organized by *l'Academie Expérimentale des Théâtres à l'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe* under the direction of Georges Banu, among others. Another useful text here has been a record of one of Penciulescu's works at the Malmö Theatre Academy that was made in 1994 by one of his students.

In his Odéon lecture Penciulescu marks a distance from Stanislavski's productions and "stanislavskism" as an aesthetic. What, on the other hand, Penciulescu appreciates in Stanislavski is his way to think theatre, the way of talking about the artistic profession of being an actor. The point of departure for Penciulescu is *concretization*, which, he stresses does not necessarily mean realism. This is how he suggests the actor to work:

Apprendre à trouver les motivations qui expliquent un comportement. Les déterrer par une approche souterraine du noyau de l'acte. Par exemple, essayer de saisir les raisons de l'abandon de l'enfant dans LE CERCLE DE CRAIE. /.../ ... trouver toujours *ce qui détermine un acte*. ("Trouver sa vérité" 70)

For Penciulescu the work of the actor always has to do with the circumstances given in the play. Penciulescu also stresses that action on stage is not pretence, but something that takes place in real time: "Le personnage est la somme des réponses données aux situations. Le personnage agit, il ne reproduit pas." (72)

Truth onstage is always embodied: "Au théâtre, la réalité est toujours physique" (72). Truth in acting has nothing to do with "true feelings" or with make-believe: "Jouer un personnage c'est trouver la vérité du jeu" (73). And "Au théâtre ce qui compte c'est d'atteindre la vérité au coeur du mensonge unanimement accepté" (74). If there is an element of "lie" involved, this has not to do with concealing truth, but to make it possible to show truth in the way that is specific of the art.

Furthermore, truth in theatre is not static. It resides in the pursuit of events in real time as they unfold themselves on the stage. The obstacles for the character are not just a matter of make-believe in the relation between the stage and the audience, but something that is manifest in the situation of play and appears as a real element of obstacle in the situation of play:

Les grandes vérités tuent la dialectique du comédien. Ce qui compte c'est la vérité en mouvement, la manière dont tu combats pour accomplir le but. Au fond, il ne faut pas oublier que la mission change constamment.

Le jeu est aléatoire, il est toujours en train de se faire. Cela maintient le comédien en état d'éveil. (74)

The truth is not in the representation but in the *process* engendered by the representation. "The way you fight to attain your objective" is not a matter of representing a fight, but of engaging oneself in an actual fight in the situation. The fight is not only a matter of *representation* in the actor-to-audience dimension, but of a *real obstacle* in the play, in the actor-to-actor dimension. Thus the audience witnesses not only a fake fight, but a real fight under the circumstances imposed by the play. It is an element of the play, hence it is aleatoric and demands total concentration in real time.

In his work with his students Penciulescu uses different exercises to train this element of reality in the play. One of these could be useful to refer to here in order to clarify what could be meant when one says that the obstacle is not only a matter of representation in the actors-to-audience direction, but a real obstacle in the actor-to-actor direction. This is how Penciulescu describes the task of the exercise: "Vendre un objet aux spectateurs jusqu'au moment où l'un des spectateurs se décide de l'acheter" ("l'Engagement de l'acteur" 144).

The person charged with "selling" the object should not *play the role* of a salesman but find his arguments in the object itself in relation to the onlookers viewed as potential buyers. The obstacle for the "salesman" is not the one of representing somebody convincingly, but of finding relevant arguments in the assumed situation. The arguments should be no less convincing than they would have been had the actor really been a salesman, and, just as in this case, the arguments should be based only on considerations as to the potential advantage

of the object for the persons as potential users. It is with this sense of real elements in the assumed situations that Penciulescu wants the students/actors to deal with situations in dramatic works as well. He asks himself "How should one come to grips with a scene?" The answer is: "To make it one's own". Thus, when working on Lady Anne's scene with Richard (Shakespeare: *Richard III* I.ii), one should analyse the way Richard converts the situation argument by argument: stimulating sexuality, establishing a contact by means of the gob of spittle or by means of the sword he points to his own chest ("Trouver sa vérité" 73). The gestures are then considered not only as iconic signs of a faked situation but as *relevant arguments* in such a situation assumed to be real.

Penciulescu illustrates this idea of how the reality of the play coalesces with reality beyond the fictional narrative by means of two examples from real life. The first one is taken from his own native Romania in the years of the Nazi occupation. The occupying power had spread the information that a number of men in the resistance had been killed and that their bodies were exposed in the local mortuary. The information was false and in fact aimed at making the potential "widows" appear and so betray the whereabouts of their husbands. One of these women came to the mortuary, but when she entered the place she immediately became aware of the plot. In the same moment her eyes fell on a pail standing in a corner, and in an accustomed manner, as if she was a cleaner, she grasped the pail and proceeded to a neighbouring room, from which she could safely leave the building. No one had reacted.

The other example is taken from a newspaper and tells about a painting that was stolen from the Louvre. A few days later a young man appeared and put the painting back again in its place. Apprehended by the guards and interrogated the young man declared that he was himself a painter, that he had fallen in love with the painting and taken it home with no other intention than to make his own copy of it. His manner was so natural that the people witnessing the removal of the painting thought it was done by an authorized person.

Penciulescu concludes:

Un acte de théâtre, en plein moment d'inspiration et d'intuition, permet de s'ouvrir à des forces inconnues qui utilisent à fond les éléments objectifs de la réalité dans un scénario qui à son tour devient tellement réel, qu'il est capable de défier la prévoyance des défenseurs de l'ordre établi du moment! ("l'Engagement de l'acteur" 140)

Obviously, these “unknown forces” and “objective elements” are not a matter of pretence, of fiction or faking, but of the real element of the scenic situation that is independent of the will of the actor. They are not only “signs”, as they are, in fact, actions, which presuppose a person with an intentional direction. The idea that an actor actually performs real acts makes a conception of the kind instantiated by Penciulescu go beyond the traditional behavioristic “spectator-to-stage” perspective typical of traditional semiotics, as expressed for example by Patrice Pavis in his *Dictionnaire du Théâtre*. Under the entry “La réalité des comédiens” Pavis declares that even though actors are real human beings, their entire apparition on stage is part of a semiotic system, a semiotic frame that “makes use of them” in a fictive universe. All their physical properties are semiotized. Thus beauty, sexuality, “mystical being” transferred to the person who represents it is “une belle, sexy et mystérieuse héroïne” (322).

Now, what Pavis is talking about is not the dynamic of what the person does on stage, but the external properties of the person. His description does not account for the intentional structure of scenic action, but only for the static body as subjected to the onlooker’s gaze. He only talks about the features of this body, as if a property on stage was only a kind of a symmetric relation between the actress in this case and the character.

So what is, actually, this element of reality? – It is not “realism” of any kind, “psychological” or other, as reality actually means the opposite to what is meant by “realism”. The latter always means depiction of some kind, while the talk about “reality” in theatre denotes the element of non-depiction. If the obstacles assumed on stage are meant to be commonsensical, they imply all kinds of constraints that can be grasped by human apprehension, whether logical, mathematical, physical or other. If one for example assumes that the left side of the stage is a part of the sea, people on stage are not likely to walk around there as if on firm ground. If a space on stage is meant to represent a narrow lift, one and a half square meters, it could not possibly house twenty people. Not even the question formulated in the “magic if” “How would I have reacted in this situation?” is necessarily one about psychology. It could be *assessed* psychologically, but in the very moment of reflection, reaction or performance it is not, lest all human reactions and actions of all kinds should be classified as per definition “psychological”.

In fact, the circumstance that a play has a level of reality, although the conditioning of it is artificial, is not only typical of theatre, but of all kinds of plays.

Penciulescu's conception has many features in common with Stanislavski's. Both underline the importance of action, of given circumstances and the importance of the objective. Harald Leander who documented one of Penciulescu's works with students at the MTA, begins this with a kind of dictionary similar to the one by Carnicke on Stanislavski referred to above. According to this crucial notions for Penciulescu are: objectivity, analysis, "what do they do?", circumstances, space, relations, other circumstances, objective, obstacle, score, emotions and presence.

Objectivity: As an actor you must rely on objective and concrete actions

Analysis: What *happens* in the play? – The events must be seen as *facts*.

What do they /the characters/ do? – *What*, not *how*. What they say follows what they do.

Circumstances: the *milieu*, the *space*, the *co-actors* and their *relationships*

Space: You have to decide and agree on relevant circumstances in the space.

Relations: You have to decide on the shared history of the characters.

Other circumstances: Every character has his own history that affects his actions.

Objective: This could be formulated on both long and short term.

Obstacle: Many factors create external obstacles for the character/actor. There are also internal obstacles. In order to impose one's will one has to act. Actions without will become empty and unconcrete.

Score: The different single wills of a person make up a "score", a chain of concrete and objective actions

Emotions: Emotions always depend on actions.

Presence: Only by being present and letting oneself be influenced by the circumstances at every single moment can one make one's character come alive. Presence is a matter of *concentration*, *openness* and *availability*, not about capricious inspiration or mystic talent. (Leander 2–4) (My translation.)

In the conference programme of *Le Siècle Stanislavski* Penciulescu subsumed the idea behind his teaching in this way:

Pour moi la qualité essentielle de quelqu'un qui est ou qui veut être acteur, est de pouvoir s'engager, totalement de corps et d'esprit, dans un processus qui a pour but de rendre pertinent et sensible, le monde extérieur. Par effet de miroir, cette activité rendra pertinent et sensible, l'acteur.

"For me, the essential quality of someone who is or want to be an actor is to engage himself totally physically and mentally in a process aiming at making the external world pertinent and perceptible. Through a mirror effect this activity makes the actor pertinent and perceptible as well".

Both Stanislavski and Penciulescu insist on the idea of the play as, first and foremost, an activity in the real world. Both also see a seamless connection between scenic action and reality in the wider sense, as an expression of the reality of the actor's life experience.

The idea of "given circumstances" and the idea put forward by Penciulescu exemplify BSI in its most developed form. There is no more question of make-believe for its own sake, nor of realism, but of making reality itself in the form of the actors' factual apprehension of reality work directly on the scenic events. A kind of immediate *transparency* is established between the acts and circumstances of the piece on one side and, on the other side, constraints related to the actor's actual apprehension of the world, as well as the ongoings of the play in their actual spatiotemporal setting.

Fiction in theatre, as dealt with in this way, thus escapes the Platonic idea of duplicating reality and instead becomes an ongoing examination of reality.

Different test situations can also instantiate how fake situations are used to gain information about reality. A scenic situation should not be reduced to a test situation. But, according to Penciulescu again, stylistic features in theatre are always subordinate to the scenic situation in its reality perspective ("Trouver sa vérité" 70). This idea is consistent with the arguments referred to in Section 3 of this text that the given circumstances Stanislavski talks about were of central importance for acting in the Elizabethan era as well.

Donnellan

Declan Donnellan's ³²*The Actor and the Target* was originally issued in Russia and has been translated into many languages within a short period of time. The book is a practice-oriented treatise on the art of acting.

Donnellan uses, as a springboard for his discourse, a critique of questions that actors are advised to put to themselves and which resemble the ones subsumed under the "5 Ws":

Who am I?
What do I want?
Where am I?
Etc.

But Donnellan's point is not that the actor should be unspecific, unsituated, etc. The problem in his view is that all of these questions repeat the word "I". What he wants to underline is that the actor's task lies *outside* himself in what Donnellan calls "the Target". The target is the reason, which cues someone to do something. In Donnellan's own words: "You can never know what you are doing until you first know what you are doing it for. For the actor all 'doing' has to be done *to* something. The actor can do nothing without the target." (17) The target is something like a task which the actor responds to. It is "the source of all the actor's life", something "we" are always present with as long as we are conscious. When conscious there is always something we are conscious with, and this is the target. Accordingly an actor cannot play unconsciousness. The target is not defined as an object or a want, a plan, a reason or an intention, goal, a focus or a motive. The target is that from which all this arises. The target is always specific. Like Penciulescu, Donnellan insists that "Good acting is always specific" (3). The target cannot be created, but must always be found. The target is always transforming (47). The target could be defined as the element in the situation that calls for the agent's/character's action. Or, as Donnellan puts it, an actress working on Juliet in Shakespeare's play rather than trying to change herself into Juliet should imagine how Juliet would like to change things (93). If the actor does not focus on the target, he/she starts to *show* or *pretend*. And pretending is not acting (81). The target "always exists outside..." ; it exists before

the actor needs it; it is something to be discovered rather than invented; it is "the only source of all practical energy for the actor". "The actor can only act in relation to the thing that is outside, the target". A target is "a kind of object, either direct or indirect, a specific thing seen or sensed, and, to some degree, needed". "The target is always specific." (36) Even the most brilliant script, Donnellan argues, is "unintelligible" if it is detached from the target. Every word needs to be caused by the outside world (38).

So instead of asking himself "*What am I doing*" the actor should ask himself "*What is the target making me do?*" (24) The target is the source of the actor's motives.

The idea that an actor's work results from constant focus on a "target" in constant motion also has implications for the way in which identity is conceived. According to Donnellan "'Who I am' is unknowable" (99). As an ongoing reference Donnellan uses Act 2, sc. 2, the "balcony scene" from *Romeo and Juliet*. According to Donnellan, Romeo must make the balcony scene more about Juliet and less about him, as must Juliet also make it more about Romeo than about her. Romeo and Juliet are each other's target.

As for more recent writings for the stage he refers to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which he views as subject to the same rules as the Shakespeare text. According to Donnellan a scene that does not develop is no scene at all. And although Godot never appears Vladimir and Estragon develop, and so does Godot from their point of view (214).

Notably, Donnellan does not content himself with saying that one cannot act without a target. He even claims that one does not *know* what one is doing without this target.

It is only when the actor achieves a contact with those factors outside himself that he can act. Thus the actor does not preoccupy himself with any question about the "psychologically realistic" reaction from his character what would be. Nor does he preoccupy himself with questions about character. No description of a human being, Donnellan argues, is the truth. Therefore "[...] it is wise to accept that there is no such thing as character" and one can never play the character, only the situation (84, 106).

This also marks Donnellan's relation to "psychology" in acting. If the target is outside the actor like the ball is outside the tennis player, an actor, it seems, is

making psychology when responding to an impulse just as little as a tennis player is psychologizing when hitting the ball. There could be psychological aspects of both activities, but this psychology is imposed by the observer rather than by the agent himself. If psychology is involved it is, at most, in the trivial sense that there is a psychological aspect of everything where the human mind is involved.

It is entirely alien to Donnellan's conception that acting should be a matter of representing psychologically "true" images, and that in order to achieve this the actor should delve within himself for his "true" feelings. The word "realism" like any "-ism" suggests an idea of representation. But in Donnellan's description the actor does not have any idea of depicting. He just reacts to stimuli identified in the situation suggested by the dramatic text and his coactors. Hence in this context the notion "psychological realism" seems beside the point and Donnellan never mentions it or anything of the like.

Donnellan does not make use of the traditional Stanislavskian vocabulary, such as "given circumstances", "creative if", "objective", "super-objective" etc. He never supports his views with reference to Stanislavski and makes very little mention of him at all. Still, his text seems perfectly consistent with Stanislavski's ideas. To a great extent they are also in line with Penciulescu's.

Unlike other writers on acting methodology referred to here, Donnellan also addresses the work with a mask. For Donnellan this is just another way to deal with "the target". The mask enables the actor to see through the eyes of someone else. The audience sees what the actor sees. Thus the mask enables actor and audience to see something they would otherwise not be able to see.

Donnellan recalls a phenomenon that can be observed in all parts of the world where actors wear masks and which can also be seen on Greek depictions: the performer prepares himself by contemplating the mask. "The actor will then practise in the mask and continue to discover who the mask is by seeing how others react to this new identity. Sooner or later the actor will move like the mask." (111)

In Donnellan's view any concrete object worn by the character could be seen as a mask, in the sense that for example the actress playing Juliet might use a pair of shoes supposedly worn by the character to make discoveries about her. Anything can be a mask provided that the actor only wears it when acting (110).

The aim of the play with or without a mask is to make discoveries and then

allow for the public to take part in one's discoveries. "The artist finds, rather than creates and controls. To say we discover rather than invent is not humble; it is realistic." (130)

To Donnellan the core of the target is consciousness and intention. He accords vital importance to the past of the characters for their actions in present time. He accords crucial importance to what the figures do, the action. But at the same time Donnellan avoids just recycling the vocabulary of others. The "target" is a notion that repeatedly underlines the active and responsive relation to what lies outside the actor himself.

Donnellan, who addresses himself to practitioners, does not preoccupy himself in the first place with the relationship between text and scenic action, but rather with how the actor should *relate* to the scenic situation. He makes clear that his first aim is to direct the actor's focus from himself to his task. And he recurrently criticizes emotionalist approaches to acting. We cannot express emotion, he insists, and argues that, rather, it is emotion that expresses itself whether we want it or not. There is no practical answer to the question "What does the character feel in this situation?" and therefore there is also no reason for the actor to ask this. Emotion cannot be produced. The feeling will follow the target, but the target will never follow the feeling. Trying to show feeling will inevitably obliterate the target. There is no other way than to go via the specific. Freud and Stanislavski, Donnellan argues, have this in common: they strove to dig the unconscious with the only shovel at our disposal, the conscious (174).

When writing about the actor, Donnellan intermittently refers to how people act outside the stage. Thus he seems to agree with the view that the similarity between theatre and life lies in the fact that actions in life and actions on stage are conditioned in similar ways.

With the concept of "the target" Donnellan stresses the importance of the actor's directedness towards the future. He also underlines the fundamental importance of the situation. But how about the past? Donnellan here points to the fact that there are different phases in the actor's work and that thus the focus on the three tenses also changes. According to Donnellan it is necessary in the actor's preparatory work to go back into the antecedents of the events in which the character is involved. This, however, is not the same as to say that the actor at the moment of play should fill his thoughts with background events.

Rather the background should have been moulded into more useful material, i.e. into part of the character's objectives – or target – in Donnellan's vocabulary. Moreover, the past is never something completed. It is always dependent on what happens in the present time. Or as Donnellan incisively puts it: "There is nothing as unpredictable as the past." (123)

An actor playing the part of Oedipus somehow knows that his character anterior to the events accounted for in the plot was predicted to slay his father and marry his mother. This prediction is a crucial background to the scene in which the character inquires into the death of the former king. But this fact, of course, does not imply that the actor playing Oedipus must fill his mind with thoughts about these previous events. Being aware of something is not the same as consciously thinking about something. Thus the idea that the background, or the antecedents of the scenic actions is crucial is not inconsistent with the idea that at the moment of play one should focus on one's aim, or target.

While they perhaps lay their emphasis differently, these writers, nevertheless, also comply with Stanislavski's idea of given circumstances as the basis for the action on stage. These given circumstances inevitably form a consistent whole.

Again, cohesion and fiction go hand in hand.

On the other hand, this idea of logic, consistency and so on in connection with acting has met with some criticism, particularly from post-modern theory. One important instance of this is the aforementioned article by Philip Auslander entitled *Just be yourself*, published in the anthology edited by Philip Zarrilli *Acting (re)considered*. In the article Auslander addresses two features in connection with ideas about acting. One is the Cartesian idea of a stable self; the other is what Derrida calls *logocentrism*. The latter is in the definition adopted by Auslander "the orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning – thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word – conceived as existing in itself, as foundation". After a discussion about Stanislavski's writings Auslander arrives at the conclusion that Stanislavski, after all, seems to realize that the self does not exist independently of the processes by which it is revealed to itself and others, and that therefore he cannot readily be accused of nourishing a Cartesian idea of a stable self.

But how about logocentrism? Auslander argues that since Stanislavski insists

on the need for logic, coherence and unity he is “inscribed firmly within logocentrism” (54).

Now, in response to this, one could argue that Auslander here seems to forget an important detail in his own premises. Logocentrism, according to his own definition, is an orientation within *philosophy*. And Stanislavski’s preoccupation is not philosophy but the practical pursuit of actor training and acting. Thus it is more akin to some other practical pursuit which, for practical reasons, must take place by the application of a basic succession, of starting up one’s computer, say, before writing on it, instead of performing these operations in the inverse order.

One should rather search for the origins of Stanislavski’s insistence on logic and coherence in relation to the following: 1. The fact that he writes on scenic fiction and that insofar as fiction is a matter of contrafactuality a basic consistency is necessary for it to take place, and 2. One should seek it in Stanislavski’s own account of the reasoning behind the principal element in his system, “the creative if”.

In a passage which has been cut in Hapgood’s English translation of Stanislavski’s autobiography *My life in Art* Stanislavski tries to illustrate with an image the predicament one is set in when playing a role (*Mein Leben in der Kunst* 360–361). I will henceforward call this example the “Red Square experience”. Stanislavski exhorts the reader to imagine himself standing on the Red Square with a woman at his side whom he has never met before and with someone who orders him there, in public, to fall in love with this woman. Around him stand thousands of people who expect him to move them by displaying flaming, passionate emotions, a crowd who has even paid for this service. They all, of course, have the right, first of all, to hear everything he says, which makes it necessary for him to roar out, with the full power of his lungs, words that under normal circumstances a man only whispers to a woman between the two of them. – It is an image like this of what it means to stand on the stage before an audience, and no theories about the world, the mind or epistemology that underlie the writings that make up Stanislavski’s “System”.

In Stanislavski’s account “The Red Square experience” leads directly to the idea of the “creative if”. In order to master such a situation, Stanislavski continues, one has invented different signs and tricks to express human passions

– theatrical moves, poses, intonations, cadenzas and floritures. Instead of this, he wants to find the creative approach he could sense in his own acting at times, and which he could observe in the work of great actors of his time. But whereas actors of genius always seem to find the spark of inspiration necessary for this kind of acting, he only found it in himself occasionally. He asked himself “Are there no technical means for the creation of the creative mood, so that inspiration may appear oftener than is its wont?” (*My Life in Art* 461). He mentions fear of the reactions of the public as a cause of lack of inspiration. He then finds out that this fear disappears once he ceases to think about the audience and concentrates on his actions on stage, and he also realizes that this is also, in fact, the best way to attract the interest of the audience, that his own concentration also brings with it their concentration. From this conclusion he proceeds to the next one, that an actor must actually *believe* in what he does. But he also realizes that one can only believe in truth. And how, then, he asks himself, can there be belief in something like theatre that seems to be untrue in its every detail? Then the answer comes: I know that the props, costumes etc. are lies but *if* they were true, then ... (466). The story is not about philosophy or even about ideas, but of the primary, personal need – whatever this stands for – of making sense to oneself and others in a given situation. Auslander seems to make the mistake to see practice just as applied theory, and as thus possible to criticise on the basis of this alleged dependence. This view is not only reductionistic, but, in fact, also stands out as a category mistake. Stanislavski does not claim that acting is propositional. He always describes it as an activity. Therefore, unlike sentences such as “logocentrism is right” or “logocentrism is wrong”, it cannot be classified in terms of “true” and “false”.

It could rightfully be claimed that it is naïve to believe in a sort of innocence in any theatrical pursuit, a kind of “natural” state that could warrant an original “authentic truth” in for example acting. Acting, no more than any other human activity, escape cultural influence. But this influence is practical as well as ideological, and, indeed, more practical than ideological.

As has previously been pointed out with reference to other writers, if Stanislavski’s stagings and his own acting display influences from realism and naturalism, this does not mean that his writings on theatre are applicable only to these theatrical styles. Primarily, as will be fleshed out a little more in detail

in the next section, it is because his basic idea was probably part of theatrical praxis long before both him and naturalism. Obviously his basic idea, the one about the "creative if" and the "given circumstances", can be used for non-realistic forms of performance as well, from Grotowski to live games. Moreover, as Hornby points out, Stanislavski's aim is not to describe the prerequisites for "true" depiction, which is often habitually assumed.

The distinction between fictional and real easily leads one to exaggerate the opposition between the two. Fiction is used within a multitude of activities as a means to examine reality, not least in the form of simulating real events. Examples of this can be found in everything between the training of salesmen and military manoeuvres. The dichotomy of true-false represented by the notions of reality and fiction easily overshadows the fact that there is also the *use* of fiction that is in itself an operation in the real world. Thus, too, an actor on the stage is not pretending, as it may appear, but rather is *making fiction*, with real means and for purposes in the real world.

Stanislavski's writings on the actor's art do not build on any idea of a stable self. All the writers on the actor's art referred to here view the self as under development in accordance with the constantly unfolding situation. Neither do the accounts of other writers referred to in this section. The self of the actor in the role unfolds itself in the interaction with the scenic events.

SITUATEDNESS IN A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

So far in this chapter there has been a focus on the situatedness of (scenic) actions. I will now address this situatedness in relation to the identity of the agent/actor. As concerns theatre this is often discussed in terms of the actor's psychological and emotional involvement in the doings of the character. I am going to approach the issue from a different point of view, the *epistemological* aspect involved in the first-personal perspective, a perspective that an actor inevitably applies to the actions of the role. I will set the BSI model in relation to some writers within the phenomenological tradition in philosophy. A fundamental trait in this is a preoccupation with the relationship between perception, identity and I-awareness. However, this is not a way to philosophize on acting in the sense that the aim is to suggest a hidden philosophical underpinning to the ideas about acting accounted for previously. The point is not that this philosophy (or

any) rightfully explains what takes place in theatre practice. What I want to do is only to point out some striking parallels between observations made within two entirely different fields.

One contemporary representative of phenomenology is Dan Zahavi, director of the Institute for Subjectivity Research in Copenhagen. In his *Subjectivity and Selfhood* Zahavi, apart from giving his own views on different questions about subjectivity, consciousness and self-awareness, subsumes ideas on these issues formed by important thinkers within this philosophical tradition, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty. In the passages quoted here Zahavi is apparently much influenced not least by the last. Zahavi's ideas about the self and the others bear resemblance with ideas put forth by Merleau-Ponty in for example the chapter "Autrui et le monde humain" in *Phénoménologie de la perception* (398–419). Nevertheless the reason for my citing Zahavi on these matters is his greater emphasis on the notion of the "first-personal perspective", which will become important in my discussion on "drama without action" later on in this work. Zahavi's study will be used here in connection with some references of my own. In a previous writing, "Stanislavski, Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Acting" I have discussed parallels between some of Stanislavski's observations about the actor's working process and the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. I will return to this later.

As Zahavi remarks at the beginning of his account, today one can observe a rapidly increasing interest within many disciplines in studies of human consciousness. After too long a period of behaviourism and functionalism, Zahavi argues, it has become obvious that one can no longer leave the problem of subjectivity outside the discussion. A mere functional analysis of intentional behaviour is not enough to account for human consciousness. One must take into consideration how this is experienced by the individual, an issue that has always been a central concern within phenomenological philosophy (3).

Zahavi discusses the relationship between consciousness and self-awareness. Behind reflection, he argues, there is a non-reflective consciousness, which renders the reflection possible. Seeing, remembering, knowing, thinking, hoping, feeling and willing something are *eo ipse* being aware of these activities. Consciousness is an intrinsic part of our mental states. Zahavi concludes: "Any convincing theory of consciousness has to be able to explain the distinction

between *intentionality*, which is characterized by an epistemic *difference* between the subject and the object of experience and *selfconsciousness*, which implies some form of *identity*.” (28) It should be noted here that “intentionality” in the phenomenological vocabulary does not stand for the same as “intentional” in the sense an action can be intentional, or deliberate. The phenomenological intentionality has to do with the consciousness or “directedness” involved in the act of perception.

Consciousness is not in need of any transcendent principle of unification, as it in itself is a “flowing unity” (34). It is always consciousness *of* something. Thus subjectivity is not self-enclosed, but is self-transcending in its being directed at an object (51).

In this understanding self-consciousness can be described as the presence of a first-person perspective.

When I consciously taste freshly brewed coffee, touch an ice cube, see a dragonfly, or feel pain or dizziness, the experiences in question are characterized by a first-personal givenness that immediately reveals them as my own. First-personal experience presents me with an immediate access to myself, and it is therefore legitimate to speak of an implicit (and minimal) self-awareness. (61)

Note that the sense of identity and self-awareness in Zahavi’s rendering is constituted by means of how one engages oneself physically in real objects. In the phenomenological perspective, instead of saying that we experience *representations*, our experiences are rather *presentational*, that is, they present the world in a certain manner. The experiential dimension has to do directly with a *first-personal givenness*. This first-personal givenness is inevitable. The idea that there exists a pure third-person perspective is, according to Zahavi, an “objectivist illusion”. To be self-aware is not to think about oneself as a worldless self in isolation. Self-awareness is always awareness of the self as immersed in the world (125–126).

The phenomenological perspective on the self entails an *experiential* dimension, which is closely linked to the first-personal givenness (106). According to Zahavi the first-personal givenness remains unchanged in the stream of different experiences we constantly live through (67). He gives

the notion of consciousness the following definition: "Consciousness is the generation of a field of lived presence" (72).

The Temporal Dimension of Self-Awareness and the Historicity of the Ego

Not least interesting in the perspective on drama and acting we adopt here is the relationship established within phenomenological philosophy between subjectivity and time. Temporality, according to Husserl, is a basic element of self-awareness. It is viewed as "a temporal field that comprises all three temporal modes of present, past and future". This conforms to Husserl's idea of the temporality of consciousness as divided into the three categories of 1) *primal impression* or *primal presentation*, which is how the object presents itself to us in the now-dimension, and 2) *retention*, which makes it possible for us to be aware of the object in its just-elapsed state. Finally 3) *protention*, which is the individual's intentional directedness to the object in the phase that is about to occur (56).

The Self as a Story

The temporality of human perception as described above has subsequently been extended to a similar temporal subdivision of the entire notion of the self. In a *hermeneutical* perspective the self is a narrative construction. When replying the question who someone is, one tells a story comprising certain traits, which one finds most significant. The self becomes closely connected to the story one and others tell about oneself, which also, in Zahavi's phrasing, is "an open-ended construction under constant revision". Zahavi continues: "It is pinned on culturally relative narrative hooks and organized around a set of aims, ideals and aspirations". In this view, the identity is dependent on the social context, which establishes the values, ideals and goals forming the constraints for this story. In this sense, too, one cannot be a self of one's own, but only together with others in a community with a common language. Personhood entails initiation into a language (105).

Ricoeur is one of the proponents of the idea that a person's identity can be formulated as a narrative. In this view the insight I have about myself is inevitably situated within a life story, which tells where I come from and where I am heading. It is also this narrative sequence that makes our actions

intelligible. Narrative has to do with responsibility: Asking for responsibility is asking for narrative identity.

Paul Ricoeur in his *Soi-même comme un autre* has ventured to clarify the notion of narrative identity by means of a distinction between what he calls identity as sameness (*mêmeté*) and identity as selfhood (*ipséité*) (140–166). The distinction refers to the Latin words *idem* and *ipse*. The first, *idem*, refers to that which does not change over time but can be reidentified as the same. However, not all aspects of the identity can be accounted for by a constant substrate of this kind. Hence the second form of identity, *ipséité*, which stands for the subject's experience of herself as an answer to the question "Who am I?" The answer, Ricoeur argues, demands that I can account for the total development of my person, that is, the answer is a matter of an *examined life*. *Ipse*-identity can be accounted for from the third-person perspective, whereas *idem*-identity is connected to a first-person perspective and can never be given an exhaustive answer. Ricoeur has developed his idea about narrative identity into a theory about "*herméneutique de l'ipséité*".

By means of this distinction between two notions of identity Ricoeur attempts to find a solution to the dilemma of having to choose between the Cartesian notion of a stable self and the Humean and Nietzschean concept of the self as subjected to constant change. According to Ricoeur we can avoid this dilemma if we cease to talk about a self defended by the one and rejected by the others and instead talk about a *narrative identity* (Zahavi 108).

Now, one could object that it is possible to tell different and even incompatible narratives about the same life. Furthermore, the narrative might contain fictional parts and the story about someone's life might be deceptive for example by conferring to the person's life a coherence that it does not have. How does one single out true narratives from false ones? The narrative form of identity actually seems to support a kind of relativism, as it makes the identity dependent on the storyteller, and in this way the narrative account, as Zahavi puts it, turns out to be just another variant of the "no-self doctrine". On the other hand, it does not follow from the fact that something is constructed that it is unreal. Zahavi contests the idea that just because the self is a matter of a story under constant revision this would also justify the claim that the self does not exist (110).

As Zahavi points out, Ricoeur, despite being one of the main proponents of

the idea of a narrative self, does not claim that this theory exhausts the question about the identity of the self. In *Temps et Récit* he puts forward the point that the identity of the self also involves an *ethical* dimension. Being someone means to perform acts in a social context, and to be accountable for an act. (114, Ricoeur *Soi-même comme un autre* 341–342) Zahavi also points out that ideals can define identity and that acting against one's ideals might imply a disintegration of one's wholeness as a person (129).³³

While agreeing in principle with Ricoeur's idea about the importance of the narrative for the forming of the self, Zahavi still does not find neither the hermeneutical nor the ethical take on self-identity sufficient to explain it in all its complexity. Rather, Zahavi views self-awareness as a necessary prerequisite for experiencing one's life as a story. Before one can begin such a self-narrative one has to be someone who can differ between oneself and others and can account for one's actions and experiences by means of a first-person pronoun. The experiential dimension of the self precedes the hermeneutical one (114).

With its emphasis on the individual's way to perceive and understand the world phenomenology has often been accused of being solipsistic, i.e. of having a prime concern in the experiences of the singular subject. Zahavi rejects this claim. Through the presence of the other, he argues, one can experience oneself in a third-person perspective: "[...] the self is fully developed only when personalized intersubjectively" (94, 130). This understanding of others is linked to the fact that we immediately identify others as humans like ourselves, and that this differs from the way we experience inanimate objects. In accordance with this, Zahavi also criticizes the idea that we perceive others' behaviour as meaningless until we, through an intellectual process, have attributed a psychological meaning to it (which could be identified as the "theory of mind" doctrine (see page 153). In a face-to-face contact, Zahavi argues, it is a unified whole we are confronted with, not just a mere body. Zahavi here quotes Wittgenstein: 'My thoughts are not hidden from [the other], but are just open to him in a different *way* than they are to me'. The feelings and thoughts of others are given in their expressions and actions. And "the body of another is always given to me in a situation or meaningful context that is supported by that very body" (150–155). Human expressions – Zahavi mentions different

countenances and facial expressions – always occur in a certain context, and “our understanding of the context, of what comes before and after, helps us understand the expression” (166).

Obviously, Zahavi draws heavily on Merleau-Ponty in his reflections over consciousness and first-personal identity. He agrees with Merleau-Ponty when the latter argues that to exist embodied is not to exist as a pure subject or a pure object, but always to transcend the two. Furthermore, action abolishes the division between inner and outer, being actions of “minded individuals”. When we see others performing different tasks, these are immediately given to us as meaningful actions, which also makes it possible for me to interact with them without first drawing inferences about what they are doing. This understanding of others comes from the fact that I am myself not a pure disembodied interiority, but an “incarnated being in the world” (161).

Later on Zahavi’s distinction between basic awareness of others’ mind and *empathy* will be further dealt with (Zahavi 156, 164). The same will be done with his idea about “theory of mind” (179).

Rhonda Blair also addresses the idea of the historical self when writing the following: “The strong link between imagination and action in training for the actor are reflected in our very being as a species. Extended consciousness builds on core consciousness to allow us to develop an *autobiographical self* (66).

The phenomenological Idea of Perception, Consciousness and Self-Awareness as Applied to a Play

It is constitutive for theatre that it uses living persons, the actors, as a basic part of its material.

Being a human being the actor has two aspects: the third-personal aspect in which the public meets him and the first-person aspect of his own self-awareness. Moreover, the person which he is about to act, the character, has these two aspects as well.

The actor, just as little as any artist or even any human being can just rid himself of his first-personal experience of himself

Now, if the phenomenological philosopher tries to *describe* the components making up human identity, the actor makes practical use of such components in order to *present* human identity on the stage. In his role the actor cannot

only appear as himself with his own personal identity. This, however, does not mean that his own identity must be done away with, which would certainly be an impossible claim. Rather, his own identity must transcend itself into forming the identity of a person who perhaps has a name and a "history", but who does not actually exist. This is what the actor has to do with the text. Thus the actors playing X and Y in Strindberg's *The Stronger* do not stand for any two "absent" ladies by these names. The ladies do not exist and as a consequence they cannot also be "present" or "absent". The actors embody them out of their understanding of the situational context that Strindberg has hypothetically put the characters and their sayings into, as well as of the stage directions by which he has indicated some of the things they hypothetically do. Fiction thus does not indicate some absent other elsewhere, but emerges in the situation onstage in and through action. On the other hand, one should be observant of the difference between fiction as it is dealt with by the actor who is about to play a part in relation to this part as perceived by the spectator attending the performance. In the latter case this is certainly a matter of infiction in Saltz's phrasing: "Fiction functions as a cognitive template that informs an audience's perception of reality on stage, structuring and giving meaning to the actual events that transpire on stage." (203)

For the spectator the actor merges with the role (and still remains the person he is). But, according to the writers on acting methodology referred to previously, for the actor this blend does not take place in any person-to-person relationship but in the actions-to-circumstances relationship. When an actor works in the mode described by these authors, the *character* is hardly an issue at all. All emphasis is laid on situational and intentional issues – given circumstances, objective, target, and so on. Louis Jovet urges his students to observe this difference between the actor's and the audience's point of view on the role of Tartuffe, for example (29–37). In Jovet's view the actor has to concentrate on the actions of the character and how he can find motivations for these in the given circumstances, which in turn allows the public to form their conception of the character. Like many other writers, but perhaps more outspokenly than most of them, Jovet points to the assymetric relationship between how the actor perceives the character and how this is done by the public. They all insist that in order to make a role merge with an actor, this has to be achieved in and through *action*, and nothing else.

Finally, even though in accordance with Saltz the audience experiences the role in the actor and at the moment of play, and even if, as Saltz puts it, fiction in theatre is not an end unto itself (203), the events on the stage are more or less consciously assessed in relation to the actor's and the public's understanding of reality. This is also consistent with Donnellan's claim that actions in life and actions on stage are conditioned in similar ways.

In the case of *The Stronger* it is the information given about the years preceding the two women's encounter in the café, plus the events unfolding themselves in the duration of the play that are targeted in the *action analysis*. This story is formed partly by what is expressly accounted for by the characters (the character X in this case), and partly by inferences that present themselves on the basis of the information given (of the type that X in *The Stronger* has two children). One of the children can handle a cork pistol and is therefore likely to be at least three years old. Thus X's identity includes that of a mother of two children. From another passage one can conclude that the two women knew each other before the son was born. Thus they have known each other more than three years. In consequence their relationship according to the given circumstances spans a rather long time. Finally, new information about the characters of a play is added with every performance of it, not least as a result of the actors' gradually deepening understanding of the background, situations and intentions of the characters.

Every step in this process brings with it additional premises for new inferences, i.e. additional constraints on the narrative. As Hans Georg Gadamer points out, making fiction is not only a matter of free imagination. A necessary prerequisite for the creation of it is knowledge about reality that is shared, in this case, by the the actor and the public. Thus, reality itself puts constraints on a story, irrespective of how "fantastic" and "non-realistic" this is. As Gadamer puts it: For the writer, free invention is always only one side of a communication, which is conditioned by what is pre-given as valid.

Für der Dichter ist die freie Erfindung immer nur die eine Seite eines durch vorgegebene Geltung gebundenen Mittlertums. Er erfindet seine Fabel nicht frei, auch wenn er sich das noch so sehr einbildet. Vielmehr bleibt bis zum heutigen Tage etwas von dem alten Fundament der Mimesis-

Theorie bestehen. Die freie Erfindung des Dichters ist Darstellung einer gemeinsamen Wahrheit, die auch den Dichter bindet. (*Wahrheit und Methode* 1 138)

The necessity for coherence in scenic fiction is due to the need 1. to enable the actor to really *act* in the performance, 2. for his co-actors to take part in the same narrative, and 3. in order for the audience to be able to understand the scenic activities on the basis of their own experience of existing in the world.

Stanislawski uses the notion of "I am" to designate the final point in the actor's work with the text, the moment when the actor can make the actions of the character his own ("Stanislawsky's System" 17). Arguably, this is, to use Fauconnier and Turner's vocabulary, the way the blend takes place in the first-personal dimension.

In this respect Stanislawski's observations also nicely conform to Ricoeur's idea about the "narrative self". On the other hand, Stanislawski also gradually came to the conclusion that it is not enough to form the character only on the basis of biographical data given by the author. He, therefore, even in an early work admonishes the actor to "visit" the venue of the action, namely, in his own example, Famusov's house in Griboyedov's play. Stanislawski suggests that the actor should "go into" the house, "walk" up and down the stairs in it, "enter" different rooms, and make himself acquainted with the physical specificities of the objects in these rooms as they present themselves to his well-informed imagination. That is, the actor forms the identity of the role, Chatksky in this case, by physically – Zahavi would say experientially – relating himself to the milieu. Conversely, by the same token, he also makes this milieu present, first to himself, then to the spectators. This, again, is not a process of pure imagination, but rather, in Stanislawski's writing, a way to investigate the reality, i.e. that which in Gadamer's phrasing is "binding on the writer also". (Re)creating the world and (re)creating the identity appear as just two aspects of the same process.

This way of describing the actor's work with a role is consistent with the phenomenological idea about a self, which is formed by the way the individual intentionally engages himself in the world, in a process by which the world, the intended (in the phenomenological sense) object, also presents itself to the subject.

This could also be instantiated with the mime actor performing the routine to walk against a strong wind. By experientially reacting as if he was walking against the wind (by applying his knowledge about the physical aspects of this) he makes this wind "present". In so doing he simultaneously creates the identity of someone walking against the wind.

When Stanislavski later developed "the analysis on the floor" this can be understood as a way to capture the actions of the role in the core of their assumed situational context. In this, Stanislavski's method to the full extent applies to what in Zahavi's account is described as the "experiential" dimension of identity. The actor discovers the elements of the situation by physically engaging himself in the assumed situation, i.e. by experiencing it in its form of *primal presentation*, which also means in its *retentional* and in its *protentional* form. It is in these three temporal dimensions that the actor finally goes through the scenic events as they present themselves in the succession of performances. It is also in these temporal modes that the actor's work is experienced by the public in the third-personal perspective.

Stanislavski and other writers repeatedly underline the importance of interaction with the social context for the forming of the scenic identity. In the case of the theatrical performance the coactors represent this social context. This is consistent with Zahavi's idea of the self as formed in a social context.

As has been stated previously, Stanislavski's idea of the actor builds on the situatedness of identity within what in the phenomenological vocabulary is a "narrative ego", as well as in the social context represented by the other roles/the co-actors, and finally in the experiential context of the scenic situation.

As these entities are subject to constant change, Stanislavski also displayed an advanced conception of the "performativity of the self". This idea in Stanislavski is very consistent with Judith Butler's view, formed in a discussion about the concept of "woman" that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (33). Virginie Magnat has addressed this side of Stanislavski in an article entitled *Theatricality from the Performative Perspective*. She here points out that in these observations about the dependency of the self and the character on the situation Stanislavski actually foreshadows what was subsequently to become the foundation of modern performance theory (151).

Stanislavski's observations about the actor's work, which is often reductively discussed as a normative idea of the actor's emotional engagement in the role, rather stands out as a description of acting a role as the creative (re)construction of identity. What Stanislavski, as well as the other writers about acting referred to here, is writing about are prerequisites for forming human identity, which in their rendering have striking similarities with observations about human identity and self-awareness made within phenomenological philosophy. The ideas of the referred to writers that deal with the situatedness of acting correspond well to the descriptions made within phenomenological philosophy as to the occurrence of identity and self-awareness and the way these two relate to the world.

Thus, also conversely, the above descriptions of the work with a role in a BSI setting can be seen as pragmatic support for some basic ideas within phenomenological philosophy. If one wants to describe how a role gains an identity on the stage, basic concepts within the vocabulary of phenomenological philosophy stand out as strikingly adequate.

The actor experiences the world he is conjuring up as a real presence in the way a person according to phenomenological philosophy apprehends the world. If a theatrical performance is seen as a game, taking place in the real world, this also dissolves any strict dichotomy between the real and the fictional. Saying this is consistent with Gadamer's description of the relation between fiction and reality, i.e. with the idea of that which is "pregiven as valid" or the "common truth" that is "binding on the writer also". The actor who "visits" Famusov's house, i.e. makes a simulated visit to a Russian house with certain specifics, does not only gather information about an unreality, but rather about elements of reality in the context given by the fictional narrative. The actor has to have a certain knowledge about the world in order to undertake such a "visit". And the aim of this visit, as Stanislavski describes it, is a way to gather further knowledge. Subsequently it is this sensual and embodied knowledge that is transferred to the public.

What for example Stanislavski insists on is that the fictional situation emerges, not through a display of faked "make-believe" reality, but through experiential adaptation to an assumed reality unfolding itself in real time (*My Life in Art* 466). By means of the "creative if" the actor assumes that he really finds

himself in the given situation. When adapting to the "given circumstances" he provisionally *believes* in these circumstances, i.e. assumes that they really are at hand, making use of his own experience of reality, and *adapts* his scenic actions accordingly. "In the blend", to use the vocabulary of Fauconnier and Turner, he merges his knowledge about reality with the assumed circumstances laid down in the narrative. In so doing he also has the possibility to process his human experience of reality in a new context.

Furthermore, I find Zahavi's accounting for the phenomenological perspective on the interaction between self and world consistent with Wittgenstein's idea about a play as a model of how meaning occurs in human interaction. According to the phenomenological view, identity is closely tied to the capacity of having a language. It is only when I have acquired a language that I can form a personal identity within a social context. The phenomenological idea also accounts for how things and objects acquire meaning through the subject's intentional directedness, for how our perception of other humans differs from perceptions of inanimate objects, and how I as a human being can immediately perceive acts of others as intentional acts like my own. In this context Zahavi also makes reference to the same text by Wittgenstein with which I open this essay.

What is not specifically addressed in Husserl's/Zahavi's account is the purposeful action, which here is represented by the "I" in the BSI formula. (Again "intentional" in the phenomenological vocabulary has another meaning than the one adopted here. In the phenomenological vocabulary it has more to do with perception than with volition. It stands for the way the consciousness is "directed to" the object in the act of perception.)

It is Ricoeur who has developed the idea of intended action and its relationship to fiction in for example in *Du texte à l'action*.

In an earlier text I have pointed out intriguing similarities between Stanislavski's writings and the hermeneutic of Paul Ricoeur. Both writers share an idea about mimesis as a way to explore reality. They also share a hermeneutic approach to the text, and both subscribe to the Aristotelian idea of action and plot as the most significant elements of this. Essential for both writers is the way the narrative reflects the temporal and causal structure of reality. They also share the idea of mimesis as a conditional, an idea that was first formulated by Aristotle in contradistinction to the idea advocated by Plato of mimesis as an

(inferior) duplication of reality. Both Stanislavski and Ricoeur underline the creative potential of this conditional. And although Stanislavski in contrast to Ricoeur acknowledges the importance of the author's intention with the text for its interpretation, in practice he supports the idea later also elaborated by Ricoeur of the text as forming an autonomous "world" of its own, whose context can be "visited" or "inhabited" (Rynell 125).

The intention with the comparison made here is not to suggest that phenomenological philosophy has had any importance for the development of situated acting. The point of the comparison is to indicate interesting parallels between experiences made within two widely different fields. One of them is practical, the other theoretical. The vocabulary developed within phenomenological philosophy stands out as a means to make tacit knowledge within theatre and acting graspable from a theoretical approach, and thus it also becomes a means to bridge the gap between practice and theory.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed some important writers on the actor's art³⁴.

1. All the writers take the situation as the point of departure for scenic action. An important representative here is Stanislavski. I want to avoid the erroneous way of reading him as the theoretic he always stressed that he was not, and apply the approach to his texts that more corresponds to their pragmatic intent. I find the following propositions:

his most important discoveries go beyond what is described as scenic realism or "psychological realism";

he does not prescribe from theoretical viewpoints, but bases his teaching on practical experience of the importance of "given circumstances" (situatedness), and on a way to find/communicate its meaning on the basis of a fictive text;

he expressly is not the author of the ideas his system is based on, but they had been part of actors' (tacit) knowledge long before him, possible for any actor to find out himself, and

Stanislavski is not a proponent of any idea about a stable self, and his idea of the necessity of coherence in the actor's work is based on the conditional character of fiction, as well as on the urge for elementary human and artistic control of his work.

Concerning the other writers on the actor's art I have found

that they refer primarily to their own practical work and not to any authorities;

that they arrive at similar conclusions as Stanislavski, but without referring to him as an authority;

that for all of them focus lies on action and situatedness, not on emotionality, identification with the role, and the like, and

that for none of them depicting, illusion, realism etc. is the central issue.

I also question the uncritical way of seeing practice as a mere application of theory.

2. I have made a comparison between situated acting and some ideas within phenomenological philosophy, finding notable similarities.

All of the writers on the actor's art referred to in this chapter treat the work on a written text, and the relationship between this and the work on the stage. It turns out that according to the experiences of all of them the *actions* of the roles/actors have the greatest importance for this process. The actor assumes the possible objectives, or a possible target, and uses this *goal-directedness* as a primal guiding line for his sayings and doings in the name of the character. (One example of this is Donnellan's claim that even the most brilliant script is unintelligible without a target.)

The actions are described as *situated*. With his insistence on the importance of the three tenses – past, present, and intended future – of the (scenic) actions Stanislavski accords the actions a historical dimension. This is consistent with the description made here in the previous chapter of the scenic actions in an action-based play as complying with the BSI pattern. Another way of describing this temporal contextualization is Stanislavski's suggestion to the actor working on the text by Griboyedov to imaginatively visit the house where the action takes place in the narrative account. Other writers, such as Cohen and Donnellan, give particular emphasis to the directedness of the actions towards future goals, but without denying for that sake the importance of circumstances in the past.

The authors on the actor's art that have been referred to stress the *embodied* character of the scenic actions. Stanislavski rejects the idea of a division between body and mind, adopting a holistic view of this relationship. A similar view could be said to underlie the views of others of the writers referred to.

The work on the text is thus described as based on an embodied understanding of the actions of the role. The actor should put himself in the shoes of the character, taking his own first-personal perspective of the actions ascribed to character in the text (or in an interpretation of this). Thus, according to all the writers, acting stands out as an instantiation of *empathic* understanding, pursued in the form of physical embodiment.

This is made possible through the *intersubjective interaction* between the actor and his co-actors, as a concretization of the interactions between different figures in the play.

As the script is a fictitious text, this understanding takes the form of a

simulation. But the authors referred to stress that the most important aspect of fiction is the element of the *real* in the scenic play. (Stanislavski writes about a *real*, productive action, Cohen makes the comparison with the sportsman who really plays baseball instead of trying to look as if he played baseball, Hornby talks about how it is the real play that creates the illusionary effect, Penciulescu, in different ways, underlines the element of the *real* in acting ("la réalité du jeu"). Donnellan underlines that "pretending is not action", and so forth.

All the writers describe the work on the text and its embodiment as a process of *investigation*.

All also underline the *first-personal* character of the actor's work (Stanislavski's notion of "I am", Cohen's recommendation that the actor makes the objectives of the character "his own" several examples in Penciulescu concerning the importance of the first-person perspective, Donnellan's insistence on the need for the actor to find out and adapt himself to the "target" of the role).

Penciulescu makes an interesting statement when arguing that the essential quality for an actor is to engage himself physically and mentally in a process that aims to make the external world pertinent and perceptible, and that this is also a way to make himself pertinent and perceptible. The passage cited is also consistent with the other writers' insistence on specificity, concretisation and commitment in the work on the scenic actions, on the essentially *real* character of these, and how the role emerges out of the actor's preoccupation with his doings in interaction and context. Penciulescu talks about acting as a kind of transcendence, and his statement bears strong affinities to how within *phenomenology* first-person awareness is related to the person's apperception of phenomena, which is also seen as related to *consciousness*. Such connections between the pragmatics of acting and actor training on the one side and ideas within phenomenological philosophy on the other, are also addressed in the final section of the chapter.

Thus, to conclude, the writers on the actor's art referred to demonstrate that the actor's work on a written, action-based play deals with the following issues, among others: action, goal-directedness and intention, situatedness and contextualisation, embodiedness, empathic understanding and intersubjectivity, the relationship between real and fictional, simulation as a way to produce knowledge, first-personal perspective, perception in relation to self and identity.

In conclusion it could be argued that *mentalism* rather than realism is the main

characteristic of the way the authors on the actor's art referred to deal with the relationship between text and embodied action. By mentalism I understand that these authors appeal to "mental entities", such as "ideas, mental representations, and the like" and that they crucially presuppose the ability to "represent mentally things, events, people, and ideas" (Daddesio 39). It is thus a stance that is opposed to behaviourism. At an early stage this mentalism was connected to introspection in the form of Stanislavski's "affective memory", a concept that on the other hand, as has been pointed out, gradually lost its original importance in his writings and teaching, for the benefit of the more extrovert "given circumstances", objective, superobjective, and so on. The other authors either implicitly or outspokenly, sometimes emphatically, are opposed to an introspective attitude on the part of the actor. The focus for the actor, according to them, should always be directed outwards, towards the goal or "target" of the actions, towards the game and the co-actors.

In the final part of this section I have discussed experiences from acting and acting education in relation to grounding ideas within phenomenological philosophy, most particularly as regards the emergence of consciousness, first-personal awareness, and what has been called "the historical self". I have pointed out striking parallels between these theories and experiences in connection with acting and acting education.

The work on an action-based text is a practical preoccupation with a row of elements that today also attract great interest in an important part of cognitive science, as well as in the related philosophy of mind. As mentioned above, writers like Carnicke and Blair call the process an actor goes through when working on a fictional text a *cognitive* process. In consequence, too, it seems appropriate to widen the discussion about work on a play beyond that about different acting styles, degrees of realism etc. that it has often been confined to within theatre theory. A closer look also seems motivated at theories within cognitive science that could have a bearing on the embodied work on the stage departing from an action-based text.

In the next chapter I am going to address how terms relating to the notion of action, such as goal-directedness, intention, situatedness, embodiedness, and intersubjective understanding are treated by some authors within cognitive science, as well as by authors within the philosophy of mind. This will also give opportunities to return once again to phenomenological philosophy.

4. ACTION, MIND AND COGNITION

ACTION AND RECENT THEORIES WITHIN PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE

As theatre deals with human action, it also inevitably intersects with the realm of action theory and ideas about action developed in various scientific disciplines.

The issue has been subject to important treatises within the philosophy of mind in the course of the last fifty years. A treatise that exerted far-reaching influence within analytical philosophy was Ryle's *The concept of mind*. Notably, the issue about free action and the questions whether reasons can be causes have been treated by Donald Davidson in his "Actions Reasons and Causes", as well as by authors such as G.E.M. Anscombe and A.I. Melden, among many others.

In Elam's definition of action, which I have chosen as the point of departure here, there were two notions that could be seen as key concepts. One is "conscious"; the other is "intention". According to Elam, behaviour is an action if and only if it is conscious and intentional. Now, both consciousness and intentionality raise difficulties of explanation, and as a consequence these notions have largely been absent in writings about psychology during the 20th century.

In so far as action is viewed as dependent on human will, it was not to the same extent the focus of the dominant theories in psychology, behaviourism and psychoanalysis, owing to the mechanistic orientation of the former and the idea within the latter that ultimately human doings are steered by the unconscious (Persson).

Consciousness

In the nineteenth century Wilhelm Wundt and his disciples introduced experimental methods in psychology. Even after a few decades, however,

experimental psychology was dominated by behaviorism, a view that denied the existence of mind. Psychology should now restrict itself to the relation between observable stimuli and observable behavioural response. "Talk about consciousness and mental representation was banished from respectable scientific discussion" ("Cognitive Science" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

In the USA the notion of consciousness already began to disappear from the scientific discussion at the beginning of the 20th century with the rise of behaviourism, while still remaining of limited scientific concern in Europe. In the 1960s the grip of behaviourism weakened, but it was not until the 1980s that there was a major resurgence of scientific interest in the nature and basis of consciousness. Since then the issue has been subject to rapidly growing interest, and this has brought forth a flood of books and articles, as well as the emergence of speciality journals, professional societies and international conferences. "Despite the lack of any agreed upon theory of consciousness, there is a widespread, if less than universal, consensus that an adequate account of mind requires a clear understanding of it and its place in nature." (Van Gulick)

This is how Owen Flanagan expresses what seems to be a common observation: "Consciousness exists, but it resists definition". One possible background, according to Goldman, is that one frequently restricts criteria of consciousness to behaviour.

Consciousness is also related to the issue about the self. According to Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* the self is the perspectival point from which the world of objects is present to experience, and it is this coherence of experience that also warrants the meaning and intelligibility of the world.

An interesting set of recent theories about consciousness is not least those that go beyond the neural and place the natural locus of consciousness at the micro-physical level of quantum phenomena. In view of the different aspects one can attribute to the phenomenon of consciousness – physical, neural, cognitive, functional, representational and higher-order ones – Van Gulick concludes that a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon will require theories of many types (Van Gulick *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Intersubjectivity

There are several ways to deal theoretically with the human capacity for understanding other individuals' mental states. All of them in one way or another also address the concept of consciousness.

In Alvin Goldman's view consciousness is a "folk psychological" conception, which he supports, and he accords great importance to it for cognitive theorizing (368–69, 375–76).

The concept of "folk psychology" is disputed and has given rise to much discussion. According to one definition "In its broadest sense, folk psychology is the information that lay people have about the mind. Although the scope of folk psychology is thus vast, contemporary discussion of folk psychology in philosophy and cognitive science focuses mainly on the portion of folk psychology that guides the prediction and explanation of actions." (Nichols 134). Many theorists maintain that folk psychology is of crucial importance for our capacity to understand, explain and predict the behaviour of others.

According to a grounding view within behaviouristic theory, introspection does not have a privileged status as a way to understand mental processes. In this vein Wilfrid Sellars considered it a myth that the content of our mental life is just presented to us. Instead he came up with an alternative myth: originally our ancestors understood each other in a purely behaviouristic way. Eventually they learned that inner episodes were causes of external behaviour. First, they just applied this idea to others, i.e. learned to "read" the behaviour of others in this way. Later they learned to apply it also to themselves, and finally they exercised mental state self-attribution without theorizing at all from their behaviour (Ravenscroft). The point with this (admittedly false) account of the evolutionary background is that, nevertheless, it makes our understanding of others a matter of theory and not of introspection. The idea that folk psychology is a theory has become known as "the theory theory" (Nichols 134–35).

The question is now to what extent "the theory theory" is right about our inner states. In philosophy one way to deal with this problem has been to examine platitudes that everyone accepts, for example "persons in pain tend to want to relieve that pain. Persons who feel thirst tend to desire drinkable fluids", and the like. According to Churchland and others such platitudes are the constituents of what is known as folk psychology. These could be subject

of investigation and thus be refuted or confirmed by "mature science". Some theories have altogether refuted folk psychology. According to "Eliminative Materialists" we have to uproot the ontology of folk psychology entirely in the same way we did with the ontology of the supernatural. Eliminative materialists maintain that explanatory failures and limitations of folk psychology indicate that mature science will be entirely at odds with folk psychology.

Others accord great importance to folk psychology and its undeniable predictive abilities. Jerry A. Fodor maintains that folk psychology predicts behaviour better than any of contemporary scientific approaches and that this strongly supports the view that folk psychology is right and that it will comply with mature cognitive science. Nichols establishes that when it comes to how we should explain the lay capacity for psychological attribution, prediction and explanation, the platitude approach does not suffice. In support of this he refers to the advanced capacity people generally possess of attributing emotions on the basis of facial expressions. In a similar way, he writes, the capacity to attribute goals from motion cues could not be explained by a platitude theory. He refers to recent experimental evidence, which supports this, and concludes that prediction, explanation and attribution could probably not be a matter of applying platitudes to instances. He acknowledges that much information underlying folk psychology is not accessible to the consciousness, but willingly adopts the thesis that it is at least partly tacit, and he sees this as an assumption that is already reasonably established within cognitive science (137). One challenge to the "theory theory" came with the advent of the so called "simulation theory". According to this one does not have a *theory* of other persons' states of mind, but rather one pretends to have the mental stages of the other, and then simulates his/her decisions on the basis of what oneself would have done in a similar situation. The resulting decision is then used to predict the behaviour of the other. According to Nichols, simulation theory has many advantages in relation to the "theory theory". On the other hand, the simulation theory cannot account for all our capacity to attribute, understand and predict the actions of others. An assumption that has reached wide acceptance today is therefore that the capacities of "folk psychology" "will require a hybrid account, appealing both to simulation processes and to tacit knowledge about mental states" (138).

The new interest within the philosophy of mind for our capacity to understand

and predict others' actions took as its point of departure dissatisfaction with explanations of mental processes based on introspection. Ironically, the late development of this theory has brought with it a reassessment of introspection. Alvin Goldman suggests that introspective access might provide the basis for concepts of belief and desire, which should imply that theory of mind depends on introspection rather than the reverse (Nichols 139). Goldman argues that relevant evidence for consciousness can be expected from multiple sources: if a fit can be established between phenomenology, psychology and neurology, this could be accepted as the evidence required. According to Goldman scientists have provided evidence for a neuronal underpinning of consciousness.

The idea of folk psychology includes an idea of human capacity to predict and anticipate others' actions. In Osvath and Gärdenfors this capacity is discussed in an extended form: that of how human beings are able to make long-term plans for the future. The writers argue that anticipatory planning and cognition are necessary for the development of human interaction, as well as of human language. This is yet another example of how issues pertaining to the development of cognitive abilities take the form of hypothesizing about ontogeny. The example also testifies to how the capacities addressed within the "folk psychology" discussion have gained acceptance as a point of departure for important discussions in other fields too.

Jordan Zlatev defines intersubjectivity as "*the sharing and understanding of others' states of consciousness*". He includes not only beliefs and other "propositional attitudes" in this, but phenomena like emotions, attentional states and intentions. Zlatev also sees the *re-enactment* of others' actions, both overtly as imitation and covertly in imagination, as ways to achieve intersubjective understanding ("On Intersubjectivity and Mimetic Schemas").

Thus, one could add, theatre and acting is a way to deal with intersubjective understanding, both from the actor's perspective and from the spectator's. The basic concept is that the actor makes the someone else's situation his own and tries out the actions of that person in their situational context, in order to finally submit the result to public appraisal, i.e. to the assessment of other human beings. It is this that makes acting a unique and highly sophisticated form of intersubjective understanding.

THE THEORY OF JOHN R. SEARLE

A philosopher who has extensively treated theories with a bearing on scenic action is John R. Searle. His ideas about intentionality bear similarities with the ones put forth by phenomenological thinkers. He is also a philosopher whose ideas are compatible with ideas within cognitive science referred to a little further on.

After having been the most important representative of Speech Act Theory since J.L. Austin, John R. Searle has extended this theory to a more general philosophy of mind. In doing this he touches upon a series of issues that have a bearing on theatre, and on dramatic writing, as well as on the connection between that and scenic action. I find Searle's discussion of elements like consciousness, intentionality, free will, the connection between intentionality and meaning, the self, his concept of "background" and the aspect of familiarity, what he calls the "construction of social reality", and rationalism of particular interest in this context. Like Habermas, Searle essentially defends the project of Enlightenment and stands in opposition to a relativism that he associates with post-modernist theory.

Searle's fierce defence of human action, freedom and responsibility, is interesting, as is his insistence on the crucial importance of phenomena like self, consciousness, intentionality, all of them explicitly or implicitly referred to in Elam's definition of action.

I will here make a brief summary of those of Searle's basic ideas that have a bearing on action, as these are addressed in some of his most important writings. I will take as a starting point an interview given for the French magazine *Le débat* ("Langage, conscience, rationalité").

In the article Searle outlines the background of his philosophy: His ideas in *Speech Acts*, his first book, could be traced back to the classic logician Gottlob Frege, in whom Searle sees the inventor of the philosophy of language later developed by Russell and Moore. In the course of the last decades, maintains, the philosophy of mind replaced the philosophy of language as the most important field of philosophy. He saw the development of neuroscience as a background to this. It is in this context that one should also see Searle's critique of the idea of the brain as a computer. Searle sees an important difference between the human brain and a Turing machine³⁵ or a computer in that the human brain can produce

conscience and intentionality. Both of these concepts, henceforth, became crucial for his philosophy: According to him early pioneers of the philosophy of mind, such as Ryle and Wittgenstein still belonged to an anti-mentalistic tradition, and the philosophy of mind in Wittgenstein became inseparable from the philosophy of language. An important shift came with what Searle calls the defeat of behaviourism and the insight that consciousness and intentionality are indeed possible and relevant objects of study.

Another feature in modern philosophy that Searle criticizes is what he calls the Cartesian obsession with epistemology, i.e. the idea that the most important task of philosophy is to respond to the challenge of scepticism.

It is with his book *Intentionality* (1983) that Searle passed from the philosophy of language to the philosophy of mind. Language in his view is an extension of the expressive capacities characteristic of mind. The notion of *background* is crucial in this context. He defines the background as a group of capacities that are in themselves not representational, but without which no representation is possible. In *Mind, Language and Society* Searle thus exemplifies the following: in order to know that Clinton is the president of the United States or to intend to go skiing one must have the belief that America is a republic and that there are ski areas within reachable distance. In *Rationality in Action* he characterizes the Background as a set of abilities that do not themselves consist of further intentional states. He sees the components of the Background as social and biological at the same time.

The self

Another discussion that is crucial for the understanding of the process from text to scenic action has to do with the possibility for the text to contribute to the forming of an identity, a self, which in its turn, of course, first and foremost brings with it the question as to the existence and status of the entity we call "a self". This discussion affects both the character and the actor and the relation between the two. For if we cannot identify the self of a person, how then can we at all talk about an agent, someone who performs actions?

Searle takes as his starting-point a critique of Hume's negation of the human self. According to Hume, when we look into ourselves, we do not find a coherent entity, but only a stream of particular experiences. Searle finds this idea an

almost accepted truth among philosophers, and he has previously supported this view himself. Now he argues that Hume's account of the self as just a bundle of perceptions needs revision. All personal experiences, Searle maintains, come as part of a unified conscious field. Hume, he argues, cannot be right in thinking of each perception as separate and distinct, for then we would not be able to put together different perceptions such as feeling the shirt on one's body at the same time as feeling the taste of beer, seeing the sky etc. Searle insists that at any given point in time all of a person's experiences must be united into "a single conscious field" (*Rationality in Action* 77–78). He here makes a connection between self, consciousness and freedom. There must be an animal agent, he maintains, who is this if and only if it is a conscious entity that has the capacity to initiate and carry out actions under the presupposition of freedom.

"Agency requires an entity that can consciously try to do something" he states in italics. He also makes a clear connection between volition, conation and cognition: "... the notion of agency was introduced to account for *volition*, but the same entity that has volition must also have *conation* and *cognition*. The agent must, in short, be a self" (83–84). "The existence of voluntary, intentional actions", he claims, "requires a conscious agent who acts. Otherwise, the action would just be an event that occurs". The agent must be a self and by this be understood as an entity capable of perception, memory, belief, desire, thought, inference and cognition generally. Agency is not enough for rational action (91–92).

In *Mind* Searle adds some specifications. The self, as he describes it, is a purely formal notion. It does not involve having a particular type of reason or a particular type of perception. Searle still agrees with Hume that the self is not an object of our experiences, but argues that we have to *postulate* (my italics) a self in order to make sense of the character of our experiences. He specifies his critique of Hume by referring to the latter's conception of experiences as consisting of "impressions" and "ideas", whereas, according to Searle, Gestalt psychology has taught us that perceptual evidences do not come in discrete units, but rather have a holistic character. Searle does not maintain that the personal sense of a self suffices as an evidence for its existence. The personal sense of a self does not flesh out the purely formal requirement necessary to supplement Hume's accounting for the possibility of free rational action.

Searle on Consciousness

Consciousness consists, according to Searle, of processes that are inner, qualitative and subjective and thus it has a first-person ontology, as opposed to third-person phenomena like natural phenomena such as heat, liquidity or solidity. Consciousness processes, he insists, are biological processes. This is the importance he accords to consciousness: "[...] much of what we do that is essential to the survival of our species requires consciousness: you cannot eat, copulate, raise your young, hunt for food, raise crops, speak a language, organize social groups, or heal the sick if you are in a coma." (*Mind, Language and Society* 63)

His ideas about consciousness also serve as a basis for his conception of the self and of intentionality. Searle argues that conscious states only exist as experienced by an agent. Furthermore, he maintains that the consciousness or a coherent thought presuppose that both a beginning and an ending of the thought be part of a single, unified field of consciousness, united by memory (*Rationality in Action* 77–78).

Moreover, there is a necessary link between consciousness and rationality: "Without consciousness you cannot get into the game of rationality at all" (143). He notices that in recent time consciousness and its relation to the brain attracted increasing interest and become more commonly accepted in philosophy and neuroscience. But he also acknowledges that so far we have no answer to the question as to what exactly the neuronal processes are that cause these conscious experiences (270–272).

Intentionality

Searle's understanding of intentionality is not the same as our understanding of intention as we apply it here as being tantamount to "deliberation" or "doing things intentionally". Thus, it is neither the kind of "intention" that fits into the notion of BSI. Still intentionality in Searle's sense has to do with a "directedness" of the human mind that contributes to giving meaning to entities and events and thus becomes important in the discussion originating in Wittgenstein's observation about a play, a drama, as a model for meaning production in language.

For Searle intentionality is a biological phenomenon and the philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind.

The foundation of Searle's theories of speech acts was intentionality. He

claims that all he has done since has been an application of the idea of this. When he asked himself about intentionality he detected that there was a fundamental homology between the structures of speech acts and those of intentional states.

Intentionality, he argues in *Mind, Language and Society*, is that feature of the mind by which mental states are directed at, or are about, of, or refer to, or aim at, states of affairs in the world. It is a peculiar feature in that the objects need not actually exist in order to be represented by our intentional state (64–64) .

As many have observed, Searle in his theory about intentionality comes close to the notion of “intention” in Husserl and his followers within the phenomenological tradition of philosophy (“Phenomenology” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

But Searle also deals extensively with the notion of “intention” in its more teleological form.

He makes an interesting distinction between what he calls *prior intentions* and *intention-in-action*, where the latter stands for our capacity to hold on to the same intention through the entire action.

In Searle’s vocabulary *prior intentions* are those intentions we have before we do something, for example raising our hand to vote for a motion. Then

p.i. (that I raise my arm and that this p.i. causes that I raise my arm)

+

Intention-in-action is an intention one has when actually performing the action.

+

“I will act on my prior intention, and thus have an intention in action whose conditions of satisfaction are that very intention-in-action should cause the bodily movement of my arm going up. ”

Or:

i.a. (my arm goes up and this i.a. causes that my arm goes up).

+

I have an intention-in-action whose conditions of satisfaction are that my arm goes up, and that this very intention-in-action causes that my arm go up. (*Rationality in Action* 44–45)

Action and the Freedom of Will

Initially, Searle saw a parallel between action and perception, volition and cognition, only later to reject this idea. Action, he said to himself, has a specific structure. It is not possible for us to act without a presupposition about liberty and choice, regardless of whether we believe in freedom or not. He gradually found that in intentional causality there is a crucial element, a gap between the reasons for an action and the execution of the decision. Here he finds the whole problem of rationality, which according to him could be described as the manipulation of intentional contents under the presupposition of liberty. It is also because of this that one cannot speak about intentionality without returning to traditional questions about the freedom of the will.

Jacob and Jeannerod draw heavily upon Searle in their discussion about action. But they also provide an interesting section about action and causation. According to them, action is a movement "one of whose causes is internal to the agent" (34). In general, they define action as "intentional behavior" (35) and they quote Davidson's claim that action has reasons, not causes. They also question the idea that action must involve a belief-desire pair, and argue that there are "subintentional acts", acts that are not deliberate, premeditated acts, but still are subjected to the will of the agent. One example of this is when one taps one's feet to the rhythm of music. They make use of Searle's notion of intention-in-action and claim that "Arguably, not all actions have prior intentions, but all have an intention-in-action" (37).

I find Searle's theory of action and the specifications made by Jacob and Jeannerod consistent with common experience from actor training and with the use made of the word by the authors on the actor's art in Chapter three.

Construction of Social Reality

In his *Mind, Language and Society* Searle goes into what he terms a previously neglected field of philosophy, the philosophy of society. (He makes a distinction between this and political philosophy.) The question he poses himself is this: How can living creatures on the surface of the earth create a new reality? This reality is objective in the sense that it does not depend on anyone's opinion for its existence, but subjective in the sense that it exists only because we think that it does. He mentions money, property and marriage as examples of this

social reality. I would argue that when seeing a play we can often study how the process of establishing social reality takes place. Objects and actions are accorded social value depending on the person involved, as well as the manner in which this comes about.

Fictional Discourse

While finding Searle's theories about consciousness, the self, intentionality etc. very fruitful for the discussion about action and intention on the stage, I find Searle's ideas about fictional discourse a little more problematic.

Searle addresses the issue of fictionality in a famous, early essay about the correspondence between language and the world. Searle declares that while treating literary fiction he does not treat the concept of literature, a distinction similar to the one made here between the artistic and purely fictional aspects of theatre. Searle's aim is to explore the difference between fictional and what he calls "serious" utterances. He maintains that when stating something in a fictional narrative one has no commitment to any external truth, which is constitutive of a "serious" statement. What for example Iris Murdoch does in a novel is to *pretend* to make assertions, which are, in fact, no assertions at all, as they contain no facts about the actual world. Searle's use of "pretend" here should not be confused with "deception". Miss Murdoch, he argues, is engaged in a "nondeceptive pseudoperformance". The author of a work of fiction "pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the representative type". "Pretend", Searle observes, is an intentional verb, and thus of necessity the illocutionary intentions of the author are that which makes a text a fiction. As a consequence, it also seems absurd to Searle that a critic completely ignores the intention of the author, since this intention is already necessary to identify a text as a novel, a poem and even as a text. Fiction is for Searle "extralinguistic, nonsemantic conventions" that break the "vertical" connections between fiction and the real world. Telling stories is a special kind of "language games" in Wittgenstein's sense. There is a set of conventions that separate the activity of making fiction from the one of telling lies. But it is only the illocutionary act of telling that is pretended, whereas the utterance act is real (325–327).

When it comes to theatrical performance it is not so much the author who is doing the pretending. The text, rather, consists of serious directions to the

actors as to how they should perform assertions and perform other actions. The actor pretends to be someone he is not and to perform speech acts and other acts of the character. What the playwright writes is a "recipe of pretence". The public "shares in the pretence". It is the pretended reference that creates the character and the shared pretence that enables us to talk about the character as some real existing person. By pretending to refer to a real person one creates a fictional person. By pretending to refer to people and to recount events one creates fictional characters and events. Coherence is crucial for the acceptability of the narrative, but there is no universal rule for coherence (328–331).

Searle's departing point is obviously an ontological question related to the discussion about speech acts inaugurated by Austin. In this context it might be important to make a distinction between the characteristics of a descriptive text dealing with actual states of affairs on the one hand and that of a fictional text on the other. It is this distinction that dominates his approach to fiction, not, as it seems, an urge to explain the essence of fiction. Typically, Searle finally asks himself "Why bother", why attach any importance at all to texts that are only fictional? He finds part of the answer in the "usually underestimated" fact that imagination plays a crucial role in human lives.

Now, despite Searle's specification the distinction between fictional and "serious" seems unnecessarily idiosyncratic, not least in view of the fact that one actually can be more serious with a fictional text than with one that is experimentally referential. And despite his specifications as to his use of the word "pretend" it does not seem very appropriate as it nevertheless takes on a kind of pejorative colouring. Apart from objections concerning these points I have no problems with the main tenets put forward by Searle. The chief objection has to do with the way to approach the important issue of human imagination only as a formal question about reference. Human apprehension of a state of affairs in the world is a matter of interplay between what could be called "objective observation" on one hand and what is more or less accurately remembered, assumed, imagined, calculated, anticipated etc. on the other, to the extent that at the moment of observation one can often not isolate the one from the other. This does not imply that there is no difference between what is true and what is just mental representation, imaginations etc. But it seems as if focus on the dichotomies true-false, real-pretence etc. have blurred the necessity of mental

representations for the apprehension of facts. As will be addressed later on, the acknowledgement of the importance of mind models has also brought with it other approaches to questions about fictionality than the one inspired by the urge to distinguish between fictional and "serious" in Searle's sense³⁶.

The Application of Searle's Ideas to Drama and Acting

There has been a considerable scholarly interest in the applicability of speech act philosophy to theatre, maybe due to the fact stated above that Austin's ideas about locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts could seem a fruitful approach to the use of text in the actor's work. Now, it seems as if speech act theory in the form given to it by Searle continues to yield interesting points of view on theatre, acting and dramatic writing.

Searle is a fierce defender of external realism. He also defends elements that support the concept of action applied by proponents of the BSI model, for instance Stanislavski. Such concepts are consciousness, free will, to some extent also the notion of a coherent self, or rather what he paraphrases as "a single, unified field of consciousness". But the idea of "social facts" and the "construction of social reality" also seems fruitful to apply on theatrical performance and thus to acting alike.

Modality and Inferentiality

Modality and inferentiality play a vital role in the action analysis of a text and in the work on the floor, in short in the construction of scenic fiction, whereas it is felt less in the stage-to-audience relationship. Considerations about the fit between fiction and real life are a natural element in the process of creating fiction, whereas this fit, once created, is perceived more "in the blend" by the audience.

Counterfactuals are also central in the theory about "conceptual integration" or "conceptual blending" put forth by Fauconnier and Turner. According to them

Counterfactual scenarios are assembled mentally not by taking full representations of the world and making discrete, finite, known changes to deliver full possible worlds but, instead, by conceptual integration, which can compose schematic blends that suit the conceptual purposes at hand. (218)

Fauconnier's and Turner's idea of conceptual integration is not restricted to fiction, but is described as a basic capacity of human thinking with a wide scale of different applications. Conceptualisation in general "has counterfactuality available and typically uses it as a basic resource" (87). Fauconnier and Turner demonstrate that in human thinking talking in terms of counterfactuals is not simply a way to talk about something unreal. Counterfactuals constitute an integral part of our thinking in many everyday situations. The use of counterfactuals is a consequence of human capacity of double-scope blending, and thus, they argue, the importance of counterfactuals for human thinking cannot be overstated (230–231). In consequence, one could also add that the basic human capacity for double-scope blending is a precondition both for the creation of scenic fiction and the way it is understood by the public. This, on the other hand, does not mean that the theory of conceptual integration suffices to account for fiction, or scenic fiction.

The acknowledgement of the importance of modality is not tantamount to the idea of fiction as representing an "absent" reality. In his essay *Infiction and Outfiction* David Z. Saltz criticizes what he calls a "dualistic understanding of representation" (203). According to this idea scenic events acquire meaning only insofar as they apprise the audience of some other, absent event. In contrast, Saltz argues that a spectator, rather than repressing the reality of the theatre in order to attend to the fictional narrative, understands the latter as an integral part of the actual events taking place on the stage. Saltz draws on Wittgenstein here, and the latter's concept of "seeing aspects" and "seeing in". Wittgenstein illustrates this with a drawing that could represent alternatively a duck or a rabbit, dependent on how the drawing is viewed by the observer. Saltz also refers to Gombrich's *Meditation on a Hobby horse*, where the author argues that if a child calls a stick a horse this does not mean that the stick is a sign signifying a horse, but rather that the stick by its capacity of serving as a "substitute" becomes a horse in its own right. Thus Saltz can also argue that, unlike sculptures, actors are not merely props in other people's games of make-believe, but are themselves game-players (a view that is strongly agreed with here). Referring to Stanislavski's idea (following Pushkin) of "given circumstances" Saltz concludes that just as the concepts "duck" and "rabbit" provide schemas to organize Wittgenstein's drawing, so the fictional narrative

of a play provides a schema for how the audience perceives the game the actors are playing. Hamlet is metaphorically a prince in Denmark, and literally a "prince" in the game played on stage. According to Saltz the relationship between narrative and performance runs two ways, one being what he calls "fiction in" and the other what he names "fiction out". Saltz argues that theories about theatre have tended to overemphasize the latter, the way meaning is *extracted from* art works, at the cost of the former. I have also addressed this issue previously, for example by arguing in the first chapter in favour of seeing the actor not only in the acting-to-audience perspective (fiction out) but also as the person who forms the game in preparation and rehearsal, as well as in the here-and-now interaction with the coactors (fiction in) (Saltz 203–220).

Still, Saltz, in spite of his criticism of the dualistic view of fiction, does not relativize the difference between the two. What he argues is that the way they relate to one another at the moment of performance is different from how this is often described. How we experience a rabbit in a drawing is a matter of the schemas we provide ourselves at the moment of seeing the picture. But these schemas are based on experience. Thus also, without experience of a real horse, the child would have been unable to make a "horse" out of the stick. Imagination is not free in the sense that it is independent of experience, as Gadamer underlines. The making of fiction and the understanding of it is a matter of shared experience. It is also here that modality comes in. The "prince" in the game of Hamlet is this partly as a result of a modality that the audience can follow and accept on the basis of experience of the world.

EMBODIMENT AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Aspects of "Cognitive Science"

In the last decades of the 20th century new ways to deal with questions about the human mind also brought with them new approaches to issues about human action. One background was the development of computer technology and the idea developed within what was labelled Artificial Intelligence (AI) that neuronal processes could be simulated by machines. This was also a background for the emergence of Cognitive Science, a cross-disciplinary study of how information is represented and processed in the human brain, and how knowledge in this field can be useful for computational and other artificial systems. Cognitive Science

originated in the nineteen-sixties and -seventies, when similar problems came into focus in different neighbouring disciplines: besides AI, philosophical epistemology and philosophy of mind, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and linguistic and cognitive anthropology. It became an overall aim to understand the function of cognitive processes and how they are encoded in the brain. Another one was to simulate these functions by means of computers (Gärdenfors Kognitionsforskning). The term Cognitive Science was coined by Christopher Longuet-Higgins in 1973.

The emergence of cognitive science brought with it several important changes in the approach to the human mind. One of them was that issues about the human mind that had long not been central to important currents of modern psychology and that were extensively dealt with in *a priori* ways in the philosophy of mind became the subject of empirical investigation. Owen Flanagan maintains that the deepening of our understanding of the mind can no more be considered a subfield of philosophy proper. Philosophers must join the interdisciplinary quest carried out within cognitive science (Flanagan). There was a first-generation cognitive science that was centered on ideas about symbolic computation. In the late nineteen-seventies came a turn that goes under the name of "the second-generation cognitive science". A new emphasis was laid on the dependence of concepts and reason on the body, as well as on the importance of imaginative processes, such as for example of metaphor, prototypes, frames and mental spaces (77).

Initially the idea that computers could be capable of performing mental processes led to the idea that just as the computer is dependent for its performance on the program, human thinking is also considered as a program. This idea was called functionalism. The critique of functionalism was that the theory could not account for the element of consciousness involved in mental processes. One of the critics, John Searle, came to the conclusion that a computer lacks intentionality and hence cannot understand the meaning of the sentences it processes.

The entire idea that mind and thinking is a matter of symbol processing was soon to be challenged. An idea about the importance of imagery for thinking was developed within linguistics, largely as a criticism of Chomsky's idea of an innate, universal grammar. In the view of Chomsky's strongly influential idea,

syntax was the main object of study, while the semantic and pragmatic aspects of language were disregarded. In contrast to this George Lakoff, together with Ron Langacker, came up with a semantic theory that replaced the uninterpreted symbols of computationalism with "image-like representations that have an inherent meaning". Our use of more or less conventional metaphors was seen as examples of such images (Gärdenfors *Cognitive Science* 5–7).

Cognitive Science: Challenges to Theories of Computational Representation

References to cognitive science will here be used in two ways: Firstly, in order to account for certain features in work with action-based drama. I have demonstrated in the previous chapter that many of the features involved in work on action-based drama are subjected to increased interest within contemporary cognitive science. In this way also cognitive science explicates the complexity of human action that is dealt with in practice in the acting on an action-based text. But it will also be argued that important cognitive scientists give support to the importance of intention and situatedness that has persistently remained a central part of acting methodology at least since Stanislavski. Finally it will be argued that this yields promising possibilities as concerns possibilities to conceptualize experiences made within the practice of theatre.

Secondly, the cognitive perspective will serve to clarify certain differences between action-based drama and what is here called "drama without action".

As has been demonstrated by McConachie in *Performance and Cognition*, the development within contemporary cognitive science has already seriously challenged ideas that have gained prestige within theatre theory. My contention will be that it ultimately challenges important presumptions behind the practice of modern theatre as well.

But in order to achieve this I will have to account for my use of the word "cognitive science" here, as well as of what theories within this multilayered field serve the purposes I set for myself.

If one goes to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the following definition will appear: "Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary study of mind and intelligence, embracing philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, linguistics, and anthropology".

The definition bears witness to the width of the field, due not only to the

number of disciplines involved, but also to diversities regarding the ways in which the respective disciplines are pursued in different quarters. This also means that *cognitive science* is a notion that can mean very different things, and that approaches and concepts that are accepted within some forms of cognitive science could be banished within others. I will first expand this in a little more detail and then give some specifications as to the use I make of the notion within contemporary theatre research. Finally, I will specify my own use of the notion in the present dissertation.

The intellectual origins of Cognitive Science lie in the mid-1950s, when complex representations and computational procedures gained focal interest among researchers in different fields. From an organisational point of view Cognitive Science originated in the nineteen-seventies, when a Cognitive Science Society was founded and the journal *Cognitive Science* was first issued. After the long domination of behaviourism within philosophy and psychology a field of artificial intelligence (AI) was started. This allowed for what became called "computational modeling" of the human mind. Researchers began to form and test computational models that were intended to be analogous to mental operations.

Interestingly, in its ensuing presentation of goals, methods and directions within Cognitive Science *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* holds on to this original perspective, arguing the following: "Ideally in cognitive science, computational models and psychological experimentations go hand in hand, but much important work in AI has examined the power of different approaches to knowledge representation in relative isolation from experimental psychology". "The central hypothesis of cognitive science is that thinking can best be understood in terms of representational structures in the mind and computational procedures that operate on those structures." However, in the final part of the article the author, Paul Thagard, also acknowledges that this idea of the human mind as first and foremost a matter of representation and computation "is an empirical conjecture and might be wrong". He reviews some researchers who have challenged this idea, and whom he calls "critics of cognitive science". Among them one can find John Searle, who has already been rather extensively referred to here, but then not as an opponent to cognitive science, but conversely, as it will turn out, a philosopher whose

ideas are extensively compatible with basic tenets within cognitive science. How can that be?

The answer can be found in the list presented in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* of objections raised by him and others to the computational model of mind and cognition. The list includes a long row of negligences allegedly committed by traditional cognitive science. Such negligences include the importance of emotions, consciousness, the physical environment, the contribution of the body to human thought and action, the social influence on thought and mind, the possibility that the human mind could be a dynamic system, not a computational one, and finally what is called "the mathematical challenge". According to the latter there is evidence that the human mind cannot be computational in the standard sense, and that as a consequence the brain must operate differently.

Such objections have given rise to other directions within cognitive science that are not accounted for in the encyclopedia referred to, but that will be reviewed here a little further on. *The Stanford Encyclopedia* ends this section with a quote from Thagard's *Mind*, where the author argues that all these challenges can be best met "by expanding and supplementing the computational representational approach, not by abandoning it".

In *Mind* Thagard starts with a computational model of the human mind, what he calls the *Computational-Representational Understanding of Mind*, or CRUM (10). This is the theme for the first part of his book. In a second part he addresses different challenges to CRUM under the headline "Extensions to Cognitive Science". He here treats concepts like emotions, consciousness, bodies, the world, dynamic systems, and societies. In connection with the section that deals with consciousness he puts the question as to whether machines are likely to be conscious in the future. When writing about embodiment he demonstrates that "embodied" interaction with the environment is tested within robotics, which could also make robots perform a kind of "situated actions" in the sense accorded to the notion by Suchman, among others. He accounts for Searle's famous argument that computers are purely syntactic engines lacking human semantic capabilities, and thus also cannot be taken as models for the human mind. He further admits that computational models up to now have tended to ignore the details of the physical environment (95). Thagard asks whether CRUM

is not actually a middle layer of explanation and questions if we really need it. His answer is that, in principle, a robot could have semantics to go with its syntax, and he envisages a development where robotics takes environmental factors more into account. He also sees a possibility that in the future CRUM be expanded with ideas about dynamic systems, and it is not least in this that he sees the alternative to expand CRUM rather than to abandon it.

Thagard displays a humble and self-critical attitude towards the challenges to the computational model. The ideas as to how CRUM should be able to answer these challenges are to considerable extent located in the future. Now, Thagard seems well anchored in the tradition of computer science. It seems rather unsurprising that in these quarters perspectives on cognition and mind strongly connect with the present state of development of the available technology, which as yet does not allow for the intergration of notions like consciousness and empathic interaction. Neither does it seem to be anything really repulsive in Thagard's and others' belief that in the future one will increasingly narrow the gap between computers and human cognitive abilities.

But this eventuality is certainly not an issue in the present dissertation.

Suffice it to conclude that in spite of his basically mechanistic approach to cognitive science Thagard in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* as well as in his own *Mind* seems perfectly conscious of serious challenges to the computational model of cognition, treating the arguments against his own position with striking respect. Thus neither does it seem controversial even from his point of view to deal with such representatives of cognitive science who are sceptical about the possibilities to account for human cognition in terms of representational computation.

I will here draw upon ideas of such cognitive scientists as Lakoff and Johnson, Gärdenfors, Varela, Tompson and Rosch, Fauconnier and Turner, as well as on such theories that, according to representatives of cognitive science, have a bearing on cognitive science, such as for example the theory of "mirror neurons". I will refer to such theories that are mentioned as challenging the idea of cognition as representational computation, which includes five of the seven challenges listed by Thagard in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, namely "the consciousness challenge", "the world challenge", "the body challenge", "the social challenge", and the "dynamical system challenge". Like cognitive

scientists often do I will also refer to philosophers who do not expressly join the cognitive science community, but whose ideas are compatible with important tenets in this field. Chief of these is, as already mentioned, John Searle in the present text, who is critical about cognitive science as based on representational computation, but who addresses questions that become crucial in "second generation" cognitive science. But even a thinker such as Alicia Juarrero fits into this category, with her dynamic system approach to theories about human agency. Not least, I will address an interest one can find among some contemporary cognitive scientists and philosophers in phenomenological philosophy. This strand will be represented here by scholars such as Dan Zahavi, Francisco Varela, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson.

Importantly I do not treat Cognitive Science as a coherent theoretical field, something it apparently is not, and I will not go into much detail as to how the ideas of different scholars I refer to fit into each other. Neither am I trying to form for myself a coherent theory about human cognition, which, yet again, is not the central aim of this dissertation. It will be sufficient for the main purpose, namely the one of discussing important properties of drama with and without action, respectively, to point out the increasing scholarly interest in the aspects of human cognition mentioned in the above list of challenges to a mechanistic concept of the human mind. *One contention will be that the acknowledgement of these challenges brings with it important implications for the discussion about drama and theatre.*

Thus also, during the period of the writing of this dissertation, cognitive aspects have begun to find their way into contemporary theatre research, not least through the publication in 2006 of Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart's groundbreaking *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*. Subsequently one of the contributors to this anthology, Rhonda Blair has issued a treatise of the actor's art entitled *The Actor, Image, and Action. Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*. In this way the word "cognitive" has already gained acceptance as a viable notion within theatre theory.

Hence also, while "cognitive" and "cognition" within computer theory are linked to techniques of representation and computation, there is another use of the term which is connected to such concepts as "consciousness", "interaction with the world", "embodiment" and "intersubjectivity". In an interview Lakoff

talks about "first" and "second" generation cognitive science, treating these as tantamount to "disembodied" and "embodied" cognitive science, respectively. Typical of "first generation cognitive science" is, according to Lakoff, the idea that intelligence consists of computer programs that manipulate meaningless formal symbols. The authors also claim that "many textbooks still portray cognitive science in that way" (*Edge*) This was said in 1999 and, as has been demonstrated previously, textbooks with the same content also appear today. Lakoff himself often uses the concept of "neural computation", which would announce another form of computationalism, where the brain only takes the place of the computer. But Lakoff also repeatedly underlines sensory-motor interaction with the world as a necessary element of embodied cognition. And both in the interview referred to and in *Philosophy in the Flesh* he mentions Merleau-Ponty as one of few philosophers whose general ideas are compatible with his own about bodily cognition. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) is one of the outstanding followers of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenological philosophy. Thus, apparently, despite his emphasis on neurological processes and "neuronal computation", Lakoff does not leave such elements as situatedness and context out of his theory.

Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception*, where he treats such issues as human interaction with the world and intersubjectivity, is also frequently referred to by other cognitive scientists. Dan Zahavi, whom I extensively cite in Chapter three is heavily influenced by Merleau-Ponty. Influential publications in contemporary cognitive science, such as Varela, Thompson and Rosch and Thompson, treat Merleau-Ponty as a particularly important influence. This testifies to the great interest accorded to this thinker within important parts of contemporary cognitive science. But there are indeed also important exceptions. Thagard does not mention Merleau-Ponty, but, on the other hand, among "challenges" to representational-computational theory about cognition he lists some of the topics Merleau-Ponty focuses on.

For Varela, Thompson and Rosch cognitive science stands at the crossroads "where the natural sciences and the human sciences meet". They find it necessary to go beyond the opposition between the two, in order to prevent a deepening rift. Thus, just like Paul Thagard above, they advocate an ecumenic openness between the two extremes. "To deny the truth of our own experience in the

scientific study of ourselves”, they argue, “is not only unsatisfactory; it is to render the scientific study of ourselves without a subject matter”. “Experience and scientific understanding are like two legs without which we cannot walk” (13–14).

Lakoff and Johnson on Embodiment

In *Philosophy in the Flesh* Lakoff and Johnson take as their departing point a critique of some basic ideas in Western philosophical tradition, which in different ways also concern the understanding of human action: most prominent of these is the Cartesian idea of a dualistic person with a mind separated from and independent of the mind. Lakoff and Johnson also criticize the Kantian idea of a “radically autonomous person with absolute freedom and a transcendent reason that correctly dictate what is and isn’t moral”. Furthermore, they criticize the idea of a utilitarian person in conscious and economic rational control of his doings, as well as the phenomenological thought that everything that could be known about human mind could be the subject of phenomenological introspection. And, finally, they deny the existence of a poststructuralist person and a “decentred subject for whom all meaning is arbitrary, totally relative, and purely historically contingent, unconstrained by body and brain”. They consider that “the grounding of our conceptual system is shared embodiment and bodily experience creates a largely centred self, but not a monolithic self”. An important target of their critique is Gottlob Frege and his followers within analytic philosophy, who support the idea of an objective meaning, defined by the external world. According to Lakoff and Johnson our “conceptual systems grow out of our bodies” and meaning is grounded “in and through bodies” (5–6).

According to Lakoff and Johnson the embodiment of reason via the sensorimotor system is of crucial importance because it helps explain the fit between our concepts and the way we function in the world. The idea of this embodiment leads to a philosophy of embodied realism. This idea stands in opposition to the idea that our knowledge is just an independent reflection of an objective, mind-free reality. It also entails a rejection of a strict subject-object dichotomy (93).

In fact, it also implies a critique of Searle’s representationalism. According to Lakoff/Johnson, Searle’s model with a mind-brain reference to an objective

reality is unable to account for the way in which the gap between world and mental representation is bridged (99).

Lakoff and Johnson maintain that, contrary to what has generally been acknowledged within analytical philosophy, metaphors constitute an important and, in fact, necessary part of our language use. Lakoff/Johnson also demonstrate how historically a great proportion of vital philosophical concepts in fact presuppose metaphors or are even in themselves metaphoric. But particularly in our everyday language use metaphors occur in combination with forms of commonplace knowledge. Thus for example purposes are referred to as destinations, actions are motions, people are supposed to have destinations in life, and so on. These metaphors are parts of "the cognitively unconscious" and generally we do not have any control over the use of them (60–73, 255).

According to Lakoff and Johnson the idea of embodied knowledge forces us to give up the idea of one single truth. This, on the other hand, does not entail any kind of relativism. Embodiment, they maintain, takes place on multiple levels, and not all truths can be expressed on only one of them. But even if there is not one single level that can account for truth, the multiple levels enable us to make several correct descriptions of a state of affairs, depending on the nature of our understandings. Then "each different understanding of a situation provides a commitment to what is real about that situation" (109).

The idea of the embodied mind is also incompatible with the mind-as-computer theory typical of early cognitive science. This idea was already anticipated in traditional analytical philosophy, where human thinking was extensively conceived of as a matter of symbol processing. In opposition to this Lakoff/Johnson maintain that the brain uses neurons and not language like symbols. Cognitive science cannot start a priori with a theory of meaning that is given in terms of reference and truth, without any kind of embodiment. Our entire conceptual system is formed by our brains, bodies and bodily interactions and there are no ideas or thoughts outside and independent of bodies and brains (266).

This view of thinking and the forming of concepts as embodied, as well as the idea that meanings and concepts come through embodied experience, also brings with it important consequences for the view of human self (442). According to Lakoff/Johnson what we call "our inner lives" has to do with several

kinds of experience related to living in a social world with the kind of bodies and brains we have: our attempts to control our bodies and the way they get out of control, the way conscious values come into conflict with our behaviour, the way disparities occur between how we experience ourselves in contrast to how others do it, the way we take external viewpoints, when imitating other people or trying to adopt their views, and lastly our inner dialogue and the way we are engaged in inner monitoring. The authors conclude that we have no single and consistent way of conceptualizing our self that covers all these aspects (267).

Lakoff/Johnson repeatedly trace *a priori* beliefs in modern philosophy back to Descartes. In the tenet that could be derived from him that all thought is conscious, that the structure of mind is directly accessible to itself and that no empirical research is necessary for establishing knowledge of the mind they see four basic pillars of Anglo-American philosophy still today. Such ideas, they argue, have also affected important theories within modern linguistics.

The ideas about how concepts are formed within embodied processes make Lakoff/Johnson also see the property of grammars as properties of embodied neural systems, and as a consequence syntax is not seen as autonomous, but as existing by virtue of embodied symbolization relations (499). They argue this as part of an extensive critique of Noam Chomsky's philosophy. In Chomsky, arguably the most influential linguist of the 20th century, they see a Cartesian essentialist: language, in their understanding of Chomsky, must have an essence and this essence is the idea of a "universal grammar" (470–480).

Analytical philosophy, as well as post-structuralist philosophy, are in Lakoff/Johnson's view inconsistent with all that second-generation cognitive science has discovered concerning mind, meaning and language. They accuse the former of having missed the possibility that the body could ground intersubjective meaning, and the latter of believing that any account for meaning that would not be stable over time must always be arbitrary and subject to change (468).

One target for Lakoff/Johnson's critique is the behaviouristic idea behind Quine's epistemology. According to Quine, one of the most influential Anglo-Saxon philosophers since the Second World War, behaviourist psychology provides the basic tools for epistemology. It is seen as a matter of how an external world stimulates human sensory receptors. The idea does not presuppose the existence of consciousness, and its object of study is behaviour rather than mind.

The stimulation of sensory receptors is thought of as objective and independent of any interpretation. This and related ideas are judged by Lakoff/Johnson "as far away as one could imagine from the kind of empirically responsible philosophy we envision" (461). With this they also reject the idea that they identify with analytical philosophy from Frege on that one can talk about truth conditions and meaning as independent of human psychology, as well as Frege's idea of a realm of disembodied senses standing in a kind of objective relationship with objects and categories in the world. They also question the habitual dichotomy made by Frege and others between objectivity and psychology, seeing for example language understanding as a result of the commonalities of our bodies and our bodily and social experience of the world. Thus, they conclude, psychology is not only a matter of subjectivity.

Along with analytic philosophy, Lakoff and Johnson also criticize basic tenets within poststructuralist (or post modern) philosophy: that of a complete arbitrariness of the sign, the idea of *differance*, i.e. meaning as a matter of binary oppositions among free-floating signifiers, the purely historical contingency of meaning and the strong relativity of concepts. They show how some meaning is motivated, not arbitrary, and how meaning can emerge from pre-existing conceptual metaphors. They argue that conventional metaphorical expressions are cases of motivation rather than of arbitrariness. They question the idea that signs only come in pairs and that each pair must be interpreted as opposites. Any pair of signs, Lakoff/Johnson argue, can be interpreted as any form of opposition at all, including, for example, reversed oppositions in an ironic understanding, and thus there is nothing that fixes the interpretations based on such oppositions. In contrast to the relativism of post-structural thinking and the idea that science is only an arbitrary imposition of sign system Lakoff/Johnson argue that convergent evidence achieved via different methods makes science escape the risk of just being an arbitrary narrative (462–468).

Finally, some remarks on Lakoff/Johnson's view of empathy. For them the idea of Multiple Selves is an important metaphor. The ability to project onto someone else, already acquired in early childhood through imitation, is then developed into the capacity for empathy. The subject is projected onto another in a hypothetical situation: "If I were you...". They describe this as a way to metaphorically conceptualize the subject to the selves of others. They differ

between advisory projection, meaning the projection of my own values onto someone else, and empathic projection, which means the inverse process (280–84).

The importance of the general idea of embodied knowledge in connection with theatre is first of all that theatre, by its very nature, is embodied, and that what takes place on stage is embodied action. What we witness onstage is no less than the very process of how conceptualization takes place in and through practice. This relationship between action and concept is not addressed in *Philosophy in the Flesh*.

Lakoff and Johnson do not specifically address *action*, the central concern of this dissertation. They do not go into much detail about issues like context and situatedness either. Nevertheless, in this book they address several features that are important in the work on a theatre text. Thus their basic idea that meaning is always embodied easily connects with the fact that the aim of the work on a text onstage is to produce embodied meaning. Their idea that the embodiment of meaning is based on sensorimotor interaction with the world seems very compatible with the one recurrently expressed by the authors on the actor's work referred to in the previous chapter, about how meaning onstage occurs through concretion and direct, real action. As underlined by Lakoff and Johnson themselves, this opens up a favourable attitude towards phenomenological philosophy, which here and elsewhere has been pointed out as an interesting field for discussion about the practice of theatre and drama as well. Their criticism of behaviouristic psychology is notable, not least because the pragmatics of acting described in Chapter three has, until rather recently, been developed against a backdrop of predominantly behaviouristic scientific views of the human mind. Their criticism of analytical philosophy because of the idea that one can treat truth values and meaning as independent of human psychology serves a similar purpose of taking mental factors into account that are crucial in the practice of acting and actor training and that previously have extensively been banished from scientific discussion. Their idea of an "empirically responsible philosophy" brings experience into the centre of the discussion, which is interesting from the point of view that, like empiricism, pragmatics, including acting and actor training, is also ultimately monitored by experience.

Finally their idea of empathy as a projection of the subject onto others in a hypothetical "if I were you" situation also has a bearing on acting.

The views put forth by Lakoff and Johnson have not been uncontested. One of the contributors to McConachie and Hart, Tobin Nellhaus, sees their theory has a shortcoming: the image schemas and metaphors they write about often appear as givens. In this Nellhaus sees an essentialism and a kind of decontextualisation. Rather, Nellhaus stresses the importance of social determinants behind the forming of metaphors and image schemas (91). Zlatev in his "Embodiment, language and mimesis" objects that Lakoff and Johnson's definition of "embodiment" has no real place for central concepts like conventionality and representation (312). Sonesson argues that it remains unclear how the different kinds of embodiment Lakoff and Johnson distinguish actually link to meaning, as opposed just to neurobiology ("From the Meaning of Embodiment..." 91). I am not going to go deeper into this discussion here. Neither am I going to follow the development of Lakoff's ideas in his later writings. One reason to confine myself to this extensive reference to *Philosophy in the Flesh* is the huge influence this book has exerted on cognition-oriented theatre theory. Thus for example virtually all contributors to McConachie and Hart make references to Lakoff and Johnson. On the other hand, as is also demonstrated in the above mentioned anthology, there are several other cognitive scientists who treat issues like embodiment, sensorimotor interaction with the world, connections between cognitive studies of consciousness and phenomenology, and empathic understanding. In this respect Lakoff and Johnson contributes to a trend within parts of cognitive science to go against long accepted ideas about the human mind. Lakoff/Johnson write about the empathic projection as a kind of metaphor. In recent years there has been a debate going on about the so-called Theory of Mind (TOM) as a necessary feature for understanding not only other minds, but for human cognition generally, not least for the understanding of meaning in language. Theory of Mind is one way to conceive our ability to place ourselves in the situations of others, to "put oneself in the shoes" of someone else.

The interest in intersubjectivity has been subject to a new boost as a consequence of partly an increased interest in empathy as a means for cognition, partly of a novel finding within neurology, the discovery of the so-called "mirror neurons".

Empathy is often identified with an emotional relationship to other people. This however is only one way to apply the concept. Walter G. Stephan differs between three forms of empathy: cognitive empathy, reactive empathy and parallel empathy. Cognitive empathy is defined as knowledge about for example a group, its cultural practices, norms, values, beliefs etc. Reactive empathy is compassion-related emotions arising from feelings of concern for the suffering of someone else. Parallel empathy is the parallel positive or negative reaction of a group, and takes the form of for example members in one group having negative emotions towards members of another group, or being conjointly positive for example when winning a competitive game.

Cognitive and emotional empathy could also be defined thus: *cognitive empathy* the ability to know what someone else is feeling and, *emotional empathy* the ability to feel what someone else is feeling (UCSF).

E. Thompson (1999) takes his point of departure in the phenomenological idea of the human mind as not confined within the head, but something that includes interaction with the interpersonal world of the self and others. He sees the consciousness of the self as founded on empathy. In *Empathy and Consciousness* he stresses that "the embodied mind is intersubjectively constituted at the most fundamental levels" (4). Thompson addresses two ideas developed within the philosophy of mind and psychology and which both deal with our ability to understand the intentions of others. One is the so-called "theory theory" (TT), the other "simulation theory". According to the first one we possess a commonsense or folk-psychological "theory of mind" enabling us to explain and predict human behaviour. According to the simulation theory (ST), mind reading does not come from a psychological theory, but from our ability to mentally simulate another person or to project ourselves imaginatively into someone else's situation. He accounts for how scholars preoccupied with the theories about the so-called Mirror Neurons (see below), for example Gallese and Goldman, criticize TT for being just a cold theory that mainly focuses on our intellectual capacities while leaving other means for the understanding of others' minds aside, he sees empathy as a special case of mental simulation. As for himself he also finds the simulation theory unsatisfactory. Instead, he propounds the idea developed within phenomenology about the importance of affective engagement. According to this view it is crucial for the understanding

of others that we first recognize them as persons, and as “living bodily subjects or embodied agents” (12). It is interesting here to include these considerations by Thompson, as he brings the idea of TT and ST closer to ideas developed within phenomenology, in a deliberate attempt to create a meeting ground for Anglo-American philosophy and continental European phenomenology.

In “On intersubjectivity and mimetic schemas” Zlatev argues that *intersubjectivity* stands at the very centre of the understanding of meaning in language: “I will argue that intersubjectivity serves both as a precondition for and, on a higher level, as a consequence of language use”.

Furthermore, Zlatev sees intersubjectivity as “*the sharing and understanding of others’ states of consciousness*”. On the basis of this, Zlatev has formed his own idea about “mimetic schemas”, defined as “body-based, pre-linguistic, consciously accessible representations” (301). Notably, Zlatev sees consciousness as a necessary ingredient in these body schemas, as he also does in his general theory about language. In this he also criticizes Lakoff and Johnson’s idea of the “cognitive unconscious”. He criticizes these authors’ idea of pre-linguistic *image schemas*, a category which is claimed to play a crucial role in the “grounding” of language. Lakoff and Johnson regard these as non-representational, either interactional or neural, which, according to Zlatev, “leaves the representational (symbolic) character of language still to be explained” (301).

Mirror Neurons

The idea of *mirror neurons* is important, not least because it provides evidence of a neurological substrate underlying mental phenomena traditionally addressed within psychology and the philosophy of mind.

Gallese accounts for how in the nineties he and other researchers found in macaque monkeys a particular set of neurons, which were activated during the execution of purposeful, goal related hand actions, like grasping, holding or manipulating objects, and which turned out to discharge also when the monkey observed similar hand actions performed by another individual. The neurons, which are located in the ventral premotor cortex, area F5, were called “mirror-neurons”. Part of these turned out to generalize across different ways of achieving the same goal, thus allowing for “a more abstract type of action coding” (36). This brings Gallese to the conclusion that a link must be established

between the observed agent and the observer and that there is an *embodiment* of the intended goal that is shared by the agent and the observer: "Whenever we are looking at someone performing an action, beside the activation of various visual areas, there is a concurrent activation of the motor circuits that are recruited when we ourselves perform that action." (37)

The upshot is that action observation implies action simulation. In addition: "It appears therefore that when we observe goal-related behaviours executed with different effectors, different specific sectors of our pre-motor cortex become active. These cortical sectors are those same sectors that are active when we actually perform the same actions." (38)

This means that when a person observes other acting individuals, he/she can immediately recognize them as goal-directed agents like themselves, because the same neural substrate is activated.

Starting from this neurological standpoint, Gallese investigates how actions are represented and understood. He then puts neurology in relation with empathy as described in a classical tenet of phenomenology. Empathy, he recalls, is an English translation of the German word *Einfühlung*, which was introduced by the psychologist Theodore Lipps in 1903 and was originally applied to aesthetic experience, the attitude of the observer meditating a work of art. Later Lipps also used the concept to describe intersubjectivity as a kind of inner imitation of others. When, for example, he observes an acrobat walking on a suspended wire Lipps describes it thus: "*I feel myself inside of him* (Ich Fühle /sic/ mich so in ihm)." Gallese refers to a further development of the idea of empathy carried out within phenomenology. Gallese here quotes Husserl, according to whom the intelligibility of the movements of others is due to the fact that the body is not perceived as a material object, but as something alive. In Gallese's understanding empathy is grounded in the experience of our lived-body and this experience enables us to directly recognize others as persons like us, and not only as bodies endowed with a mind. Now, as in consequence with the findings of mirror-neurons there can be no awareness of someone else without the mechanisms presiding over action control, "the bridge to be crossed to get from *acting* to *thinking* narrows considerably" (43).

This idea also influences Gallese's idea about the *self*. According to him, the self is the result of a mirroring of the individual in the social organization of

the outer world. Hence he introduces the notion of the “*shared manifold*” of intersubjectivity. This, he argues, can be described as operating on three levels. On the *phenomenological level* actions, emotions and sensations experienced by others become meaningful because we can share them with them. On the *functional level* the shared manifold can be characterized in terms of simulation routines, *as if* processes enabling models to be created of others. Finally, on the subpersonal level it is the result of the activity of series of “mirror matching neural circuits”.

According to Gallese, neurological evidence has clearly pointed out that one of the mechanisms enabling feelings to emerge is the activation of simulation mechanisms, so-called “*as if* body loops”. These are not only internally driven, but also triggered by the observation of other individuals. In addition: “The discovery of mirror neurons in the monkey premotor cortex has unveiled a neural matching mechanism that, in the light of more recent findings, appears to be present also in a variety of non motor-related human brain structures”.

A long evolutionary process has made it possible for us to develop mind-reading abilities.

When we see the actions of others, a great deal of what we ascribe to their minds depends on “resonance mechanisms” triggered in us by their actions (45–46).

Luc Steels, a specialist in robotics and AI, and with affiliation both to a university and to a prominent enterprise in data technology (Sony) connects the mirror neuron theory with a strongly action-oriented view of language. Like Tomasello Steels enters the discussion about the origin of language, which is interesting for us here because it inevitably also affects the origin of meaning. According to Steels “language understanding amounts to the recognition of the plan intended by the hearer and the utterance is seen as giving hints about which plan is intended” (1). He sees the production of an utterance as involving the construction of an action plan and the understanding of it as the recognition of these action patterns. Hence he also sees the mechanisms required for language as essentially the same as those required for motor planning. This, he argues, also brings verbal behaviour much closer to sensorimotor behaviour than what is usually assumed. According to him evidence gained from work with robotic agents confirms that the planning and plan execution mechanisms required

for sensori-motor behaviour could also form the basis of language. In different respects this shows how action and the understanding of action, both very central in theatre according to the BSI model, are essential parts of our basic forms for production and interpretation of meaning at large.

Referring to the discoveries by the neurologist Giacomo Rizzolatti and his research team at the Dept of Neuroscience Sect. of Physiology in Parma, as well as to Rizzolatti and Arbib he puts forward a theory about language that, in fact, constitutes an extended version of the theory about mirror neurons. According to Arbib a mirror system for grasping in the common ancestor of monkey and human was not originally evolved out of mechanisms related to communication ("The evolving Mirror System"). But the mirror system's capacity to generate and recognize actions, he argues, provides an evolutionary basis for language parity, making an utterance mean the same for both speaker and hearer. In the course of evolution the mirror system was extended from a system for recognition of single actions to a system for recognition and imitation of compound actions, which in its turn became relevant to language readiness. The evolution of language readiness was a matter of gestural communication and the mirror system suited for action recognition was used for intentional communication. Thus, he argues, intentional communication took the way via pantomime or gestures, i.e. through pragmatic action, before becoming language (190–200).

The theory is interesting here, as it makes pragmatics, which also stands at the centre of this investigation, the very origin of the specifically human forms of communication, including the use of words. Particularly interesting is the fact that Arbib sees *imitation* as "the Key" in this process (191).

Because of the lack of historical evidence theories about language evolution in a phylogenetic perspective easily become speculative. This on the other hand does not overshadow the importance of the discovery of mirror neurons as a possible substrate of human action understanding. In a recent paper, *A unifying view of the basis of social cognition*, Gallase and members of his team at the Padua University put forward a unifying neural hypothesis on how humans understand the actions and emotions of others. Their thesis is that the activation of the mirror neuron system is the fundamental mechanism behind experiential understanding of others' actions. They once more refer to the discovery of the mirror neurons and they conclude on this evidence as follows:

Action understanding does not depend, according to this view, on the activation of visual representations (an activation obviously present) followed by their interpretation by the central conceptual system, but by the 'penetration' of visual information into the experiential ('first person') motor knowledge of the observer. (Gallase et al. 396)

According to Rizzolatti and his team, there are parietal and premotor areas in the human brain that activate both during the first- and third-person experiences of actions and emotions. We do not just see or hear actions and emotions. Internal representations of these are evoked in us "as if" we were performing similar actions or experiencing similar emotions (400). The authors acknowledge that their findings as to the importance of mirror neurons for action understanding are "conceptually similar" to ideas about action understanding put forward by some phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty in particular. They also stress that although they are inclined to believe that simulation underlies intention understanding, they only discuss how the meaning of action is understood, not how the intention of the actor is captured (397).

For a comprehensive presentation of the theories about mirror neurons, see also Gallese and Goldman.

Now, one has good reasons to conclude that when we see actors in a theatre performance, the same mechanisms are activated in our neural system as when observing human beings in real life. If this is true, and if it is true that such impressions enter our minds without the intervention of the central conceptual system, then this has interesting and far-reaching consequences for our view of such notions as scenic representation, mimesis and realism.

First of all, it does away with the idea of mimesis as a world existing in some objective realm independently of human beings. It also does away with the idea of mimesis as an objective relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié*.

If the representation of human beings is not a matter of similitude between fictional "signs" and reality, but of a more holistic access to purposeful and intentional action, this in fact sheds new and interesting light on Aristotle's tenet about action as the most important element in theatre.

If Gallese et al. are right, and if the mirror neuron theory is applicable to theatre, then the representation of human beings on stage has a special

status in relation to other forms of mimesis. This also renders the idea of a “dehumanisation” of the actor, to a great extent envisaged in avant-garde theatre, more cumbersome. Perhaps through this, it also becomes less motivated. The idea of the “dehumanized” actor/human could ideologically be traced back to theories about human beings and human behaviour as ultimately dependent on forces external to the mind itself. As has been addressed earlier, this concept of man in theatre originally came in two versions: one was grounded in a mystic idea about unknown metaphysical forces operating on human volition and agency. This was for example the idea Maeterlinck gave expression to in his *Trésor des humbles*. The other one was the idea of human behaviour as primarily a question of stimuli and response, and which did not have any use for human consciousness. Behaviouristic ideas of this kind for example influenced Meyerhold in his constructivist stagings. Throughout the 20th century different theories have challenged the idea of knowledge about man as something essentially different from knowledge about impersonal phenomena. Now, it is difficult to disregard this as a possible background of the widespread reluctance within Western avant-garde theatre to give place to empathic understanding of the characters, and of its general preference for a “third person” perspective. According to the “mirror neuron” theory our inclination to experience other people in a way different from how we experience other phenomena is not the result of an illusion of folk psychology, but a feature deeply embedded in our basic cognitive abilities.

Importantly, however, discoveries like that of “mirror neurons” do not entail any kind of norms for or constraints on artistic creativity. But on the other hand, if it is accurate, it calls into question a whole set of *theoretical* approaches to consciousness, empathy and action of which some have exerted influence on theatre practice as well.

The importance of the discovery of mirror neurons for discussions about theatre and acting is that it provides evidence as regards neural underpinnings for human action understanding and imitation. There are also interesting connections researchers have found between mirror neurons and language readiness, which points out the understanding of others’ actions as a basic, prelinguistic form of intersubjective understanding. On the other hand, the discovery of mirror neurons does not suffice to account for all action and

imitation understanding, in particular not higher-order ones.

Theatre, not least in its traditional forms, has been frequently alleged to be a means to “duplicate” reality for the sake of hypnotizing the audience into a kind of non-reality, an illusory world. Much criticism of “realism” and naturalism has had this idea as its essential content.

In recent years, however, human ability to imitate has become a topic of intense and growing interest within neuroscience, now seen as a way of gaining knowledge.

The Cultural Influence: Tomasello

In his *Emotion and Action* Kurtén draws parallels between Stanislavski’s ideas about action and the theory of the Soviet developmental psychologist Aleksei N. Leontiev (3–5).

In his *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* another developmental psychologist, Michael Tomasello at Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, refers not to Leontiev, but repeatedly to his colleague Lev Vygotsky, who exerted an important influence on Leontiev’s thinking. Like Vygotsky Tomasello views the evolutionary, historical and ontogenetic processes as instrumental in transforming human perception, memory, attention, categorization, and so on into “the special version of primate cognition that is human cognition” (11). In Tomasello’s view “the fundamental social-cognitive ability that underlies human culture is the individual human being’s ability and tendency to identify with other human beings” (90). I find Tomasello interesting here as regards his theories about the development of human action, his ideas about the significance of action, his ideas about action in the process of socialization, and not least his ideas about the importance of imitation as instrumental in the development of human cognition. Tomasello’s idea of imitation does not get lost in traditional dichotomies like the Platonic one between original and copy, or the one between the ontological levels of true and false à la Russell. Rather he highlights the role of imitation in the process of forming human knowledge, consciousness, self-understanding and social interaction. He accords a cognitive function to imitation that is very much in line with the view adopted here.

The focus of Tomasello’s investigation in *The cultural origins of human cognition*

is primarily the ontogeny of human understanding. In the centre of this process stands the notion of intention. "During early ontogeny", Tomasello writes, "[...] the child comes to experience herself as an intentional agent – that is, a being whose behavioural and attentional strategies are organized by goals – and so she automatically sees other beings with whom she identifies in these same terms" (14). He argues that in ontogeny already, the basic cognitive skills typical of mammals have evolved, not out of simple behaviouristic connections of stimuli and responses, but in ways that give room to "creative inferences and insightful problem solving." (16). Tomasello sees imitative learning as the basis of all cumulative cultural evolution (39). He sees human cultural inheritance as resting on the twin pillars of sociogenesis, by means of which cultural artefacts and practices are generally created, and cultural learning, "by means of which these creations and the human intentions and perspectives that lie behind them are internalized by developing youngsters - [...]" (54).

This, to a large extent, leads the way via imitation. Tomasello refers to evidence that children already at a neonatal state develop the ability to imitate for example movements of the tongue performed by an adult. He sees this as a way for the neonatal not only to imitate but also actually to "identify" with conspecifics (60). At nine months of age a human infant begins to engage herself in a number of so-called joint attentional behaviours. These indicate that she starts to understand other persons as intentional agents like herself. Between nine and twelve months of age a new set of behaviour emerges that is not dyadic in character, i.e. based on the relationship between the child and another person, but is triadic in the sense that its interactions are coordinated with objects and people, resulting from a referential triangle. There emerges a kind of joint attention. According to Tomasello's view, infants begin to engage in joint attentional activities when they begin to experience other people as intentional agents like themselves. Attention in his view is a kind of intentional perception. His theory is that human infants identify with other humans from early ontogeny, and that this feature is based on uniquely human inheritance. Children conceptualize their own mental states only after they have managed to conceptualize the mental states of others (61–66). The human cultural environment sets the context for the cognitive development of children, as cognitive "habitus" in Bourdieu's sense, and in the form of active instruction

from adults. An important dimension of human culture is the way adults instruct children, and "[...] the ontogenetic niche for developing human beings is a richly cultural one." Imitative learning represents the children's initial entry into the cultural world. Children engage in imitative learning, a process where they try to place themselves in the "intentional space" of the model, discerning his goals for example with the use of an artefact. Once the child has learnt the intentional affordances of different artefacts and objects, and becomes free to interchange them in symbolic play, she has also, in Tomasello's view, learnt these affordances in a way that is to some extent independent of their materiality.

This process of realizing others as intentional agents has important consequences for the forming of a "self". As long as the infant does not understand the behaviour of others as relating to an outside world, there could also be no question about how they relate to me. But once this feature has been detected it is also possible to monitor the attention of others to themselves as well. Thus the idea of a self should appear when the "triadic" form of understanding emerges in the mind of the child. Thus, also "the fundamental social-cognitive ability that underlies human culture is the individual human being's ability and tendency to identify with other human beings." In a way entirely consistent with Vygotsky's view children from the age of nine months are involved in a process of becoming members of their cultures in a way that is more and more active and participatory. It is also in this process that the child comes to understand how other persons regard her and the formation of a self begins (79–91). It is when infants start to see themselves as participants among others in an interaction that they form a concept about their own self. The understanding of others as intentional agents is crucial for the ontogeny of human social cognition. This idea also affects Tomasello's view on human language evolution. In his view language is not the cause of human cognitive uniqueness. Rather the evolution of language transforms the nature of human cognition. In a critique of inter al. Chomsky Tomasello argues that language is a "symbolically embodied social institution" originating in previously existing social-communicative activities (94). The symbolic representation involved in language use and which the child learns is intersubjective in the sense that symbols are "shared" with other persons and perspectival in the sense that each symbol picks out a particular aspect of the phenomenon invoked. This process takes place in the situation

and in the very place of interaction and within the frame of a communicative intention. Hence Tomasello sees linguistic reference as a social act and “joint attentional scenes” as social interactions. At the same time, what he calls joint attentional scenes are also not linguistic events. The joint attentional scene is understood first nonlinguistically. Its contents are larger than what could be indicated in mere linguistic symbols. The joint attentional scene should not be understood as just reference as explicitly symbolized in language. Rather, the joint attentional scene provides a context that is intersubjective and where the process of symbolization takes place. The child treats the communicative act of the adult as a way to direct his attention in a way relevant to the given situation. And importantly, “Only a child who can monitor the intentional states of others toward herself – indeed toward her own intentional states – can understand a communicative intention” (103, 96–109).

The child involves herself in a process of imitative learning where she aligns herself not only with what the adult does, but also with the goals and means of her actions. In order to learn how to participate in human interaction, the child must understand others as intentional agents, participate in joint attentional scenes, understand not only intentions, but communicational intentions, as well as develop the ability to reverse roles with adults and act toward them as they acted toward her, “which actually creates the intersubjectively understood communicative convention or symbol” (105–7). Tomasello also states that according to many recent studies the ways children learn language could be very variegated: they are not confined to the situation of an adult pointing at something and uttering the word for it, but understanding of words can as well be a result of social-interactive situations, where the child takes the same focus of attention as the adult. What Tomasello calls “the perspectival nature of linguistic symbols” he also sees an important part of cognitive and functional linguistics as represented by for example Langacker.

Tomasello sees the ability to communicate as linked to the ability to take different communicative perspectives on the same objects. A necessary condition of cognition is the ability to remember specific objects, events and different kinds of human experience, as well as to use this kind of mental representation as a means to anticipate future experiences. In a way once again reminiscent of Vygotsky Tomasello argues that the use of cultural representations

in social interaction is important for the representations emerging in the individual. When the speaker is speaking and someone listens, both parts in the conversation know that there are at least their two perspectives on the situation they are talking about (108–12).

Tomasello argues that children learn to use objects as symbols in a way similar to the way they learn to use symbols in language.

The main function of language, he argues, is to manipulate the attention of other persons, to induce them to take another perspective on something. The speaker must choose his symbolic means to adapt himself to the specificity of the spatio-temporal situation, as well as to the abilities, expectations etc. of the listener.

Tomasello also addresses the importance of intersubjective understanding. According to him, the ability in a child to engage in the experiences of others, to place themselves in another's situation, is a way of leaving the normative systems. This ability could not be taught by means of rewards and punishments, but evolves through the ability of the child to understand others as having the same kind of feelings as themselves. At the bottom there is a process of simulation, "and linguistic discourse is an especially rich locus for complex and sophisticated simulations" (181).

He sees human cultural-historical processes as processes of sociogenesis with generative powers and a way of creating an "ontogenetic niche for human cognitive development" (207). He also sees narrative as part of this process: "Narratives add more complexity still, as they string together simple events in ways that invite causal and intentional analysis, and indeed explicitly symbolized causal or intentional marking, to make them coherent" (214).

Referring to Wittgenstein and Vygotsky he describes humans as "fish in the water of culture" (215). He also criticizes traditional philosophical categories like nature versus nurture, innate versus learned and genes versus environment as too categorical and finally unapt to deal with the evolution of human cognition in its historical, cultural and ontogenetic perspective (217).

Tomasello argues that cumulative cultural evolution depends on imitative learning. It is a result of two processes, imitation and innovation (39).

Is learning by imitation a feature that is restricted to the ages of infancy? Or should one see this ability as something we also retain and develop as adults?

And does this have importance for theatrical action and our way to experience a theatrical performance? The possibility to take other persons as models for our behaviour could be seen as a continuation of our inclination in childhood for learning by imitation. In recent years, when focusing on cognitive elements in theatrical acting, one has observed that the kind of imitation applied by an actor also generates a special kind of knowledge, which the actor shares with the public. Hence a connection can be established between the role of imitative action in childhood as well as in adult life. This makes it interesting to follow Tomasello's investigation of the role of imitation in its ontogenetic context.

In the article "Understanding and sharing intentions" Tomasello et al. provide this definition of rationality in action: "The chosen action is 'rational' to the degree that it effectively accommodates the organism's knowledge, skills, and model of current reality" (677).

They also address the somewhat perplexing issue that an organism may have some movement or action in itself as a goal. As an example they take a dancer, whose goal is simply to perform certain body movements without any discernable environmental effect. But this complication, the one that organisms have goals both in terms of environmental effects and in the actions themselves or of combinations of both, plays a crucial role in imitation, as the imitator has to decide whether he shall do the action in an effective way or in the way the one he imitates had done it. It also has importance in some collaborative activities. Finally, the authors make a distinction between desires, or goals and intentions (or plans) (678).

A Dynamic Systems Account of human Agency: Alicia Juarrero

So far there has been talk here about prerequisites for action according to the definition of the term I have chosen in Elam's *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. Today human action is subject to renewed interest, and the emergence of new writings on the subject can contribute to shedding light over this element in drama and theatre as well. In the philosophy a central theme in the discussion about action has become the one about causation. In her *Dynamics in Action*, issued in 1999, the American philosopher Alicia Juarrero has presented a novel perspective on this issue by initially calling into debate no less than the generally accepted way to understand the notion of "causation". An interesting feature in

Juarrero is also that she finally arrives at a conclusion similar to Wittgenstein's in the passage quoted in the first section of this dissertation about how the play becomes a model of how meaning is formed in language generally.

Juarrero refers to research carried on in different scientific fields. In this way her book exemplifies how philosophy of mind, from traditionally being a speculative pursuit has increasingly oriented toward a more empirical approach.

Juarrero engages herself in a reappraisal of basic concepts within action philosophy, while combining in her own account elements from such disparate fields as information theory, system theory, thermodynamics and philosophical hermeneutics.

According to Juarrero a great portion of modern philosophical action theory has come to focus on questions about the causal link between intention and action, at the same time building on a conception of causality that is actually ill-suited for dealing with this task. Juarrero calls attention to similarities between human action and different kinds of other complex processes taking place in nature, and which are equally difficult to explain only on the basis of traditional ideas about causality.

If Juarrero's account is interesting for our purposes, this is not only because she actually includes a discussion about theatre in the final part of her book. Rather, it is that her approach to human agency also opens up new ways to deal with scenic action, as well as with what it means to do away with it.

I have earlier cited Fuchs, who in her *The Death of Character* accords great importance to Nietzsche's thinking regarding the development of new forms in theatre. In Nietzsche's rendering the scientific stance displays similarities with the mechanistic idea which later also became typical of the behaviouristic view that was to dominate a great portion of Western psychology up to the final decades of the twentieth century. It is against the backdrop of this conception of human action Nietzsche himself launches his alternative idea about human will, the one he names the "Will to power". It could be argued that it is with this opposition that the divide takes place between scientific ideas about action and the idea developed within much avant-garde theatre. What, on the other hand Nietzsche's idea has in common with the mechanistic one he criticizes is a scepticism regarding man's ability to intentionally direct his own actions. In

both cases action is viewed as caused from outside. Action thus represents not a reflection of the mind of the agent, but of the deterministic laws of nature or the influence from a metaphysical principle. This is an interesting background to the fact that many attempts to create new theatre forms, just like dominant strands within modern psychology and philosophy of mind, attempted to describe human agency without taking into account elements such as consciousness, intention and empathic intersubjectivity.

Now, it is exactly such a discussion about action and causality that Juarrero takes as her starting point. She demonstrates how the notion of causality dominating modern science is in fact a historical product. Originally one took into consideration not only one, but several forms of causation. Aristotle mentions four forms: final cause (the purpose towards which something is aiming), formal cause (that which makes something the thing it is and no other), material cause (the stuff of which it is made) and the efficient cause (the force that brings the thing into being) (2). At the end of the seventeenth century science discarded two of these causes, final and formal. In this way structuring and purposive explanations no longer qualified as causal. By and by the understanding of causality became restricted to efficient cause. In the eighteenth century, with David Hume, it even came to a questioning of the notion of cause as such. As there is no possibility to demonstrate the necessity by which an effect follows cause, causality in Hume's view is not even an ontologically verifiable category (48). Hume arrives at an understanding of "cause" as only a matter of conjunction. It is not that "A causes B" in terms of a necessary relationship, but "when A occurs B is also likely to occur". Juarrero sees Hume and the covering-law idea about causality as lying behind behaviourism and the third-person perspective, which built on the elimination of point of view and intentionality (50–52).

Teleology, i.e. purposefulness in human actions was explained as only a matter of stimulus and response. Causality became understood only as external impact on inert matter, which made it difficult to explain an action out of something taking place in the individual himself. It also became difficult to explain how it was possible that an action could not only be initiated by its cause but could also remain directed toward the goal over time. Juarrero also refers to Kant's theory about teleology in nature. Kant considered the time-reversible mechanistic principles of Newtonian physics as the only ones providing scientific knowledge,

but he also had to acknowledge that this could not account for purposive behaviour in organisms. This seemed to have nothing analogous to causality as he understood the notion. Kant's only solution to this explanatory gap was that it was due to a limitation of reason (46–48). According to Juarrero the reduced idea of causality has given rise to many problems for the philosophy of mind. It has done this not least in combination with another idea also originating in Aristotle: that nothing can move, cause or act upon itself in the same respect. But whereas Aristotle could always combine different kinds of causations, the subsequent reduction also brings about the inference that nothing can cause itself (2). This is another tenet that Juarrero calls into question in her book.

One way of doing this is to find an image for human action and volition other than the idea of lawlike regularities. To begin with, Juarrero turns her attention to information theory. All the difficulties the traditional idea about causation gives rise to, she argues, disappear once one, instead, looks at human action as uninterrupted flows of information from intention to behaviour. In contrast to the definition of action as a result of an efficient cause, action according to her definition is "the unequivocal flow of an intention's content from cognitive source to behavioural terminus" (85). It is because of an outcome's informational dependence on a source that the two are not only accidentally related. The dependence is possible to calculate in terms of conditional probabilities. Furthermore, as the message is generated by the cognitive status of the agent, the latter has privileged knowledge about the alternatives considered, as well as about how the reduction of possibilities came about. After having initiated the action one must maintain an unequivocal flow of intention into the action. It is also by this process that meaning can flow into behaviour (94).

From Information Theory Juarrero now proceeds to System Theory. She reminds us to begin with of how thermodynamics challenged the Newtonian idea about a clocklike, reversible causality, as regards macroscopical processes in the first place. But classical mechanics following Newton and thermodynamic agreed about the machine-like character of the universe. The theory about the "near-equilibrium" thermodynamics ignored the relational, secondary qualities, the properties which emerge through an object's interaction with its environment and its past. In this situation Darwin emerges and explicates the mechanisms responsible for the increasing complexity and order characteristic of onto-

and phylogenesis. By thus acknowledging the central role of the environment for selection, Darwin makes context re-enter science for the first time in centuries. This also concerns the functional properties of the context. Juarrero explains how scientists in the middle of the 20th century understood that under particular circumstances open systems, which exchange matter and energy with the environment, including organisms, behave totally differently. But the self-organisation in this complexity was not consistent with the principles and laws regulating both classical mechanics and thermodynamics. One had to rethink causality in a manner that allowed for some sort of self-cause. In contradistinction to mechanistic ideas about man, scientists at the end of the 20th century found out that when a living thing is embedded in an ordered context, properties emerge which are not present in these things as isolated individuals. Juarrero points out the difference between *facultative* systems, which are reversible and disband, and *obligate* systems, which are not disbanded once they are formed. As an example of facultative systems Juarrero mentions bacteria, which have the ability to disperse and form new colonies. According to Juarrero actions and intentions "should be taken to be facultative, self-organizing dynamical systems" (112).

She also makes another distinction between two kinds of systems, the one between

- *allopoeitic* systems, where the organisation is given "from outside". Machines are examples of this kind of systems, and, further,
- *autopoeitic* systems, which are self-organising and to which living organisms belong.

All systems are per definition hierarchical. But there are *structural* hierarchies, which do not interact, and *control* hierarchies, where the upper level exerts "an 'active authority relation' on the components of the lower levels" (114). This also opens up feedback paths between levels. As an example in which higher levels control lower levels she mentions the phenomenon called *mutual entrainment*, which makes oscillators interact in such a way that they gradually become synchronized. An example of the *mutual entrainment phenomenon* is two pendulum clocks which if mounted on the same board, after some time tick in unison. Another example, from the biological sphere, is that the menstrual cycles

of female army recruits, students, or others living together, synchronise after some months. Changes in such systems go against equilibrium. In Juarrero's view human mind consists of not linear, closed systems near equilibrium. It is embedded in its environment, which it in its turn influences.

In her endeavour to put forward suitable models for this, Juarrero finds support in Prigogine's idea of *dissipative* structures. Ilya Prigogine, recipient of the 1977 Nobel Prize for Chemistry found out that non-linear self-organization can take place in processes far from equilibrium and that order can emerge from non-equilibrium. In Juarrero's view dynamic systems theory can conceptualize the relationship between wholes and parts, which also allows one to rethink causal relationships between wholes and parts. In its turn this will "radically recast our understanding of intentional causality and human action" (119).

Structures can reorganize without external influence. One example of this is the phenomenon known for example within chemistry that goes under the name of *autocatalytical circles*, and wherein mutualist feed-back within the system itself loops the process to increase its fluctuations around a reference value. Thus the molecules of a substance can go through sequences of mutations by which the colour oscillates from blue to red. Through self-organisation even higher levels of organisation can take place. Some thinkers speculate that such self-organisation might be the driving-force behind all evolution. According to Juarrero, the theory of self-organizing dynamical systems, has important implications for the philosophical concepts of teleology, identity, cause and explanation. By a combination with concepts borrowed from information theory, equivocation and noise, she tries to find a "theory-constitutive metaphor" which could renew the study of action (119–23).

In terms of identity, the interaction of components upholds the same processes that produced them. Despite the fact that one cannot actually talk about goal-directed and "purposive" processes here, Juarrero sees self-organisation as a "precursor of teleology". Furthermore neither dissipative structures nor organisms can be explained through mechanistic principles alone. Complex adaptive systems are holistic, and exhibit self-cause in the sense that "parts interact to create novel emergent wholes" (127–30).

Juarrero shows how an interaction takes place between systems and components, which the systems in their turn control. This does not follow the

billiard ball-like form of causality she finds in mechanistic understandings. Rather, causality in these systems could be described as workings of constraint, i. e. the components of a context are constrained by the way they are unified and embedded. By constraint Juarrero means the way something limits and closes alternatives. Constraints are not only matters of physical mechanics, but of how rules reduce randomness. At the same time as they limit freedom, constraints also create freedom. *"By correlating and coordinating previously aggregated parts into a more complex, differentiated, systematic whole"*, Juarrero argues, *"contextual constraints enlarge the variety of states the system as a whole can access"* (138).

Juarrero also puts forward an idea about the relationship between system and time that seems entirely compatible with what has earlier been described as the importance of the *background* in a play or performance according to the BSI pattern. The feed-back loops of autocatalysis also incorporate the effects of time. It is exactly this historic dimension, the fact that the current state is dependent on the past one that makes the systems dynamic. Juarrero talks about the "context-sensitive constraints of history" (140). Another general observation could similarly also function as an analysis of the way the scenic situation functions: "enabling constraints create information by opening bottom up a renewed pool of alternatives that the emergent macrostructure can access" (143). But for Juarrero this is also a description of how second-order constraints are imposed in the brain by the higher level on the lower ones, which according to her could function as a description of how self-consciousness and intentional action come about. A self-organized system could be described as collective variables, such as you and I. In this understanding folk psychological terms only describe the collective variable level.

The various levels of neural architecture in the brain are "structured structuring structure" and the neuronal activity is dependent not only on immediate input, but on the neurons' prior activity, which means that the brain shows a pattern of "history-dependent unit activity" (147). Juarrero sees consciousness, self-consciousness, intentionality, and purposiveness as properties that emerge from high-level self-organization of the human brain. This, according to her, is also the case with *meaning*. Actions are behavioural trajectories that are constrained top-down by intentions. Finally, if the brain

could be described as a complex adaptive system, the covering-law approach of behaviourism could not account for human action. The behaviour is semantically constrained, which according to Juarrero, is the primary advantage of a dynamic account over an information-theoretic one, as the former, unlike the latter, can account for the emergence of meaning. Human neurological dynamics can also embody the meanings of folk-psychological concepts. This is also how Juarrero explains the question raised by Searle in his "Chinese room" example, i.e. the explanation of his idea that a machine cannot be conscious and therefore cannot either understand a sentence. Juarrero describes the way from syntax to meaning thus: in a dynamical framework self-organized regions of neural space are capable of embodying syntax. Complex adaptive dynamics could thus offer an account of how semantic properties can emerge through self-organized patterns of neurophysiologic processes (168–70).

Actions, or what Juarrero calls "act-types" can be seen as "constrained pathways within [. . .] cognitive, semantically organized spaces " (178). Juarrero subsumes the following: "Ontologically behaviour that is the top-down projection of self-organized semantic constraints onto lower-level motor or speech processes constitutes an act-token. As such, intentions can function as the action's formal and final cause." (193)

"The anticipated terminus" is both the purpose and final cause of the action. When action is understood as constrained by a self-organized semantic space the atomicity of intentions and volitions is eliminated. But intentions are not just "in the head". Dynamical systems are embedded in history and within the structural constraints of an environment, and both phylogenetically and ontogenetically there is an interdependence between humans and the environment, as well as between humans and their history. This interdependency also makes agents act intentionally without their having explicitly formed a prior intention. Intentions have to be viewed in their physical, historical and social context. And Juarrero concludes regarding the relationship between action and consciousness:

In my earlier discussion I drew the line between action and nonaction in terms of the presence or absence of semantic constraints on behavior and argued that such constraints point to a self-organized region of mental space, one involving consciousness and meaning. Only behavior unequivocally constrained by that organization constitutes action. (203–04)

Finally Juarrero arrives at the conclusion that the only way of accounting for someone's actions is a narrative explanation. She finds that folk-psychology and human action have proved to be recalcitrant to the reductionism of modern science and that human beings, their problems as well as their behaviour, have resisted simplistic covering-law explanations or being explained in terms of the impact of exogenous forces on primary matter. One cannot ignore the particular subject's uniquely individuated dynamics the way behaviourism assumed. The advantage with the complex dynamics systems perspective is that it can account for irregularities and differences in behaviour. In order for explanations of behaviour to be appropriate to their subject matter they have to proceed hermeneutically. There are only the hermeneutical narratives that are suited to explain the dynamics of complex adaptive systems. Such interpretations are characterized by interlevel relations, and hence they are also historical and contextual. This is the way we make sense of people and their actions. The more one knows about the agent and the circumstances embedding the behaviour, as well as the agent's background, circumstances and particular frame of mind, the better the conditions for the reconstruction. But this view also signals the end of certainty. It is always impossible to predict or retrodict the exact trajectory of human behaviour. (For example from the mere fact that someone is ambitious one cannot conclude what specific pathway his actions will take. But narrative hermeneutical explanations are not only temporal listings of events.) The narrative describes the contextual pattern making up the meaningful organization of someone's behaviour, whether self-conscious or not. Storytelling and drama can reproduce the process of nature in a way that deductive-nomological models cannot. And re-enactment in the form of both simulations and theatrical performances are more explanatory than narratives. Juarrero comes to the conclusion that dynamical processes, including action, are better accounted for in the form of the genealogical, historical narratives of hermeneutics. It is necessary to rehabilitate a narrative logic of explanation. A consequence of Juarrero's conception is an idea of the freedom of the will: we are not passive products of the environment or of external forces, and we are capable of contributing to the circumstances that will constrain us later on (253).

Evan Thompson

Like Juarrero Evan Thompson in his *Mind in Life* goes back to Kant's formulation of the difficulty in explaining teleology and purposefulness in nature out of a mechanistic idea of causation. According to Thompson the scientific situation has changed dramatically through the development of the autopoietic theory, "which satisfies Kant's definition of a natural purpose" by providing a view of "circular causation and nonlinear emergence". Referring to Juarrero Thompson argues that the autopoietic system satisfies Kant's idea of natural purpose, "namely, something whose parts reciprocally produce one another and that therefore exists as both cause and effect of itself" (138). It is also this idea of self-organizing systems that lies behind Thompson's view of mind.

In his idea of action, Thompson uses the notion of enactment, which was originally introduced in Thompson, Varela and Rosch. The aim with this concept is to unify three different ideas under one heading. The first is that living beings are autonomous agents. The second is that the nervous system is an autonomous dynamic system. The third idea is that "cognition is the exercise of skillful know-how in situated and embodied action" (13).

Thompson is one of the cognitively oriented philosophers who display great interest in phenomenology. Thus in his theory about action he also draws on Merleau-Ponty, as well as on Dan Zahavi's ideas about the self. Like Merleau-Ponty he focuses on action that is purposive, effective and spontaneous, but which lacks an explicitly entertained purpose, action as a flow of skilful activity in response to the way the individual senses the context. Thompson quotes a passage where Merleau-Ponty exemplifies this kind of action with a football-player. According to the description the player becomes one with the field, feeling the direction of the goal and continuously modifying the character of the field with his actions. In this sense consciousness becomes the dialectic relationship between milieu and action. "In skilful coping" Thompson argues, "we experience our activity (it is not unconscious), and we experience it as a steady flow" (314–15).

Thompson dissociates himself from his previous view that Husserl is a methodological solipsist, i. e. that his theory, departing from the way the individual apperceives the world, creates a gap between this and the understanding of others. In contrast phenomenological ideas become important

in Thompson's idea about intersubjectivity. He defines empathy as "a unique form of intentionality in which we are directed toward the other's experience" (386). In Thompson's view it is a form of intentional experience of its own. In spite of sharing certain structural features with perception and other structural features with memory, imagination, and expectation, empathy cannot be reduced to these acts or constructed out of them (388). The affective engagement in the other has a sensorimotor coupling, by which there is a common neural format coupling perceived actions with planned actions. This leads Thompson to enter the theory of mirror neurons. "Neural studies of these mirror systems", he argues, "provide evidence for the dynamic co-constitution of perception and action at the level of intentional agency" (395). According to Thompson there is evidence that such mirror functions also work on an emotional level. Thus the fact that newborn babies have a tendency to cry in response to the sound of another baby's cry is thought to provide underpinnings for later cognitive empathy. Thompson calls this empathy "affective resonance". And he concludes: "Cognitive empathy at its fullest, [. . .], is achieved when one individual can mentally adopt the other's perspective by exchanging places with the other in imagination" (395-97). In this context he also quotes Tomasello's formulation about the coupling between an infant's ability to engage in joint attentional interaction and the ability to understand other persons as intentional agents like themselves. And Thompson sees several parallels between Tomasello's analysis of joint attentional scenes and the phenomenological theory about empathy (397-401).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation is about the element of action in the process from the script to embodied performance on the stage. As a definition of "action" I initially used a formulation by Keir Elam:

There is a being, conscious of his doings, who intentionally brings about a change of some kind, to some end, in a given context. (121)

Thus, according to Elam, necessary elements in an action are intention, consciousness, context and change. I am now going to subsume how these

elements apply to the BSI model described earlier in this book, how they are treated by the authors on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three, as well as by the authors on mind and cognition referred to in this chapter, and finally how experiences made in the respective milieus connect with each other.

The authors on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three, Stanislavski, Cohen, Hornby, Penciulescu and Donnellan, all view action as the most central element in the actor's work. I have argued that all of them basically comply with what I call the BSI pattern, i.e. that actions are framed by background, situation and the intentions of the agent.

Consciousness

According to Elam's definition of action an agent should be "conscious of his doings". Elam does not further spell out how one should understand the word "conscious" in this formulation. It could be meant that the agent is not unconscious i.e. that he is awake when performing the action. It could also be meant that he is in full conscious control of all his doings. In the former sense the claim is rather uncontroversial, whereas it becomes somewhat less so in the latter one.

Arguably, the actor's analysis of the text, described here as "action analysis", has, as one of its aims, to make the actor "conscious of his doings" in the name of the role, i.e. of how these doings relate to the given circumstances in the play, including the actions of the co-actors. But consciousness is not a frequent word in the vocabulary of acting and actor training, and few of the authors on acting referred to in chapter three dwell upon it. From Stanislavski on various techniques and exercises relating to consciousness, for example exercises for enhancing relaxation and concentration, belong to the toolbox of actors as well as educators. Still no one claims that the actor should be in total conscious control of all his doings on the stage. Stanislavski uses the formula "from the conscious to the unconscious" to describe the relationship between the two.

Among the authors on the human mind referred to in this chapter Searle addresses the issue of consciousness. He also sees consciousness as a precondition for action. For him consciousness is processes that are "inner, qualitative and subjective", forming a "single, unified field", and being essentially tied to intentionality. In this sense, we have noted, he approaches

the phenomenological view about the relationship between consciousness and apprehension. Neither does Searle talk about a "total conscious control" of actions, but argues that "much of what we do that is essential to the survival of our species requires consciousness". As has also been pointed out, Searle sees consciousness as a precondition for rationality.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that *most parts* of our actions are unconscious, belonging to what they name the "cognitive unconscious". They also criticize Quine's theory for not presupposing consciousness. Thompson sees consciousness of the self as founded on empathy, and positions himself close to a phenomenological stance. This orientation was already introduced in Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991). Alicia Jurarrero, for whom action is the overarching topic, also addresses the topic of consciousness. She characterizes intentions as "conscious states" and argues that only behaviour constrained by an organization involving consciousness and meaning qualifies as action (204). From this point of view, the formulation "conscious of his doings" as it appears in Elam's definition could actually be justified. But particularly the lack of a generally agreed upon definition of "conscious", in theories about human mind generally, and in acting education alike, can make this inclusion contested.

However, the urge among distinguished cognitive scientists, in spite of this, to restore the use of "consciousness" to respectability seems to open up interesting prospects for the discussion about theatre and drama as well. Juarrero's and Thompson's endeavours to integrate consciousness with a dynamic systems theory of human agency seem particularly promising in this respect.

Like Thompson, Searle approaches phenomenology in his theory about consciousness. In this vein, too, Searle relates consciousness to the forming of an identity, a *self*. He makes a connection between self, consciousness and freedom, arguing that the agent is this only if he is "a conscious entity that has the capacity to initiate and carry out actions under the presupposition of freedom". The idea in Searle about how consciousness relates to identity seems close to how Zahavi, as referred to in Chapter three, discusses first-person perspective as a result of the experiential dimension: "consciousness is the generation of a field of lived presence". As has been pointed out in chapter three, presence thus characterized is also extensively talked about in relation to the actor's work. Hence, *concretization* in dealing with scenic elements is a recurrent claim in

the ideas of the referred to writers about the actor's art. Thus also Penciulescu makes the observation that ultimately the result of an actor's work on a text can be that identity emerges from a concretized "lived presence" in dealing with scenic acts. "For me, the essential quality of someone who is or wants to be an actor is to engage himself totally physically and mentally in a process aiming at making the external world pertinent and perceptible. Through a mirror effect this activity makes the actor pertinent and perceptible as well".

Intention

Stanislavski, Cohen, Hornby, Penciulescu and Donnelan are unanimous in viewing intention in the meaning of purposefulness as the key element of scenic action. This is reflected in crucial concepts from "objective" and "superobjective" in Stanislavski to the notion of the "target" in the writings of Donnelan. Intention is also traditionally a recurrent notion in definitions of action. The element of intention is strongly connected to the idea of free deliberation, and thus the notion has also become problematic in mechanistic and behaviouristic accounts of human mind.

The writers referred to in this chapter have all to some extent addressed the element of intention in human agency. Searle distinguishes between "prior intentions" and "intention in action". He also sees it as necessary for the agent that she act under the presupposition of freedom. In the "gap" between reasons for an action and the execution of the decision he finds the whole problem about rationality. This theory about connections between action, freedom and rationality seems consistent with the ideas behind the "action analysis" and the BSI pattern, as represented by the writers on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three.

Thompson's definition of "action as a flow of skilful activity in response to the way the individual senses the situation" seems rather close to Searle's "intention in action". As for the pragmatics of acting as described earlier in this dissertation, it often acknowledges that intention can be "prior" and "in action". There is an interesting coincidence between Searle's distinction on the one hand and the difference between action analysis "at the table" and action analysis "on the floor" on the other. It could be argued, too, that Stanislavski's increasing preference for the latter implies an insight into the nature of action that comes close to Thompson's in the quotation. But still,

the formulation of intentions in the sense of "prior intentions" plays a great role in acting pragmatics and teaching, as reflected in the writings on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three.

Lakoff and Johnson criticize the idea of the human being as a utilitarian person in conscious and economic rational control of his doings. But they do not question the idea of intention and deliberation as such. As regards human agency they also acknowledge the existence of a "limited but crucial freedom".

The idea that action observation implies action simulation, and the discovery of "mirror neurons" in the human neural system are major contributions to action theory, with promising applicabilities also to theatre and acting. Basically these findings help explain (which notably is not to say that they exhaust) the communicational importance of goal-directed actions. As actions in this sense are a grounding element in theatrical communication as well, this theory has also interesting implications in this field.

An important contribution to the topic of intersubjectivity that has been referred to here is Tomasello, who describes how the process of simulation from ontogeny already lies at the bottom of engaging in the experiences of others.

In the present chapter Alicia Juarrero and Evan Thompson have provided interesting contributions to a theory of action that has bearing on theatre and acting as well. Juarrero's fierce take on the concept of causation in connection with action gives prospects of a solution to a classical dilemma about deliberation, an issue that has deeply affected the development of new forms in Western theatre. This issue is what I am going to deal with in the next chapter, and therefore I will also return to Juarrero later. Suffice it here to establish that her ideas about hermeneutics as explanations of the dynamics of complex adaptive systems are highly compatible with the hermeneutic character of the process from script to scenic action, as described by the authors on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three. Moreover, Juarrero expressly describes narrative as a privileged form of explanation of human behaviour, and re-enactment in the form of both simulations and theatrical performance as "more explanatory than narratives".

Thus the presence of "intention" in Elam's definition of action could indeed seem justified in relation to ideas put forth by authors referred to in this chapter.

Change

All the writers on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three treat action as a means to bring about a change in the situation in which they take place. It is, in fact, implied in the view of action as goal-directed. The element of change is not often specifically addressed by the writers referred to in the present chapter. One exception is Thompson with his idea about "skillful activity" and the reference he makes in this context to Merleau-Ponty's description of how a football-player also modifies his environment by his way of actively responding to it. The authors on the actor's art referred to in Chapter three also often underline that the actor takes part in a game together with her co-actors. In this sense the comparison made by Merleau-Ponty/Thompson can be applied to the actor's work as well.

Situation/Context

In the vocabulary of actor training central importance is accorded the notion of "situation". In particular the word has already emerged in the quotation I took from Sainte-Albine's *l'Acteur* (page 61). As far as I can understand, the word in its application on acting and actor training is normally used with the same understanding as "context". One of the most influential definitions of the element of "situation" in the actor's work is Stanislavski's "the given circumstances", a notion that is often treated as tantamount to "situation" in the formulation of the "creative if": "what would I have done, had I been in the character's situation?".

The idea that cognition is "situated" is reflected in the works of several authors referred to in this chapter, as well as in Suchman's early *Plans and situated actions* referred to in Chapter two. Suchman's contention is that human actions are situated in the sense of responding to changes in the environment. But as pointed out by Thagard robots can also be "situated" in a similar sense. In contrast, phenomenological philosophy talks about a pronounced human form of interaction with the environment, including the individual's interaction with others. As mentioned, Thompson (2007) draws heavily on phenomenological ideas about man-world interaction in his theory about human consciousness, as does Zahavi in his idea about the forming of the personal identity. Once again, the close connection made within phenomenological philosophy between the

apprehension of the world and the forming of consciousness and identity seems highly compatible with Penciulescu's idea of the relationship between the two in a work on a play (see above). Arguably, Stanislavski with his notion of "I am", the final stage of the actor's preparatory process, talks in a similar way about a close relationship between concrete action and the forming of an identity.

Elam (1980) is a handbook of theatre semiotics. From this point of view it is noteworthy that he even preoccupies himself with mental elements like "intention" and "consciousness". As Daddesio points out semiotics is traditionally anti-mentalistic. One of Elam's omissions seems to be that he does not develop these ideas about action, intention and consciousness further, despite expressly arguing that "drama is both etymologically and 'in essence' founded on action" (124). Generally in this book he, instead, mainly focuses on theories about the internal structures of signs. Thus he does not specifically address intersubjective understanding of actions and motifs either, which are central for the authors on the actor's work quoted in Chapter three of this dissertation. Theatre builds on the understanding of others, the actor's understanding of the character's actions in the situation, the spectator's understanding of the actor's actions on stage. Furthermore, if it is true, as claimed by cognitive scientists that intersubjective understanding is a necessary prerequisite for the understanding of language, then Elam has indeed left a crucial element out of account. Daddesio writes that "...the complete exclusion of so-called nonsemiotic phenomena from the study of sign behavior is impossible and [...] the pretense of doing pure semiotics can only lead us into making serious errors" (19).

Conversely, too, the authors on the actor's art quoted in Chapter three, even those who have lived through the long period of heavy influence from semiotics on the literature about theatre, are notably unaffected by the kind of vocabulary that Elam puts so much effort to expound. Their way to express themselves is very far from talk about the actors as "transmitters" of communication with the help of "metonymic accessories", or as producers of signals "selected and arranged syntactically" according to a range of "signalling systems". This does not imply that the architecture behind such notions could not be useful from other points of view. Still, in view of the importance accorded to mental phenomena by the authors on the art of acting quoted in Chapter three it could be argued that the

anti-mentalistic character of what Daddesio calls "pure semiotics" is totally irreconcilable with the very basics of acting and actor training. Arguably, too, this is an important background to the fact that pure semiotics has exerted little influence on contemporary acting methodology.

In a section headed "The challenges of cognitive science for theatre and performance studies" Bruce McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart review a row of contemporary theoretical approaches in the light of findings within cognitive science. Drawing on the "embodied realism" of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson they first criticize the Saussurian semiotics and its basic idea that our thought is only a "shapeless and indistinct mass" prior to being formulated in language. In contrast, they argue, elements such as the "image schemas" of Lakoff and Johnson indicate processes in the brain that are "not available directly as language", but "underlie and motivate the production of all human sign systems, including language" (3).

From the point of criticizing basic ideas in Saussure there is only a short step to questioning the foundations of Derridean deconstruction also. In this case, as I also do myself they refer to Lakoff and Johnson, who judge the basic idea about the complete arbitrariness of the sign, the locus of meanings in systems of binary oppositions among free-floating signifiers (*différance*) and the purely historical contingency of meaning, as well as the strong relativity of concepts, as "empirically incorrect" (3).

Next in turn come Skinnerian and Freudian notions of psychology that according to McConachie and Hart "run counter to most cognitive science" (4). In general, they argue, the Freudian model is rejected by cognitive scientists for being untestable with scientific means. This criticism brings with it a similar criticism of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

McConachie and Hart also argue that the idea of the spectator as reader has limited our understanding of audience response, an idea that I have addressed in the first chapter, referring to Sonesson's criticism of what he calls "ontological and epistemological panlinguisticism". Like myself McConachie and Hart emphasize the importance of empathic understanding for the performance reception, that this understanding is not the same as reading the body as a sign, and that empathic understanding also involves mirror neurons in the mind/brain. Insights regarding the capacity for empathic understanding, they argue,

also help us to understand how our "propensity to ascribe feelings, intentions, calculations, etc. to others governs the ways in which readers can interpret the 'minds' of fictional characters in print" (5). - However, it should also be noted that there are semioticians today, such as the above-mentioned Daddesio, who find it possible to integrate cognitivism with semiotics.

As I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, the cognitive approach, in the sense accorded to the notion here, deals scientifically with mental phenomena that are also dealt with in the practice of acting and acting education, such as action, intentionality, consciousness, intersubjective understanding, and first-person perspective. In this way they also integrate notions dealt with in acting and acting education in a broad contemporary discussion about human mind and cognition. Thus also, the cognitive approach already provides the practical field of acting with useful information from a row of different fields of knowledge. As is also demonstrated in McConachie and Hart, and Blair the cognitive approach brings with it novel developing possibilities for interchange between the practice and the theory of theatre.

5. DRAMA WITHOUT ACTION

Am deutlichsten hat es Kant dargelegt, in seiner unsterblichen Lehre von der Idealität der Zeit und der alleinigen Realität des Dinges an sich. Denn aus dieser ergibt sich, daß das eigentlich Wesentliche der Dinge, des Menschen, der Welt, bleibend und beharrend im *Nunc stans* liegt, fest und unbeweglich.

Artur Schopenhauer³⁷

In the previous chapters I have discussed drama that conforms with what I call the BSI pattern, i.e. drama built on a fictive narrative that is action-based. The way to work with this kind of drama on the stage often includes the "action analysis", which was accounted for in chapter two, and applied to a play, Strindberg's *The Stronger*. This analysis is the first step in a process destined to situate the scenic i actions, i.e. the doings and sayings of the characters, in the context implied in the written play. The BSI play is founded on a paradigm where the actor hypothetically puts himself in the character's situation, where this is part of the basic concept of the play, and the core of how the text structures, not only the play of the individual actor, but the whole context all actors are part of. According to the authors on the actors' art referred to in Chapter three, the actor's preparation for the performative part of the process could be described as consisting of an investigation where he assimilates the actions of the character from a reality-perspective, based on intersubjective understanding, tried out in the form of embodied simulation. The overall most important element in this process, according to the above-mentioned authors, is action.

In Chapter four I demonstrated coincidences between how a broad tradition in acting and actor training deals with this kind of drama, on the one hand, and current discussions within important parts of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind, on the other. I pointed out that concepts that have long been in current use in acting and actor training have also reappeared in scientific and philosophical discussion, after a long period of disrepute. Both for the authors writing on the actor's art and for the authors dealing with the human mind, *action*, and/or notions related to this, such as intention, consciousness

and intersubjective understanding of others, are important. In the definitions of "embodied cognition" referred to in Chapter one, action is also seen as a precondition for this take place. This coincidence is a major shift, putting an end to a long period when acting and actor training have been mentalistic, while theory about the human mind has predominantly been behaviouristic. Again, this does not mean that cognitive science as a whole is mentalistic, or that there exists an unanimously agreed upon theory about these issues within cognitive science. But, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter, many of the authors referred to in this dissertation develop theories about the human mind, agency and cognition that seem consistent with basic experience from the field of acting and actor training, as accounted for in Chapter three. Such coincidences are obvious from a theatrical point of view, and have also been addressed in McConachie and Hart, as well as in Blair. It is argued here that there are ideas developed within cognitive science that radically alter the landscape not only for theatre research but for theatre as well. These have to do extensively with the re-emergence of the element of action in many important contemporary writings about human mind and cognition.

If we recall the authors writing on the actor's art in Chapter three, none of them writes about any other kind of drama than that which is action-based. Donnellan, in fact, mentions Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, arguing that working with this play is equivalent from a methodical point of view to working on a play by Shakespeare. But *Waiting for Godot* is perhaps the one of Beckett's plays that most applies to traditional ways of writing for the stage. One could hardly say that *Not I* or *Rockaby* could be staged with the application of the same acting method as a play by Shakespeare. Now, arguably, the reason why none of these authors discuss drama without action is that all of them write about method. And there is so far no method for playing action-less drama that is as elaborate and widely tried out as the one these authors teach, which is arguably the same, with slight variations. It was Stanislavski who famously preoccupied himself himself with trying out methodical means for work with new texts, in this case with the symbolistic dramas of his time. It is also well known that he commissioned different studios connected to the Moscow Art Theatre, studios led by for example Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, to discover acting methods for new forms of drama. But in the end he was unable to come up with a method

for any other theatre form than the one based on action. The problem about "actionless acting" is still a concern for theatre schools today, and different means to deal with it are constantly being tried out.

New drama has given rise to new approaches to the actor's work, and I will give detailed accounts of some of them in this chapter. In such dramas one can distinguish certain common traits, such as ritualization, rhythmization, visualisation, etc. But none of the acting modes that will be described in this chapter has survived as a distinct method. Often drama without action is approached by the actor with the same method as action-based drama, i.e. what is actionless on the page is not necessarily so on stage. In fact, there could be a question as to whether it is possible for someone to appear on the stage without performing actions. It could hence be disputed whether "drama without action" could at all be possible in its acted form. On the other hand, as will be spelled out more in detail in this chapter, the basic idea behind "drama without action" is often that the mere phenomenon of human action is only illusory.

There is a great and important tradition in modern drama that is conceived in opposition to the paradigm of action-based theatre, and it is often based on a rejection of the possibility of free human agency in some sense. As Hans-Thies Lehmann points out in his *Postdramatic Theatre*, the challenge of action is, in fact, one of the most distinctive traits in modern theatre. Lehmann describes how there is a relatively unbroken continuity between early modernism and more recent experimental theatre, what he calls "post-dramatic theatre", an observation that I find highly accurate and that I will also draw upon here.

Now, what I called "drama without action" in Chapter one excludes per definition *as a concept*, the element that so far in this account has united experiences from acting and acting education with findings within cognitive science. At the outset we can see that what is here called "drama without action", like for example Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound*, Kokoschka's *Murderer, Hope of Women* or Beckett's *Not I* are not in the same way as for example Strindberg's *The Stronger*, built on intersubjective understanding of others' actions in a "given circumstances" setting. *Exactly the combination of findings within cognitive science and the experience referred to from the actor's working process thus makes the paradigmatic difference between action-based drama and drama that is not action-based all the more conspicuous.*

Again, and importantly, with drama without action I always mean the *text* of the play. But this text generally bears with it a basic concept as regards how it should be performed on stage. The concept of a drama without action implies that another structure is substituted for that of situated actions. Ideologically, the concept is often based upon a metaphysics or an ontology that defies the idea of free deliberation. Thus a drama without action often comes with a specific idea about the human mind.

Again, when the actor works on this text it is far from certain that he or she complies with the general concept behind it. Either she does this, which can become cumbersome, if the text or the staging cannot somehow compensate for the loss of circumstances to act on, or she relies on more traditional acting, of the BSI kind, for example as described here by the authors writing on the actors art referred to in Chapter three. She invents her own circumstances and just goes to business as usual. This way to cope with "difficult" texts is very common, it is well-known that actors often do so, and this is often also satisfactory from the audience's point of view. *Thus, what is so far said about the cognitive process of the actor can largely be applied to this work too*, which is the same as to say that in many cases there is no fundamental difference between acting in action-based drama and acting in drama that is not action-based. Again, drama without action might exist on the page, but it could be argued that it is not possible on the stage.

But, first, the application of this technique might be cumbersome, and opportunities to do it successfully could vary from play to play.

Second, and more important, the problematic feature with using traditional action-based acting methods with texts that are not action-based is that this could be at odds with the whole concept of the play. If the aim with the play is to show that human agency of the kind for example presupposed in traditional acting is illusory, it becomes contradictory to apply such acting to demonstrate this idea. In order to avoid this clash various directors and playwrights have invented means to prevent actors from doing this. One example is Beckett, who ventured to lead his actors off this path by means of meticulous instructions even in the text of the play. The next step became to stage his plays himself and even to set his own imprint on the actor's work. His collaboration with Billie Whitelaw, recounted in her auto-biography... *Who he?* bears witness to how he painstakingly tries to cleanse his actress's play from anything that could go

under the name of "situated action" in a BSI sense, and how finally he obtained a result that suited his general concept.

It is this relationship between concept and (intended) scenic action that will be an issue in this chapter, and *not the way in which different actors work with this kind of texts*. My aim is to take the concepts of the plays seriously, not to discuss how actors could get around the difficulties they frequently present them with. The reason that I take an interest in the concepts is that behind them often lurk alternative ideas about man and mind, which could be subject to discussion. To engage oneself in this discussion does not imply any criticism of the plays as such: plays are works of art, never just implemented ideas. But if the plays reflect general ideas about the human mind, it could be interesting to compare these ideas with some ideas within cognitive science, referred to in this dissertation. The contention is that dominating ideas about the human mind influence how theatre is made. And that major shifts as regards such ideas also influence theatre.

Rather than approaching drama that is not action-based with a conceptual toolbox formed in connection with an element that this theatre sets out to challenge, I instead take aim at the ontological preconditions for the questioning of action. I will describe how in a series of instances, selected from modern and recent drama, one tries to eliminate the element of action, and on what grounds. This means that from now on I shall stop using the vocabulary applied in the previous chapters for some time. This does not mean that the cognitive approach ends here; only that from now on I shall apply it to a more global question about the evolution of contemporary theatre. The contention will be that new insights about man and mind within cognitive science are likely to alter the conditions for dealing with these elements on stage as well.

In modern and postmodern theatre the element of action is questioned in different forms and to a different extent. I have tried to make a representative selection of radical attempts to do away with action in theatre, with a preference for radicalism rather than enduring importance in the canon of Western theatre. This will mean that I attach significance to some plays that are interesting as formulas for the concept of non-action based theatre, but which have in some instances more or less sunken into oblivion today (which, on the other hand, is not an entirely untypical fate for radical experiments in the theatre!) My selection includes the following:

- Maurice Maeterlinck's *Intérieur* (*Interior*) 1891
- Arno Holz/Johannes Schlaf's *Die Familie Selicke* (*The Selicke Family*) 1890
- Oskar Kokoschka's *Mörder Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*) 1909
- Vassily Kandinsky's *Der gelbe Klang* (*The Yellow Sound*) 1909
- August Stramm's *Geschehen* (*Event*) 1915
- Lothar Schreyer's *Kreuzigung* (*Crucifixion*) 1920
- Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby* 1980
- Peter Handke's *Die Stunde da wir nichts von einander wußten.* (*The Hour we knew nothing of each other*) 1992
- Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* 1997
- Sarah Kane's *Crave* 1998

EARLY MODERN

The Turn of the 20th Century

Earlier I quoted Ellinor Fuchs' contention that "Nietzsche's resonance in modern and contemporary theatre has not even now been fully accounted for". Nietzsche epitomized a tendency prevalent in theatre from the end of the 19th century on to question action by first and foremost questioning the free deliberation of the individual, and by stressing how human agency is influenced by outer forces. Nietzsche did not invent this idea, which in fact, had roots going back to Kant, to German romanticism and not least to Schopenhauer. But Nietzsche contributed to it by giving it a modernized philosophical form by relating it to science and the mechanistic idea about action according to which this is a matter of simple causation. He formed it not least by launching his own alternative conception of what he called the "Will to power". Nietzsche's influence on important representatives of early modernism, such as dance theatre, the theatre of the Italian futurists, Artaud, and the Sturm Group, as well as on many important writers during the first half of the 20th century, is also indubitable. Later he also exerted an important influence on seminal thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze.

On the other hand the development of "drama without action" from the end of the 19th century on cannot be accounted for with reference to ideas only, but must be sought in artistic practice.

The questioning of action brought with it a critique of traditional dramaturgy. Basic elements like plot and action came under question and there was a quest for new means of structuring the scenic events. New drama forms also called for new conceptions of the actor's work and led to experiments with alternative acting techniques.

The questioning of traditional forms was explicitly formulated in manifestos, pamphlets and critical commentaries from the end of the 19th century on. But dramatic texts could also in themselves, by virtue of their mere form and composition, be viewed as expressions of new positions in a more general discussion about the conditions for human action.

A tool for tracing action and its conditionings in a text is the so called "action analysis", which could also be supplemented with the application of the five "Ws". The "five Ws" and their variants are used to uncover features such as time, place, intention, and to some extent personal/social structure in a scene or a play. The parameters also make up for the *context* of the action, its situatedness in the given circumstances. I have previously demonstrated this kind of analysis with Strindberg's *The Stronger*. I will here once again make use of these parameters as a means to unravel to what extent a given text satisfies basic requirements for the actor's work.

I begin with a play by Maurice Maeterlinck, *Interior*. Maeterlinck is one of the first playwrights who deliberately set out to do away with the traditional role of action.

Maeterlinck's Interior

Interior (Intérieur) was written in 1891 as one of three one-acters that the author wrote in this period.

The plot of the play could be summed up as follows:

A young woman has been found dead in a river. Two men have gone in advance of the people carrying the body to bring the tragic news to her family. They are later joined by two more persons, a girl and her sister. After having tarried a while outside the house of the family of the deceased, one of them finally goes in to leave the message.

The play accounts for the moment of hesitation. The dead girl's family is "pretty visible" behind the windows, "gathered for the evening round the lamp." The conversation between the two main characters, the Old Man and The Stranger, hiding outside in the garden, takes the form of a musing on the meaning of the death of the young girl, while the family inside their cottage "devine no evil". At the same time a procession is slowly approaching with villagers carrying the body of the dead.

The information given about the event is partly very precise. Yet it differs significantly from the one provided by X in Strindberg's *The Stronger*. The difference lies foremost in the use the author makes of basic information in the narrative, as regards both its importance for the conflict and for the forming of identities.

Conflict

In Maeterlinck's play there is no conflict between the two main characters, The Old Man and The Stranger, nor between anyone of them and Mary and Marthe, The Old Man's grandchildren who appear later in the play. Unlike the case with X and Y in Strindberg's *The Stronger*, the story is not *about* the characters. The conflict is about something beyond their control, the unexpected strike of death and the (eternal) difficulty to cope with this event. Death is a matter of necessity and so is the imperative to inform the deceased's family, a necessity underlined in the play through the inexorable movement of the procession. The conflict is not linked to any persons in particular, but is about a basic *condition humaine*, inevitable for all.

Identity

The *dramatis personae* are constantly talking about others (the girl, the family), whereas they provide very little background information about themselves. We also get to know very little about the dead girl. Her death, which is a suspected suicide for some reason that remains unknown, also comes as a surprise to The Old Man, who met her the same morning outside the church. The Stranger, who was the first one to observe the body floating in the river calls himself a stranger and says that his presence in the village is only accidental, without giving any more details as to where he comes from nor about the purpose that

brought him there. The uncertainty concerning identity is also reflected in the Old Man's remarks about the family in the house:

They look like lifeless puppets, and all the time so many things are passing in their souls. They do not themselves know what they are. (71)

There is also a commentary explicitly touching upon the element of action when MARY says: "They seem to be praying without knowing what they do ..." (78)

The remark is interesting, as it not only calls into question the consciousness of the persons appearing, but also the possible interpretations of their doings. The very last line of the play is also interesting in this context:

THE STRANGER:

The child has not awakened! (87)

The child in her dreams finds herself in another dimension, unconscious of the tragedy unfolding itself around her. Thus she becomes a metaphor of the general human unawareness of basic existential conditions suggested throughout the whole play.

Someone has to go into the house and deliver to the family inside the news about their daughter's death, and the old man is for some reason bound to be this person. Thus, even in the situation when he discusses this with his granddaughter, there is never any question of a new decision. He has no alternative. When finally he goes in this is not the result of an insight that calls for action, as is the case in Strindberg's *The Stronger*. The old man takes this step with all the unawareness that has been expressed previously in the play. Everyone is caught in the great enigma regarding by whose underlying purpose death has struck this young woman.

Identity, Time, Place, Intention, Personal/Social Relationship

In *The Stronger* Strindberg gives his characters the schematic names Madame X and Mademoiselle Y, designations that make them stand out almost as specimens in a scientific test. Still they are given detailed characterisation in the form of more or less implicit information on important parts of their

respective antecedents. In Maeterlinck's play we do not see anything of this. We do not know anything about the Old Man's life before the morning of the very day, when he met the deceased girl alive for the last time. The Stranger is nothing but a stranger. We are not informed about the background of any other person appearing or mentioned in the play, the Old Man's granddaughter, the villagers carrying the dead, the family in the house behind the window. And as to the dead young woman herself, the mysteriously absent main character around whom the play circulates, we are expressly informed that we will never understand her fate, nor, as a consequence, anything about her person. It is not only that Maeterlinck omits elements ordinarily to be expected in a presentation of dramatic characters, like less accomplished writers often do. Rather he transfers this information to the mystic sphere conjured up by the play as a whole.

The play is conceived in respect of the three Units, which is another similarity with Strindberg's *The Stronger*. The time of the play is also the time of the action. The Old Man had met the girl outside the church, which justifies the conclusion that the events in the play take place on Sunday evening, on a sacred day. *The Stronger* is also set on a festive day, Christmas Eve. This is important for the play, but for its pure social implications and without any reference to the sanctity of the day. In Maeterlinck's play the selection of day of the week is yet another element that builds up for the solemnity of the scenic events. Or, rather, it blurs the matter of fact character of temporality and could be seen as suggestive of some "higher" meaning also in this respect.

The questions formulated in "the five Ws" and similar checklists for actors are means to uncover the spatial/temporal situatedness of the character, and to find out the motivational and intentional pattern behind his actions. It enables the actor to discover an identity and a task in the assumed situation. As has also been claimed earlier, for example in connection with what has been called Stanislavski's "Red Square experience" (see page 104), the use of such tools rather corresponds to basic existential needs for the actor than to any quest for realism. It is simply an obstacle to any person on or outside the stage to act without an idea about how his actions are situated.

Using an actor for a character in a fictional story means incarnating this character in real time and space. Again, the problem is not that an actor is

a realist by habit, but rather that he is *real*. It could be that the sense of being a person with consciousness and intention is only an illusion, a social construct or whatever. Still, this first-personal dimension is a precondition common to all humans, as has been pointed out by, among others, Dan Zahavi in this dissertation. And without it any person, and not only an actor, loses every idea as to who is actually performing the acts, how and for what purpose. This existential delimitation is a basic delimitation for fictional acting as well, as pointed out by Stanislavski in his "Red Square" example. These are obstacles that actors have to face when working with texts like for example Maeterlinck's *Interior*.

The idea of given circumstances and objective does not help the actor here. An actor appearing in Maeterlinck's *Interior* will search in vain for answers to such basic questions about what he is doing in the situation. He must adapt himself to the general unspokenness that is characteristic of the play. Once he sets out to formulate answers to the enigmas expressed in the script, he is, by this very token, working against the spirit of the play, its concept. Instead, his first task is actually to embody the notion of an enigma. It seems rather likely that this clash between sublime aims on the part of the writer and basic matters of fact for the person whose task it is to embody them is an important background to Maeterlinck's negative opinion about actors, and his inclination to replace them with marionettes.

Now, the interesting feature about this problem is not that it is insoluble. Again, in fact it is not, as actors develop different strategies to come to grips with it or, rather, get around it. The interesting thing is that the problem exists. Further that it is not primarily about how actors are educated, but rather, as has been demonstrated, about how human beings interact with the world and create a first-person awareness. A human being cannot act without a purpose. Neither can an actor. A human being becomes confused when he does not know what situation he finds himself in. So is an actor. The coincidences we have found in Chapter four as regards the actor's work and writings about human agency, human consciousness, human intention, human empathic understanding, are also demonstrated in a negative sense, when the actor is deprived of such elements in the material that he is offered in the text. He then has to provide imaginatively for these elements himself, but, importantly, this is no longer a matter of the relationship between the text and the embodied action, but

conversely of filling up a rift between the two. Nor is it a part of the concept of the text, which is rather often to show a person *without* the presupposition of such human needs. Thus, for the actor, it becomes, first and foremost, a matter of how to survive in an aporetic situation. For Maeterlinck the self in the basic, existential understanding was a mere banality. Thus, for example, he is not heading for the self of the actor merging with the self of the character, but for a metaphysical "true self", "*le moi véritable*".

This "true self" is unsituated and, in the end, a pure matter of faith, not of interaction with the world or given circumstances. In fact it is the very opposite.

As has been pointed out at the end of Chapter four, it is by the analogy that one can make between an actor's conditions on stage and human being-in-the-world that the interest emerges as to the work of the actor and the ideas in cognitive science and the philosophy of mind referred to in that section. I have demonstrated this with reference to important writers on acting and actor training.

Fauconnier and Turner view the relationship between the actor and the role as a matter of "conceptual integration": the role emerges in the blend between the actor's actions and those of the character. Obviously, in connection with drama without action, a blend that goes via action is not part of the concept. It is not possible to establish how a blend can take place anyway, or how it fails to take place, from a reading of the text alone. There is, as yet, no qualified literature about acting method, comparable to the one we have consulted so far in this dissertation, that deals with conceptual blending in actionless theatre. How individual actors cope with theatre texts with or without action is not an issue in this dissertation. Thus I can so far only account for the highly interesting challenges this text offers the actors.

These challenges are not necessarily interesting in the acting-spectating perspective. Often the audience does not even reflect on how the actors come to grips with their tasks. But, again, this dissertation is not about acting-spectating, but about the relation between text and embodied action on stage, as this relationship unfolds itself in the process of assimilating the text. The thesis is that this process activates cognitive processes that have also attracted interest within contemporary cognitive science and philosophy of mind, and

which pertain to how a human being interacts with the world and with other humans.

Szondi writes about Maeterlinck that he has substituted situation for action. It could be added, though, that this situation is very incomplete, and even that the incompleteness of the situation is a central theme in the play.

In *Interior* Maeterlinck expresses a scepticism regarding human action. The main ground for this is epistemological. Maeterlinck's scepticism affects three elements: firstly, action proper. As Valency writes about Maeterlinck's eight fairy-tale plays, his "Gothic plays", one could also claim about *Interior* that

the philosophy that is implied is completely deterministic. The characters are passive. Things happen to them and they react like automata; they resist nothing, and barely protest. There is only the sense of doom, the scream of anguish, and the question, Why? (82)

Maeterlinck's scepticism also affects the possibility of human knowledge. No new facts influence the doings of the characters. Given facts only yield new questions, and thus remain unfit to act on. Finally, there is scepticism as to the capacity of language to express truth. In *Interior* this is foremost expressed in Maeterlinck's frequent use of the stage direction "silence". As Valency points out, Maeterlinck means that essential communication takes place in silence (68).

It is not least by virtue of this scepticism vis-à-vis action, knowledge and language that Maeterlinck becomes a precursor of important directions in modern drama. *Interior* is not only one of the first specimens of "drama without action". It also exemplifies what was later to be called language scepticism, "*Sprachskepsis*".

To sum up the characteristics of Maeterlinck's *Interior*, the actions in the play are not just what the figures do. Behind the actions hide metaphysical forces whose presence can only be vaguely felt by the characters. The play depicts a situation which is rather a cosmic one than a context of circumstances that call for action. The interaction between the characters is less active than tentative and pondering. The characters do not involve the audience in their actions, but are displayed in a state of irresolution. Mysterious fatality rather than

the actions of the character stands in the focus. The incapacity of reason and language to deal with truth is thematized. Even from the reading of the text one can see that the play has a strong visuality. A throughgoing contrast between speech and recurring silence can be seen as a musical element. The play was originally written for marionettes, i.e. the movement is thought of as being "choreographed", elevated. The play is poetical, i.e. it expresses a vision rather than focusing on interaction between the characters. There is a ritual element present for example in the central importance of the approaching procession with the dead. There are also other features that conjure up a solemn, quasi-religious mood.

SYMBOLISM

In the same period as Maeterlinck wrote his early plays there was a renewed interest among artists and intellectuals in Paris in popular and historical theatre forms like marionettes and shadow plays at theatres such as *Petit théâtre de Marionettes* and *Chat noir*, *Le Cercle funambulesque* and so on. This theatre favoured epic and poetic elements, visuality and style, as well as a combination of popular and religious motives, features that to various degrees and in various forms were to recur in avant-garde theatre throughout the 20th century. A close collaboration between representatives of avant-garde theatre and prominent figures within visual arts became typical of symbolist theatres and their predecessors in late 19th century Paris, thus anticipating the theatre subsequently created by visual artists, such as Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Schreyer and Schlemmer, as well as anticipating the close connections between visual artists and experiments with happenings and performances in the last years of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st.

A highly acclaimed writer at the time when Maeterlinck conceived his first dramas was Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Maeterlinck frequented his company in the 1880s and was strongly influenced by his ideas about theatre and drama. Out of Villiers' six dramas it was *Axel* that became particularly important for the evolution of symbolist theatre. Villiers transformed the play's originally conventional dramatic structure into an excessively long philosophical play more suitable for reading and contemplation than for staging (Deak 45). In a spirit reminiscent of pre-Raphaelite art the drama reveals a penchant for

mysticism, legend and medieval settings. In *Axel* a Rosicrucian synthesis of Hermetic-Cabbalistic tradition, Christianity, and alchemy is projected into the time of the Crusades. This tradition was part of late Romanticism and influenced symbolism and its predecessors. In Villier's Gnostic view man is an alien on earth and when his spirit is awakened he strives to raise himself to the ultimate God through a process of initiation. On February 28 1884 Villiers gave a public lecture entitled "*Axel*, an original drama in prose. Reading and commentary. New dramatic literature". According to Deak's interpretation of the title of the lecture, it "indicates a vision of a conceptual, abstract theatre that much of the avant-garde and modern theatre of the twentieth theatre corresponds to". According to Deak we find these ideas not only in Maeterlinck, but also in Artaud, with the difference that Villiers, unlike for example Maeterlinck, was unable to invent a dramatic structure within which he could realize his ideas about a theatre of intellectual emotions and abstract, transcendental ideas. And, in Deak's formulation:

When Villiers stated in his lecture on *Axel* that plot, dramatic character, and action were only secondary to his play, he separated the dramatic genre, the theatrical apparatus, from the actual meaning of the play. It is as if the way the play is perceived and understood has nothing to do with the particular genre, but depends solely on the transcendental concept it reenacts – as if the play functions completely outside of literary and theatrical discourse in a purely thematic and ideological context. (50–51)

Interestingly, too, the production of *Axel* was announced as "a recitation". This is an early example of how recitation becomes a theatrical form in its own right, something that was also to recur in theatre experiments throughout the 20th century, and which has also influenced other theatre forms.

The importance of Villiers de l'Isle Adam was so great that for some time it even overshadowed that of Stéphane Mallarmé³⁸, historically the most prominent figure of the literary symbolist movement. Like Villiers, Mallarmé for some time entertained the idea of making himself a living as a playwright. And as is also the case with Villiers the frequency of his appearance in the repertoire does not give a true picture of his actual importance.

Mallarmé ventured to create a drama that was poetic. Early in his career he

worked on two plays, *Hérodiade* and *Faune*. The latter, a play of 400 verses, was submitted by him to the Comédie Française. Here the lecturers Banville and Coquelin found the verse admirable but objected that the play as a whole lacked plot and dramatic interest. The disappointed writer then decided to turn his plays into poems. Other writers who read Mallarmé's plays at an early stage saw in them a new form for dramatic composition. Van Lerberghe, who with his *Les Fleurs*, considered by many the first symbolist play, as well as Maeterlinck with *La Princesse Maleine*, both show signs of influence from Mallarmé. One of Mallarmé's aims became to reconcile the demands of poetry and theatre. In this he was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's essay "Philosophy of Composition". Mallarmé came to the conclusion that what should be depicted was *not the thing, but the effect it creates*" (qtd. in Deak 63). According to Mallarmé, Poe's poem *The Raven* did not consist of words but of intentions and sensations, and he argued that it was composed "consciously and symphonically with regard to desired effects". He also insisted that *Philosophy of Composition* was, in fact, a theory of theatre (Deak 65).

Poe's essay abounds with ideas that were to form the nucleus of symbolist theatre and that thus also pave the way for future theatrical avant-garde. Deak applies Mallarmé's reading of Poe's essay to Mallarmé's own play *Hérodiade*. Deak's question is as follows: "If Mallarmé can turn a fragment of a play into a poem, then is a reverse operation possible?" (74)

The question has retained its actuality for modern theatre until the present day.

Deak refers to a letter where Mallarmé analyzes his own poem *L'Azur*. "The reconciliation", Deak argues, "of drama with poetry is achieved mainly through the speaker of the poem: the poetic persona which, in 'L'Azur', is both contemplative (self-reflective) and dramatic, since it takes a direct part in the action" (73). Deak sees the same pattern in the Scene from *Hérodiade*. In Deak's words: "Hérodiade is the sole actor and spectator of her own dilemma, a tragic dilemma because the outcome can only be death" (77). Arguably there is a strong link between this writing mode and the one applied by Maeterlinck in *Interior*, where for example The Old Man is at the same time an agent in and a spectator of his fate of being the one who must bring the tragic news to the family of the deceased. The character of the Old Man also stands out as an attempt to

"break away from the narcissistic theatre of self, and to move to a theatre of universal contemplation, where the impersonal hero is an 'aptitude' in which the cosmic drama can manifest itself" (83). The interesting and new feature in this dramatic thinking is 1. that the conflict in the play is not impersonated in antagonistic characters, 2. that an impersonal, unknown cosmic force becomes a main agent, and, 3. that the main character is only passively subjected to the demands of this outer force. While in classical tragedy destiny is a force for the protagonist to struggle *against*, and a call for action, necessity here rather obliterates the possibility of action.

With a biographer of Mallarmé as his support, Jacques Scherer, Deak links the three works *Hérodiade*, *Igitur* and *Un Coup de Dés* with Mallarmé's unfinished project "*Le Livre*", which was intended to become his ultimate work, containing all knowledge, at the same time as being a total work of art, but in a sense different from that of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In the manuscript of Mallarmé's *Book* there are speculations on the relationship of genres. The ones most mentioned are not only poetry, drama, hymn and theatre, but also the newspaper which should, according to *The Book*, be integrated into a total work of art (Deak 86). Scherer has been able to reconstruct many of Mallarmé's intentions with *The Book*, revealing a complex interplay between poetry, drama and theatre. *The Book* was intended to become an Orphic explanation of the universe and, by the occult law of reciprocity, also an explanation of man. Each human existence was seen as a realization of the totality of the universe. *The Book* was to embrace not only all previous events, but all that could possibly happen within a given system (Deak 85). Mallarmé's aim was to create with words a cosmic structure in accordance with the image of the Absolute, and the resulting work of art would be no less than reality itself (Valency 32).

The Book was to be dispersed according to a certain system made up by Mallarmé in order to make himself the only owner of the entire work. Mallarmé would perform readings of *The Book* in front of a selected audience and in two sessions, or "operations", each forty-five minutes long. Mallarmé's readings were so planned that one could speak of a complete *mis-en-scène*. Mallarmé is an actor, transforming himself into the impersonal performer/operator. His impersonal performance is on the boundary of acting, recitation and reading, but, according to Deak, "since it involves both self-transformation and public

presence, it can be defined as acting". It is a "performance in the sense of a task-oriented activity" (90). Deak concludes "that Mallarmé's text is a script which, in order to appear in its full complexity, must be performed, that is, embodied" (90, 92). This practice was to be taken up by symbolist theatres, and recitation of poetry was early presented as a special kind of theatrical performance by Théâtre d'Art (149).

The Book was intended to be anonymous and unsigned, reflecting Mallarmé's idea of "the disappearance of the author". In this idea, Deak claims, Mallarmé was a precursor of Barthes' and Foucault's idea about the death/disappearance of the writer/author, as well as of ideas typical of French structuralism and post-structuralism as a whole (87).

The importance for the theatre of Villiers' *Axel* and Mallarmé's great project is rather the inspirational force they exerted on other writers. As for themselves, they did not succeed in giving their ideas a form that was suitable for theatrical practice. Even in these early and seminal attempts to create a new theatre they instantiated the utopian and sometimes deliberately unpractical attitude that was to become a recurrent trait in experimental theatre even afterwards. As was also the case with the theatre of Craig and Artaud, their projects came to make theatre a substantiation of a complex idea rather than something that grew out of theatrical practice itself.

Another important inspiration for the French symbolists came from Richard Wagner, who for some time resided in Paris. He was a frequent host to his French admirers, playing and singing excerpts from his works, discussing music, art and philosophy with them, and turning them into fervent Wagnerians. A special publication, *La Revue Wagnerienne*, was issued 1885–88. One of Wagner's great admirers was Charles Baudelaire, who speaks of Wagner's music as if it was a poetic work and does so in terms of Poe's "Philosophy of Composition". Baudelaire claims that the devices of music constitute a language comparable to the language of poetry. As Margaret Rose points out in her *The Symbolist Theatre Tradition*, it was mainly under the influence of Wagner that he worked out his idea about *correspondances* (21). In 1886 Théodore de Wyzewa published three important theoretical articles *Notes sur La Peinture Wagnérienne*, *Notes sur La Littérature Wagnérienne* and *Notes sur La Musique Wagnérienne*, where he indicated how every art can become a synthesis of art as a whole. Following

Schopenhauer and Wagner, Wyzewa considers music to be the highest form of art, because there is no physical intermediary between the signs and the audience. Music acts directly upon the audience's will (107). For Mallarmé the ideal drama would be a recital by a single actor in which the music of the word would replace the sound of instruments in the pit. In his opinion ballet would have superior dramatic possibilities (65). For Mallarmé theatre was a utopian project. Thus in his *Chronique de Paris* he formulated what could perhaps function as a heading for a considerable part of early avant-garde theatre: "que l'art dramatique de notre temps, vaste, sublime, presque religieux, est à trouver".

Deak makes a comparison between dramatists such as Villiers and Joseph Péladan on one hand and Mallarmé and Maeterlinck on the other. The former write their plays as narratives of inner development, in which parts of this inner development are parts of the dramatic plot. Plays like Mallarmé's *Hérodiade* and all of Maeterlinck's "static dramas" thematize the liminal situation. Elements from these plays are to be found in plays by Ibsen, such as *The Lady from the Sea*, *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder*. Deak argues that some of Strindberg's plays re-enact failed rites of passage (128). Now, Ibsen and the late Strindberg, despite leaving important contributions to the symbolist stage in Paris and exerting a seminal influence on the development of modern Western drama, always retained in other respects important elements of traditional dramaturgy. Therefore here they will not be considered candidates of "drama without action".

This could be illustrated for example by Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* from 1907, which is widely regarded as highly significant for the development of new drama from expressionism to absurdist theatre. The criteria used here as the touchstone for drama *with* action are based primarily on what is here called the "BSI" structure. If a drama is responsive to questions as to what has happened before the action starts, if the drama starts up in a clear situation and if at least the main characters intentionally strive toward distinguishable ends, it cannot be characterized as a "drama without action".

An examination of Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* leads to the conclusion that it responds to these criteria. The upshot is that *The Ghost Sonata*, despite its radical novelty in many respects, is rather traditional in this particular one. Unlike

symbolist writers like Maeterlinck, Strindberg, when abandoning realism, largely holds on to his earlier ways of forming the identities of his characters.

Symbolist Visuality

An important contribution to symbolist drama was Pierre Quillard's *La fille aux mains coupées* (The Girl with Cut-off Hands) premiered at the symbolist theatre *Théâtre d'Art* in 1891. The play consists of texts in both prose and verse. The highly evocative prose parts are used to introduce the dialogue parts, which are in verse. The use of scenery in the *Théâtre d'Art* setting was very sparse. In an article, intended as an answer to the criticism the play was subjected to and entitled "*De l'utilité absolue de la mise-en-scène exacte*", Quillard argues that language creates the scenery as well as the rest. While thus stressing the priority of the poetic text, Quillard also coined an expression that was to become highly influential and "a belief, a gospel" for Paul Fort, the leader of *Théâtre d'Art*. The actors brought out the musical aspect of the language. The verse was declaimed in monotonous, unexpressive voices.

Despite being, in the first place the realization of a "theatre of voices", the staging of Quillard's play also brings with it a visual effect that was to heavily influence the theatre to come: the production marked the invention of symbolist stage design, at the same time as introducing a "flat" character of the stage that was to be taken up by many other theatres (Deak 14,2–48).

Symbolist Acting

Deak calls the acting of symbolist theatre "its most problematic aspect". He quotes Victor Hugo, who once objected to the lack of personification in the declamatory style of eighteen-century theatre. The actor in this theatre was more of an intermediary between two realities, the reality of the play and the reality of the audience, without himself taking part in either reality. In both romantic and realistic theatre the actor became more of an impersonator. At the beginning this was brought about by means of gestures and facial expressions. Later came the idea of a complete transformation. In the theatre of symbolism acting again came closer to eighteenth century declamatory style than to the tendencies of romantic or realistic theatre. The symbolists developed this to the point of even calling the existence of the live actor into question. But they

did this without attempting to actually rid their theatre of him. One of the most important symbolist actors was Georgette Camée, who developed a kind of psalmodizing style of declamation. According to Deak her way of acting could be related to two sources: specific theories about symbolist acting proposed by Maeterlinck, and theories of poetic diction, "verbal orchestration", developed by the poets themselves at recitation sessions in cabarets and cafés. The style of these poets was often described as "monotonous". The acting style of the symbolist theatres was probably adjusted from play to play, but the monotonous and "dehumanized" voice became typical not only of *Théâtre d'Art*, but of symbolist acting in general. The dehumanized acting style was also brought about by means of the hieratized gesture, slow movement, and ritualized behaviour of the actor (170–77).

Maeterlinck's negative attitude towards actors is well known, and it could be viewed as symptomatic of the difficulties that presented themselves when the plays of other symbolist playwrights as well were staged. However, it should also be remembered that Maeterlinck was generally satisfied with Lugné-Poe's acting in his plays, and that there were also other actors who obviously gained public success with symbolic texts. Besides Lugné-Poe, Kindermann mentions Susanne Desprès, Firmin Gémier and Abel Deval (94). Georgette Camée has already been mentioned here. However, it is characteristic of the actors mentioned by Kindermann that the plays they succeeded in were written by Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann and Jarry, authors who are not fully representative of the symbolist strive for the questioning of dramatic action.

Odette Aslan summarizes that the gestures were reduced to vocal expression, and that the actors psalmodized and murmured in a way that made it difficult for the performance to pass the ramp. Under Lugné-Poe at *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*, the actors adopted a monotone droning. "There is a tragic droning, why shouldn't there be a symbolist droning" a Belgian critic wrote, thus suggesting a resemblance between the very new and something extremely traditional. According to Odette Aslan in her *l'Acteur au XX^e siècle* the actors had an ecstatic style, visionary, hallucinatory, like their director himself, who had been nicknamed "le clergyman somnambule". Meyerhold's adaptation of symbolist acting, which was a stage in his development of a non-realistic theatre, was developed in collaboration with the great actress Vera Kommisarjevskaya. Still,

his version of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande* was judged as "a boring show, too slow and too monotonous" (101). Such reactions, of course, could be explained out of the the public's lack of familiarity with the novelties presented. But they could also be seen as suggestive of something genuinely problematic in the relation between the text and the actor's work.

Such a view is supported by the above analysis of Maeterlinck's play *Interior*, which leads to the conclusion that the material provided by the author is not sufficient for the actor to situate his actions, and thus to actually come to grips with his character.

Besides this theatre of solemn recitation and sublime gestuality *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* also produced a seminal work in the grotesque genre with Jarry's *King Ubu*. Its opening in December 1896 and the mythified scandal it gave rise to has gone down into history as the date of birth of avant-garde theatre. Deak recalls the reaction the chief taste arbiter of symbolist theatre, Mallarmé himself, who in Jarry's play saw the great achievement of symbolist drama. In a letter to Jarry he wrote about Ubu that "he enters into the domain of highest taste" (qtd. in Deak 243).

Ubu Roi was written in the tradition of puppet theatre, and the author, who strongly influenced the staging of his play, wanted the actors to imitate the movements of marionettes.

In terms of the text-scene relation two features seem to be of special interest: one is the way in which the author himself influenced the *mis en scène* and made his own design of costumes and props, thus expanding his preoccupation with the text into a more general dealing with the performance itself. What Jarry did was to create a play not only as an image of reality but as an image of his *vision* of the reality. In this respect he also foreshadowed the plays of Beckett. On the other hand there is also a relationship between the way Jarry conceives *King Ubu* and traditional dramaturgy. Jarry's play is not a "drama without action", but his way of parodying classical drama is, of course, another form of calling the principle of traditional dramaturgical patterns into question. The effect is achieved by making a rather classical dramatic structure propelled by mundane vice instead of tragic desire.

Hans-Thies Lehmann in his *Postdramatisches Theater* acknowledges the importance of symbolist theatre for "postdramatic" theatre. He particularly

stresses the undramatic and static in symbolist plays, the tendency to monological forms, as well as its poetic character, in accordance with Maeterlinck's idea: "La pièce de théâtre doit être avant tout un poème". From here, Lehmann argues, there is a line to the "neolyrical" way Klaus-Michael Grüber staged his "Faust" and Robert Wilson his Hamlet, "als Ort einer Écriture [...], in der alle Bestandteile des Theaters zu Buchstaben eines poetischen 'Textes' werden" (Lehmann 95). Valency describes Maeterlinck's world as taking place in a void, which is also a metaphysical void, without either God or Providence. It is a world that "anticipates the hopelessness of the world of Ionesco" (70). Lehmann also accords great importance to the element of ritual and fate in symbolist theatre. As contemporary exponents of this tendency he sees the mystic and animistic traits in Tadeusz Kantor, as well as Heiner Müller's world of historical ghosts and spirits. Lehmann sees this tradition of fatality as necessary for the understanding of all new theatre (Postdramatisches Theater 97).

In 1891 Jean Thorel published a scholarly essay on the relations of German romanticism to the Symbolist movement in France. The famous musicologist Théodore de Wyzéwa was the first one to popularize the idea in France that myth was a symbolic representation of reality on a level that civilization had obscured. It was an idea that through new psychology was to have interesting consequences in literature and anthropology. This adds a special dimension to Wagner's use of myths that, on the other hand, was never adopted by Mallarmé or Maeterlinck, according to Valency because this understanding of myths lies close to allegory, which was alien to the very idea of symbolism. Maeterlinck, instead, invented his "Tragique quotidien", the idea that important moments of life take place not by means of tragic events but in often unnoticed moments of everyday life. According to Maeterlinck there is, besides the indispensable dialogue, another dialogue that seems superfluous, but is the one that the "soul truly hears". The idea that souls communicate through channels other than those available in the conscious intellect was a fundamental tenet of symbolism (Valency 76–78).

The Ontological and Epistemological Background to Maeterlinck's Symbolism

Maeterlinck was highly influenced by German idealistic philosophy. From this he develops his own version of antirationalism, which also makes him

foreshadow the postmodern critique of logic and "logocentrism". According to Gorceix Novalis' revolt against the rationalism of the Enlightenment had lost nothing of its actuality for Maeterlinck's generation. One opposed an idea that confined reality only to what could be within the reach of intellectual knowledge and which denied the idea of "invisible truth", which could be reached by means of the soul, the spirit and the unconscious. In Maeterlinck's writings the soul is thought of as the "profound self", following Novalis' idea that "the mystic way leads to the depths". Maeterlinck studied Novalis in a period very close to when he wrote his three one-acters during 1890–91. For Maeterlinck the combined influence from Novalis and the Flemish mystic Ruysbroeck had a veritable maieutic importance. He reproaches Plato and Plotinos for reaching their mysticism via discursive thought, and praises Ruysbroeck for being guided by "l'âme intuitive". As a counterpart to Novalis' *Verstand* he sets the French esprit or intelligence. "*La raison pure*" is resplendent at the top of his system, an idea reminiscent of Novalis' notion of *Gemüt*, the soul. For the French symbolists *Gemüt* is the basis of their idea of knowledge and of their aesthetics. Novalis' "Poesie ist Darstellung des Gemüts, der innern Welt in ihrer Gesamtheit" becomes in Maeterlinck's translation: "La poésie est l'art d'exiter l'âme". *Gemüt* in this understanding becomes the foyer of mystique knowledge that proceeds via intuition, not via deduction.

The idea of the "soul" stands close to Maeterlinck's idea of the self. Inspired by a passage in Novalis' *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, "Mich führt alles in mich selbst", Maeterlinck demands a return to the self. And he warns against confounding "le moi que nous possédons" with the self, the superficial object of traditional psychology. "C'est un moi plus profond et plus inépuisable que le moi des passions et de la raison pure" (Gorceix 123).

The difference Maeterlinck establishes between "*esprit*" and "*âme*" brings with it a repudiation of traditional psychology for the benefit of a "transcendental psychology". With Novalis he sees our "so called" self as only a reflection of our true self. Maeterlinck incites us to forcefully turn ourselves from the sphere of consciousness, from the everyday self, and to descend to the secret abysses of the "profound self". This is a path recommended for the man in search of truth as well as for the poet. On this point there is no separation between poetry and knowledge (Gorceix (129–31).

The idea of the self also has a bearing on the idea of the unconscious. It is conceived as a "true self", which is unmemorable, unlimited, universal, and probably immortal. It is a self that lives on another level and in another world than our intelligence (136).

Gorceix remarks that even if the German romantics did not invent the unconscious at the end of the 18th century, their merit still is to have introduced it to literature in the form of poetic symbols. Maeterlinck adopts a similar attitude of inquiring into the obscure depths of the self. Another influence came to him, as well as to other symbolists, from Schopenhauer and his disciple Eduard von Hauptmann. Maeterlinck mentions Schopenhauer beside Carlyle and Kant as his important philosophical influences and he claims to have studied Schopenhauer "entirely".

For Maeterlinck the unconscious is situated outside the domains accessible through intelligence, on another level and in another world. It ignores time and space. In this respect Maeterlinck connects to Schopenhauer, who situates will outside the spatio-temporal sphere.

At any rate, one should never confound Maeterlinck's idea of the unconscious with the psychological or physiological unconscious or with the subconscious of the psychoanalysts. The subconscious in his understanding is not contained in the conscious. For Hartmann the "absolute unconscious" inherent in the will and in the representation is the spirit of the world and the creative essence of existing objects.

While agreeing in principle with the fatal pessimism of Schopenhauer Maeterlinck also intends to transcend it, to elucidate the obscurities, to defeat the dark, for the benefit of the human race and its future. He looks forward to the day when one has studied the unconscious, its skills, its preferences, its antipathies, its mystic awkwardness. In this way, he argues, it will be possible to bridle the monster that has haunted us under the name of Chance, Fortune and Destiny, and which, according to him, we nourish in the same way as a blind man nourishes a lion that could devour him. This aim can only be reached on the road that leads from our conscious to our unconscious. Gorceix puts the question, whether it is not this unconscious that is the stuffing of Maeterlinck's theatre (Gorceix 143–51).

RADICAL MODERNISM

It will not be possible here to make a survey of Western "Drama without action" in its entirety, but I am going to exemplify the phenomenon with instances that I find particularly representative. Such instances are Kokoschka's *Mörder Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer Hope of Women*) and Kandinski's *Der Gelbe Klang* (*The Yellow Sound*). One such instance is further the theatre connected with the *Sturm* group in Berlin, most particularly during the first ten years of its existence from 1910 to 1920. This theatre exemplifies an expressionism that is more radical than later and better known examples, such as the theatre of Kaiser and Toller, and that is thus also more interesting to compare with radical experiments in recent theatre.

Oskar Kokoschka: *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*

A radical redefinition of theatre and drama was produced by the painter Oskar Kokoschka with his *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*. It was premiered in *Gartentheater der Internationalen Kunstschau zu Wien* on 4 August 1909. But Kokoschka had already written it two years earlier. The production attracted great attention.

The story line of the play could be summed up as follows:

A woman meets a man, to whom she is attracted by desire filled with conflict. The man kills the woman.

The action unfolds in an unspecified place. Warriors, torches and towers conjure up an archaic, legendary setting. The characters are *Man*, *Woman*, *Men* and *Women*, and the list of characters thus stands out as consisting of personified generalities. *Man* appears with *Men*. Attracted to them the *Women* appear with *Woman*. *Woman* meets *Man*. The *Women* are frightened by *Man* who orders his men to brand her with his sign. *Woman* attacks *Man* with a knife and inflicts a deep wound on him. *Man* is locked up in the tower, and *Men* and *Women* go like liberated individuals to enjoy each other. *Woman* is attracted to *Man*, who dwells in the tower behind bars. *Man* arises, opens the gate of his prison, kills *Woman* and then the fleeing *Men* and *Women*.

Kokoschka builds on contrasting elements: the female and the male sex, the individual and the collective. A theme seems to be the sweetness of desire

versus the dark world of passion and the vicinity of the latter to wounding and death. One should be careful not to draw too far-going conclusions on the basis of the archetypal role gallery. The author himself has been eager to defend his play from simplistic decodings. After all, Kokoschka is a painter, and the play is not conceived only as a dramatic text, but as a highly visual scenic event. In Kokoschka's own staging the performance was full of spectacular visual and sonic effects: face and body painting, torchlight and screams (*Mein Leben* 65–66). In his description the performance stands out as a kind of total art work, "orchestrated" in a "musical" way. According to the script, when *Man* kills *Woman* this takes place with a shower of sparks in a climax that opens up understanding of the play as a metaphor for erotic union.

One seeks in vain in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* for a complex pattern of circumstances or motives for the characters' doings. The play does not respond to the "five Ws". The driving force is desire as an elementary force, and there seems to be no need of additional motivations.

Meaning seems to lie rather in connotations. "Warriors" connote turbulence, war, crisis, the vicinity of death, but also male power and violence. The correspondent connotation of this on the female side is sexual desire and erotic power. Through this a struggle is established between primal forces made even more acute by the primitivistic touch and the mythological setting.

There is a presentation of the main characters: to *Woman's* question about who *Man* is the answer is frightening images, as it seems with erotic overtones, of killed women and animals. When questioning who *Woman* is, *Man* gets the answer that she divines what no one has felt and that animals follow her call. The characterizations yet again single out the two main figures from the others, the "ordinary" men and women, and make them assume a mythological dimension as representatives of ur-male and ur-female.

Mankind is depicted as subject to imperative, primitive forces. These forces could not be identified as divine presence in a mystical sense, as in the case of some symbolist dramas. The forces present themselves as natural instincts, the one identified as sexual desire, the other as an equally irresistible attraction to violence and death. The strong erotic element in *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* and the preoccupation with death has been given a personal explanation: according to Kokoschka's autobiography *Mein Leben*, when he wrote the play he

found himself in a life situation where questions about Eros and Thanatos had become important to him. Not he alone, he writes, but the entire world was on a "dangerous road" and there was a general feeling of discomfort with existence. "Nicht ich allein befand mich auf einem gefährlichem Weg. Alle Welt schien ein Unbehagen am Dasein zu ergreifen". And, he continues, the belief in the possibility of personal action and in the forming of one's own future seemed lost. "Auch das Vertrauen in die Möglichkeiten persönlichen Handelns und Gestaltens der eigenen Zukunft schien verbraucht" (62).

The commentary is a rare example of how the loss of action is related to a personal and historical situation. The element of deep pessimism and resignation inherent in the play is reflected and partly explained in the quotation. It recalls a similar trait in the writings of the symbolists and Maeterlinck, as well as, of course, in Schopenhauer, one of their ideological ancestors. The difference in Kokoschka's case is the description of this ambience as a kind of *Zeitgeist*.

Murderer, Hope of Women is sometimes described as the seminal example of theatrical expressionism. Justification of this should perhaps be measured against the importance of other forerunners such as Frank Wedekind and Arno Holz. But, without doubt, if Kokoschka rightly remembers the period when he conceived *Murderer, Hope of Women*, the questioning of action was closely linked to an experience of what was going on in the world and in society. Interestingly, Kokoschka here not only speaks for himself but bears witness to *Alle Welt*, the world, in some sense.

But what is it that makes *Murderer, Hope of Women* a "drama without action"? Thomas Schober conversely demonstrates how the play actually nicely conforms to the Aristotelian pattern of dramatic composition, with exposition, construction of conflict, peripethy and final retardation (68). Now, again, the presence of this general pattern is not sufficient here to qualify a dramatic text as a "drama with action". The most crucial element is still the deliberateness and consciousness in the action, and the way the play complies with the BSI pattern. This is also what makes the difference between Kokoschka's play and a Greek tragedy, King Oedipus say. Also in this play there is a dominant element of fatality: Oedipus is bound to commit acts inscribed in his destiny. The difference is that in Oedipus' case these actions come about through deliberate choice, in response to actual circumstances. Oedipus is just unaware that destiny operates in and

through these very circumstances. Furthermore, the acts of slaying the father and marrying his mother have taken place prior to the actions and makes up for the plot, which rather consists of a legal process, the one he unknowingly directs against himself. Oedipus fulfils his destiny because of ignorance. He is not *possessed* by fatality in the way the characters in *Murderer, Hope of Women* are entirely dominated by primal instincts.

To sum up: The action in Kokoschka's *Murderer, Hope of Women* is dominated by universal principles expressing themselves in vehement passion of a primarily erotic character. The figures in the play act under the spell of these forces rather than out of their own deliberation. The story is centred on the murder committed by the violent *Man*, but this seems to be caused by a necessity inherent in the transcendent dynamic between this figure and the one of *Woman*. The play rather illustrates the operation of these underlying forces than involves the public in the causes of the actions. The trait of fatality is strong. The concept of the play is strongly visual (something that is further underlined by extant sketches and drawings Kokoschka made in connection with the staging). The fact that the narrative, in fact, is a fulfillment of a necessity gives the play a ritual character.

Kandinsky: Der Gelbe Klang

Another play that strongly influences the expressionism of the *Sturm* group was also written by a painter. It is Kandinski's *The Yellow Sound (Der Gelbe Klang)*. The play was written in 1909, two years after Kokoschka wrote *Murderer, Hope of Women*. Kandinski created a play with a radically new structure. It was conceived as one of three "stage compositions", in close connection with Kandinski's central theoretical writing *Concerning the Spiritual in Art (Über das Geistige in der Kunst)*. *Der gelbe Klang* was printed in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach* in 1912 and in this form disseminated among the artistic avant-garde of the time. Although the play long failed to be staged, it was thus given opportunity to exert considerable influence. A musical part was added to the text, composed by Tomas von Hartmann, but this is not extant in complete form.

In connection with *The Yellow Sound* Kandinsky wrote a theoretical commentary, *Über Bühnenkomposition*, issued the same year. The essay is Kandinsky's first treatise on what he calls a "synthetic art". But, as Thomas Schober points out,

Kandinsky himself emphasizes that in Art no theory has priority over practice (Schober 138–41).

Der gelbe Klang was conceived in seven parts, an *Introduction* followed by 6 Images. In almost every respect the play deviates from what is generally considered typical of a theatre text. In Schober's phrasing neither dialogue nor a psychologically based action structures or motivates the scenic events. "Weder Dialog noch eine psychologisch fundierte Handlung strukturieren oder motivieren das Bühnengeschehen" (Schober 133).

There is hardly any spoken text at all. The play consists mostly of stage directions. One cannot talk about any action at all, only about scenic events with elements of pantomime, music, chanting, light and colours. The list of characters with its typified figures displays certain similarities with those of both Maeterlinck's *Intérieur* and Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen*, for example *Five Warriors, A Child, A Man*. The figures have no names, they lack social context and are sometimes only characterized by their visual appearance (for example "'People in flowing garb"). A characteristic innovation is the appearance in the list of characters of *Indistinct beings*. As one cannot speak about action, can one neither speak about "given circumstances" or "situation" in an ordinary, mimetic sense. The play lacks specified time and place. The author does not care about mimetic context. The play has a fragmentary dramaturgy, to which Strindberg's *Dream Play* stands out as a remote predecessor³⁹.

The characters partly display important similarities with those in Maeterlinck's one-acters, most notably perhaps in that their visual appearance is prescribed in an explanatory text, For example:

The movements of each group are different; one proceeds quickly forward, another slowly, as I with difficulty; a third makes occasional merry leaps; another keeps turning around; a fifth comes on with solemn, theatrical steps, arms crossed; a sixth walks on tiptoe, palm upraised, etc. (281)

The spoken lines are extremely sparse. They only exist as inclusions in the totality of other sign systems: visual, musical etc. Here some examples:

Even, expressionless singing (Introduction)
 Chorus without words (Image 1)
 Recitation with different characters: ecstatic, hoarse, crying out like one possessed, nasal, slow, rapid, very indistinct (Image 2)
 Noiseless whispering (Image 3)
 Exclamations of entirely inarticulate words (Image 3)
 The word "Quiet" in a "very loud and imperative, beautiful voice" (Image 4)
 Again tonelessly whispering (Image 5)

Understandable words only appear in the text on three occasions. The text is interwoven with a succession of events that is treated musically. The content of the words is reduced and there is an emphasis on tempo and timbre.

In his essay *On Stage Composition (Über Bühnenkomposition)* Kandinsky criticizes traditional stage art in its three dominant forms, drama, opera and ballet. Drama is criticized for having lost what he calls a "cosmic" element. He claims that the external process and the external context of the plot is the form of contemporary drama.

According to Kandinsky exceptions to this general rule are plays by Maeterlinck, Ibsen and Andrejev. Kandinsky's critique of Wagner, is interesting in this context; Wagner originally exerted a decisive influence on him. Wagner, Kandinsky argues, has on the one hand obtained a connection between sound and movement, but this is, according to Kandinsky, only an external feature. By subordinating text to music Wagner on the one hand enriched the two means of expression, but on the other he did so at the expense of the inner meaning of the two. "These forms", Kandinsky writes, "are merely the mechanical reproduction (not inner collaboration) of the purposive progress of the action" (259–263).

Kandinsky finally puts forward the radical possibility to do away with action. He thus explains how his general idea of theatre could be implemented in practice:

Re (1) to take only the inner sound of an element as one's means
 Re (2) to eliminate the external procedure (= the action)
 Re (3) by means of which the external connection between the parts collapses of its own accord
 likewise,

Re (4) the external unity, and
Re (5) the inner unity place in our hands an innumerable series of means,
which could not previously have existed.
Here the only source thus becomes that of internal necessity (263)

In this essay he also explicates his use of language, which is very much in accordance with his text for *Der Gelbe Klang*:

Words as such, or linked together in sentences, have been used to create a particular 'mood', which prepares the ground of the soul and makes it receptive. The sound of the human voice has also been used purely, i.e., without being obscured by words, by the sense of the words. (264)

Kandinsky also criticizes Wagner for leaving out colour in his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and hence also the form connected with it. Yet Kandinsky's aim with his "stage compositions" seems not be to create something only visual. It is rather a way to approach the core, "the inner necessity", that according to him unites all art forms⁴⁰. He sees them as differing only in their external aspects. In their essence they are "entirely similar". This similarity comes about through the "fine vibrations" they all incite in the mind. The means by which the artist finds this vibration has its counterpart in the vibrations experienced by the recipient.

The essay ends with a brief commentary on *Der gelbe Klang*. This piece, Kandinsky writes, unifies three elements, which together form the *Inner Values* of the play: musical tone and its movement, body-mind Sound and its movement expressed by humans and objects, and a colour tone ("farbiger Ton") and its movements. The musical element comes from opera, the abstract dance from ballet and the colour tone becomes an independent meaning and is treated as an expressive means equal to the other ones. The three elements are autonomous from an external point of view and are equally treated and subordinate the inner aims.

In *The Yellow Sound* the primacy of action is done away with. But unlike Maeterlinck in his one-acters Kandinsky does not content himself with just giving room for the quiet mystery, the hidden agent. It is now another energy that has taken over the place of the through going action and which provides

the play with its meaning and form. Like Wagner Kandinsky sees music as the origin of the other arts, but he modifies this idea in relation to the form given to it by Wagner. Language becomes still more subordinate to other means of expression. Wordly meaning becomes less important than the mere sound of the voice. Kandinsky's use of senseless words and sounds must also be seen as an early experiment with "concrete poetry".

Through Kandinsky's multimedial merging of art forms space ceases to be representative. It now becomes organized only according to the demands of the artistic principles, which on the other hand does not necessarily exclude representation. Despite his preference for images Kandinsky, unlike Maeterlinck, does not allow the visual element to dominate.

With *Der gelbe Klang* Kandinsky not only created one of the most radical theatre works of early expressionism. The play still stands today as one of the fiercest attempts to do away with traditional forms and find an alternative to dramaturgy based on action. It is also a work that actually transcends the limits of theatre art.

To sum up: Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* is steered by what Kandinsky entitles "the inner necessity", which is actually not something thought of as taking place within human beings, but rather is a cosmic, i.e., in fact, external, principle operating inside them. Thus neither are the figures involved in any deliberation. There is a strong trait of fatality in the play. In Kandinsky's writings we can also read that his concept builds on a scepticism towards the possibility of language to account for reality, an expressed Language Scepticism, which can in the play be felt for example in the use of senseless speech, where the vowels are the real carriers of information. This is a musical trait in the play, which is also thought of as structured with choreographic means. Ritual elements, such as chanting recitation, are also present.

Futurist Theatre

20 February 1909 was the famous date when the futurist manifesto was published in the Paris paper *Le Figaro*. Like science and technology, futurism would be a threat to idealistic and humanistic values that traditionally formed the basis of Western culture. Within literature the futurists experimented with "free words" (*parole in libertà*), thus anticipating *lettrism* and *concretism*. Early on, Marinetti

developed an idea about theatre as the medium with which one could most easily reach and influence people. This was the origin of futurist "soirées", which were arranged on stages around Italy. Here he made public debate and disputation into a kind of improvised theatre.

One of the ideas of the futurists was that it was not the established high culture, but the wild growing vulgar culture that was the forerunner of the future.

With his *Variété*-manifesto from 1913 Marinetti launches the idea of a radical anti-theatre. The manifesto codifies the dramaturgy of the futurist soirées. Freedom is total and nothing is sacred.

The backbone of academical theatre tradition is the dramatic text as the element steering dramatic action. Therefore, the futurists reduce the text, while instead stressing other theatrical means of expression: space, movement, light and sound. Hence it also replaces logical and psychological action with the irrational and absurd. Through its irrational, improvisational character the futurist theatre anticipates not only absurdist such as Ionesco, Adamov and Beckett, but also multimedia experiments, happenings and performance, as well as the post-modern critique of "logocentrism".

The first person to experiment with a futuristic machine theatre was Giacomo Balla, who in 1914 in the *Printing Press* let 12 actors evoke a machine in the run with movement and sound. This could be seen as the start of a development that under the leadership of Meyerhold was to become the norm of the revolutionary constructivist theatre in the Soviet Union during the twenties, as well as for Oskar Schlemmer's experiments at the *Bauhausbühne*. Today it is maybe the multimedial rock concerts with their advanced technical resources and combination of sound, light and movement that take up the aesthetic ideas once formed by the futurists.

In the futurist movement forms like recitation and cabaret were integrated with the ideas about theatre. In the manifesto *The dynamic and synoptic declamation* Marinetti gives expression to ideas still echoing symbolist ideas, when he describes how in the futuristic vision the literary ego is burnt and annihilated in the great cosmic shivering, and how the declamator himself is devoured by his "dynamic and synoptic word in freedom". In a monograph on Futurism Folke Edwards discusses the connections between the futurists and the symbolists. Many symbolist groups were inspired by occultism, theosophy

and spiritism. According to Edwards such currents still exerted their influence on later artists like Marcel Duchamp, Albert Gleizes, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Kasimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian. Not even the futurists were excluded from this influence. Thus Marinetti's mythification of the machine is rather more in line with an occult view than with one developed within natural science. Edwards maintains that in futurism natural science and spiritual science only become two sides of the same thing. According to one of the canonical writings of theosophy, Madame Blavatsky's *The Hidden Side of Things* (1903) technical constructions, like ships and machines, are also animate organisms. In his exalted poems Marinetti describes the automobile and the aeroplane not as tools but as animate beings with their own will and dynamic temperament. The Futurists thus also became forerunners of the dissolution of the difference between animate and inanimate that was to recur in different forms throughout the development of avant-garde theatre (Edwards 108).

Sprachskepsis

One can read in one of Kandinsky's quotations above the following words:

The sound of the human voice has also been used purely, i.e., without being obscured by words, by the sense of the words.

The quotation must be read as an expression of *Sprachskepsis*, a phenomenon that was very important in German philosophy and literature at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Language scepticism has also sometimes been mentioned as a background to the development of modern philosophy of language, and not least of important parts of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Sprachskepsis is characterised by a doubt about the possibility of language to give an objective account of reality. The idea has its roots in writings such as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the (uncanonical but influential) Nietzsche compile *Der Wille zur Macht*. One important text is also Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Chandos letter*, where the fictional writer says: "Mein Fall ist, in Kürze, dieser: Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen" (106).

And where he compares words to whirls, and claims that in the end they only

lead to emptiness (107).

A prominent representative of linguistic scepticism was the German philosopher Fritz Mauthner, with works like *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, issued the year after the turn of the 20th century, and *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. In the former he writes that every single concept is an *à peu près* and that obviously this flaw is amplified into gigantic dimensions through the combinations of words into a sentence (1 109). Language cannot yield anything but representations, and the person who can not dive below the surface of language that has become illustrative, habitual and lunatic is incapable of thinking and writing a single poetic line (1 105). Interestingly, too, Mauthner uses the word *Wortkunst* (Word Art) for different forms of literature. The term was to reappear as a significant element in the vocabulary of the *Sturm* group, where Arno Holz was credited with this concept as stated above. According to Mauthner, Word Art, in general engenders representations through the conventional signs of language. But, he argues, these signs are possible to hear, and hence they also have a sound worth besides their representational worth (1 108). The remark is very much in line with different ideas from those of Kandinsky quoted above to Blümner and Arp to create texts which only consisted of sounds.

Mauthner argues that it was the French who learnt to experience the "Sanctity of silence" (*Heiligkeit des Schweigens*). And, he argues, with Maeterlinck this silence is transformed into a religion, and hence Maeterlinck has been able to make poetry of such things as the sleeping or the prattling of a child. To Mauthner Maeterlinck's poetry is a proof of the fact that conviction about the worthlessness of language is in the air ("in der Luft liegt"). To Maeterlinck silence becomes a personification, something real, a positive power (1 118–20). Mauthner also finds support for his linguistic scepticism in the words from Goethe's *Faust*: "Gefühl ist alles. Name ist Schall und Rauch, umnebelnd Himmelsglut" (1 141).

Modern representatives of Language Scepticism in Austrian literature include Thomas Bernhard and Peter Handke. I will return to language scepticism further on in connection with the latter as well as with Beckett.

THE STURM GROUP AND ITS THEATRE

One of the great projects in modern art, as well as in design and architecture, was the one inaugurated by Walter Gropius at Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau.

Before this institute was closed in 1933 it developed into one of the most important exponents of 20th century art, architecture and design. It became a meeting point for prominent artists in many fields, as well as being an abundant source of important writings on all aspects of modern art. It is perhaps less well-known that theatre was for some time as central to the activities of the institute as architecture, a role that the theatre of Bauhaus, for various reasons, did not actually assume. In this respect the theatre of Bauhaus became yet another utopian project, an intention that was never fulfilled (Scheper 91).

I will not go into more detail about the theatre of Bauhaus, which for the most part was not based on written text and thus falls outside the scope of this thesis. Instead I will deal with some activities leading up to it, those carried out by the *Sturm* Group in Berlin around the years of World War I, and its theatre activities under the direction of Lothar Schreyer, who was eventually charged with the development of the theatre at Bauhaus from 1921 until 1923.

The *Sturm* group and its theatre have left few marks in the annals of modern theatre, maybe because for various reasons its achievements were rather modest in terms of actual stagings and performances. This was something the *Sturm* theatre had in common with other experimental theatre. The *Sturm* group was an exponent of early, radical expressionism. Their practical activities were followed up with a flow of theoretical material. These writings were dispersed by the group's own publishing house and magazine. They form a next to inexhaustible commentary on the artistic activities of the members of the group.

Here are some reasons for taking the theatre of the *Sturm* group as a model example of early modernism:

- the group is an important exponent of the general tendency in early and later avant-garde to make connections between different art forms;

- the group developed an extensive network with artists and writers of the time, and the list of those who published articles in the magazine or entertained other connections with the group for longer or shorter periods was impressive;

- the theatre activities of the group were typical exponents of ideas prevalent in the avant-garde of the time;

- there were important and close connections between the group and movements such as futurism and dada; and

the writings of the group are typical of early modernism and the documentation is extraordinarily extensive.

Typical of the Sturm group during the first years of its existence was the following:

to an important extent the group took its point of departure in music; the dramatic forms developed by members of the Sturm circle imply multi-level attacks on traditional dramatic forms. There was a questioning of language – language scepticism,

which found expression in use of pantomime and of pantomimic elements even in text-based dramas;

there were dramaturgical experiments (Döblin), radical dramaturgical and language experiments (Stramm, Schreyer), an inclination towards popular theatre forms and cabaret (Blümner, Walden); and

there were various forms of overlappings between different art forms. The astonishing width of Walden's activities was the expression of a synthetic idea in the spirit of the total work of art.

Sturm and its theatre are dealt with in general surveys by such authors as Walter Pirsich and Ingo Waßerka. The work of August Stramm is treated more specifically by Elmar Bozzeti. Lothar Schreyer is dealt with in numerous writings by Brian Keith-Smith, whose *Lothar Schreyer: ein vergessener Expressionist* is a main reference here, as well as in autobiographical writings by Schreyer himself. General information about Bauhaus is to be found in Dirk Scheper's monography, as well as in the one by Hans M Wingler. Historical and biographical information here is taken from these sources as well as from other surveys of a more general kind, when nothing else is specified, and from archives in Berlin and Marbach.

Background: How the Group was Started. Early Connections with the Theatre

The activities of the Sturm group had many ramifications. The group ran its own gallery, and its own publishing house and magazine and it organized a great variety of cultural events. The main historical importance of the group probably lies in its exhibition activities. Early on *Der Sturm* organized great art shows with some of

those who were later to become the great names in Western modernism: Chagall, Klee, Kandinsky, Franz Marc, to name but a few. In this way *Der Sturm* actually introduced vital parts of modernism within the visual arts to Berlin.

The leader of the group and its founder, Herwarth Walden was originally a musician and composer. He was also a prolific writer of articles, essays, poems and plays, which were published in the magazine. Impulses reached the *Sturm* group via Karl Kraus and Oskar Kokoschka, among others. The brilliant and controversial Karl Kraus was to be a highly admired model for Walden's own work as a publicist. Kokoschka was to set his imprint on the first issue of the *Sturm* magazine, where his play *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* was published with his own illustrations. In the first years of *Der Sturm* Else Lasker-Schüler was Herwarth Walden's wife and a frequent contributor to the magazine. Walden's musical background was to become influential in forming the work of the *Sturm* group, including its theatre activities. Another important person was the writer Arno Holz, with whom Walden entertained close contacts even before the inauguration of *Der Sturm*.

In 1892 Holz together with another writer, Johannes Schlaf, had published a play, *Die Familie Selicke* (*The Selicke Family*) that was to make him one of the pioneers of German naturalism. Typical of the two authors' writing mode were socially and dialectally conditioned language, fragmentary talk and interjections. The characters were treated as being subjected to strict determination, in fact as being helplessly conditioned by circumstances they could not change. A leading idea in Holz's essay *Die Kunst. Ihr Wesen und ihre Gesetze*, issued in the same years, 1891/92, is that there are also in Art fundamental laws that it is possible to lay down in a scientific way. From now on Holz was also to gradually abandon what he characterized as the mimetic reproduction of reality. According to him science and art share the ambition to produce images of nature, although in art this ambition is limited by its "reproductive conditions" (*Reproduktionsbedingungen*), i.e. by the artistic means as well as by the personality of the artist (Eschenbacher 33).

Even though *Die Familie Selicke* corresponds to an idea about naturalism there are also elements in the play that anticipate entirely different trends in new theatre.

The drama is set in contemporary time. The prescribed décor sets the characters in a detailed depiction of a poor lower middle class Berlin family, a typical "*Kleine-Leute-Milieu*". The conditions are harsh: poverty reigns, the

father is a drinker, the married life is bad, the mother is worn out by constant anxiety, there is a great number of children and tuberculosis rages. The figures of the play are stock characters, in accordance with Holz' intention not to display action, but characters.

Among the features to be found in *Die Familie Selicke* there is particularly a novel way to work with language. This is not only brought about by the frequent use of dialects and sociolects, which is in itself no innovation. The novelty is that the authors go so far as to also prescribe tempo, volume, pauses and gestures. Holz's cultivation of language as the primal way of forming the characters in fact anticipates the forthcoming strong emphasis on language as an imprint of reality, as a reality in its own right, and worthy of interest to at least the same extent as to the content of the dictum. This view was to be advanced by Holz himself in his theoretical works.

Unlike for example in *Miss Julie* the inherent force of the social conditioning is never broken. In every respect the impossibility to escape the fatality imposed by the social conditions is underlined.

In *Die Familie Selicke* Holz/Schlaf introduce a theme that is to be repeated in various ways in the drama to come. The hidden, mystic necessity Maeterlinck gives expression to in *Intérieur* gradually becomes the horrifying necessity of modern industrial society.

Holz discovered that the important artistic question of the time was not prose versus lyric poetry, but a redefinition of the fundamentals of literature. It was no more a question of producing a new image of the world or a critical unmasking of social political reality. His aim came to express the reality of the new technological society in an adequate linguistic form, and to restructure the poetic use of language through observation and experience.

As Pirsich points out in his *Der Sturm: Eine Monographie*, Holz's *Sprachskepsis* called for a renewal of language. It was he who formulated the term for what was to be seen as a remedy for this scepticism: *die Wortkunst*, Word Art (185–92). With his long poem *Phantastus* he exemplified the concept in practice. Neumann explains Word Art as a way to work counter to the loss of meaning in industrial society through a theory of "absolute poetry" which carries all its meaning within itself: 'Wortkunst' ist der Versuch, dem Wirklichkeitsverlust im Industriezeitalter durch eine Theorie der "absoluten Poesie", die ihren

Sinn allein in sich selbst trägt, entgegenzuwirken" (146).

According to Alfred Döblin there is a strong influence on Holz from French symbolism (Holz *Die Revolution der Lyrik* 13–14).

Holz claimed that with the monumental poem *Phantastus* he had laid the same foundation for poetry that he had earlier created for dramatic writing with *Die Familie Selicke*. Like Stramm later Holz ventured to make language an equivalent of reality. The concept of Nature stands in the centre of this theory. "Art has a tendency to become nature again", Holz wrote in *Die Kunst, ihr Wesen und ihre Gesetze* (10 IV). This conclusion originated in a redefinition of mimesis.

To sum up some distinctive traits in Holz/Schlaf's *The Selicke Family*: Rather than being a matter of the deliberation of the characters, their actions are subordinated to a fatality which in fact is tantamount to a social determination. Situation, as is pointed out, is less important for Holz than character. Rather than forming the conditions for ludic interplay on the stage the play, first of all, illustrates a human condition. It also reflects Holz's language scepticism: thus for example the importance of dialects and sociolects seems to be to stress forms of language use rather than semantic content. The authors prescribe elements like tempo, volume, pauses and gestures. Thus the play exemplifies the "choreographic" way in which to structure scenic action that was to become typical of much experimental theatre.

Holz exerted a vast influence on Walden in the years preceding the inauguration of the *Sturm* group. Later, Walden's interest in him decreased to the benefit of the one who was to become the most important symbol of the Word Art (*Wortkunst*) developed within the group, at the same time as being its most important dramatic writer. That person was August Stramm.

In 1913 Stramm had sent the manuscript of his dramatic work *Sancta Susanna* to Herwarth Walden. It was published in the magazine the following year. The event was to mark the beginning of a close friendship between the two men and of the publishing of further texts by Stramm in the magazine during the years to come. Thus all of his theatre texts were printed in the magazine. At the time when he joined the group Stramm had already had a stable bourgeois career as an official in the German Post Office Ministry. The great esteem Stramm was now accorded became a late success for a poet who up till then had enjoyed little public response. Through Walden's mediation he was soon to be acquainted

with many of the writers and artists connected with the Sturm group, as well as with the art theories of Kandinsky and the futurists. Stramm, who was an officer of the reserve, took an active part in a great number of war operations during WW1, before being killed on the Eastern Front in September 1915.

In terms of what actually appeared in print Stramm's literary heritage is small and spans over the short period of only six years. Among his earliest works one can count a drama that has now disappeared, *das Opfer* and the first version of the naturalistic drama *Die Unfruchtbaren*, written in 1909 and 1910. Between the years from 1912 to the beginning of 1914 he wrote the dramas *Sancta Susanna*, *Rudimentär* and *Die Haidebraut*, all three very unlike one another. Of Stramm's poetry before 1914 there are only two extant works, *Tanz* and *Urwanderung*. At the beginning of 1914 followed a new version of *Rudimentär* and *Die Haidebraut*. In 1914 all the poems had been composed that were to be published in the collection DU, as well as the short prose texts *Der Letzte* and *Warten*, the poem *Die Menschheit* and the drama *Erwachen*. When serving in the war Stramm wrote a fragment of a drama that was first called *Krieg*, later *Bluten*. The play was never finished. In 1915 he wrote the plays *Kräfte* and *Geschehen*, as well as the three poems that Herwarth Walden posthumously issued under the title *Tropfblut*.

Stramm's "Wortkunst"

In view of all the other experiments with language within and outside the Sturm group it has been disputed how innovative Stramm's achievement really was. Reportedly Stramm attended a speech by Marinetti in connection with the great futurist exhibition in Berlin in 1912, and according to some scholars, such as Muschg, this became Stramm's "second birthday" as a poet (62). The futurists' general idea of the function of theatre, as well as their way to "modernize" symbolist aesthetics are of great importance when one reviews the history of "drama without action". What makes Stramm of special interest in my investigation here is that he on the one hand was strongly influenced by the aesthetics of the futurists, which was almost as seminal for the Western avant-garde as that of the symbolists. On the other hand, despite being an exponent of *Sprachskepsis*, Stramm never questioned the written text, like the futurists did. In addition to this he was working in the more many-sided cultural context represented by the Sturm group.

As in Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound*, the way of speaking becomes even more important in Stramm's plays than the content. According to Bozzetti, the tone (*der Sprechton*) in which the words are uttered is accorded more significance than the dictum, as the unconscious, which cannot be expressed in words, makes itself felt in it (167).

Gradually Stramm's writings for the stage assume the scantiness that is also to be characteristic of his poems. The dramas are all short one-acters. At times influence from Maeterlinck can be felt, but in his last dramas Stramm has reached a highly personal form of his own.

In his early plays Stramm often strikes a naturalistic tone by a frequent use of dialects and sociolects. But like Holz's version of naturalism Stramm's has little in common with that of Zola and Strindberg. The difference lies foremost in the formation of conditioning circumstances⁴¹. Imperative necessity is salient in Stramm's plays. It is often conditioned by sexual instinct, as in *Sancta Susanna* and *Die Unfruchtbaren*, or by sexual instinct in combination with social determinism as for example in *Rudimentär*.

In *Die Unfruchtbaren* the milieu is a narrow apartment, inhabited by four students. An earlier member of the group, newly married, visits his former friends with his wife. The emergence of the couple evokes feelings of erotic frustration among the students. The visit also leads to a crisis for the young woman, and secretly she consents to passes from one of her husband's old friends. When this is revealed, the other friends in the collective turn their backs on him.

The play has a strongly compressed dialogue. The author, as it were, both instructs the actors and directs the play. The frequency and character of the stage directions reduce the work of the actor to the execution of instructions, in a way reminiscent of pantomime⁴². Acting and language use are *demonstrated* in such a manner that the play in fact exemplifies as an early use of estrangement. In Bozzetti's phrasing, the words seem to be spoken from a podium, always with a side-glance to the audience.

In his poetry, Stramm, according to Bozzetti, takes his motives from three main areas: nature, love and war. Nature represents an idea of a unification of all beings. Bozzetti sees love as the dominant motif in Stramm's writings. The polarity between the sexes becomes the symbol of disruption, opposition and difference generally. Love is the vain attempt to conquer opposition and

bring unity to the split aspect of reality. In desire life triumphs over intellect. Love's longing for unity repeals logically structured reason. In place of cold awareness comes intense amazement and mystic meditation. Bozzetti cites several examples, where "*Du*" is used in the neuter gender: "*Du steht! Du steht*" "*Du bannt die Zeit*" etc. Stramm's last drama *Geschehen* is formed into a venture to unite the entire universe into one all-embracing "*I*".

Even in war, the third of Stramm's three areas, Bozzetti sees a unifying principle. War is an expression of the same polarisation as love. The unifying element is here the destruction of artificial orders, the dissolution of existence into chaotic unity (82–163).

In *Sancta Susanna* Stramm has finally abandoned naturalism and created one of the most compressed of his symbolic plays. The subtitle of the drama is "*Ein Gesang der Mainacht*", "A song of the May night". The story of the play could be summarized thus: In an exalted state and kneeling in the chapel of a convent the nun Susanna hears from another nun, Klementia the story about a sister, Beata, who had approached the crucifix, undressed herself and made love to the figure of Christ. Beata had received her punishment by being sealed into the walls of the chapel. Having heard this story Susanna takes off her own clothes and repeats Beata's act. A chorus of other nuns appears. They condemn Susanna and demand that she make penance. Susanna refuses.

To a higher degree than *Die Haidebraut* *Sancta Susanna* represents the merging of eroticism and mysticism which is characteristic of so much art and literature of the period around the turn of the 20th century, and of which Kokoschka's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* is another example. It has in common with Kokoschka's play *Sancta Susanna* the depiction of desire as an irresistible and invincible necessity, as something that brings a human being in conflict with her deepest convictions and engenders a violent, even devastating existential crisis, where lust becomes one with fear and horror. In this respect Stramm also displays similarities with Antonin Artaud.

Geschehen, the play by Stramm that I will most focus on here, is Stramm's last play. It was written in 1915, in a period when he and the units under his command were engaged in numerous operations on the Eastern front. The play is a scenic poem, free from all practical considerations about staging and playability. Viewed as a theatre text it stands out as a utopian project.

Even with the name of the play *Geschehen*, (*Event*) Stramm opposes the theatre of action, marking a final upheaval of the *dualism in theatre between action and event*. In this play he simultaneously dissolves the boundary between a symbolic level and a mimetic one. In this cosmic drama all has become *one*.

There is a swarm of figures appearing in the play. In the centre stands a man *Er*, who gets involved in a row of fantastic events rather than in one conflict. The play is subdivided into five sections and could be summarized thus:

The first part is set in a garden with "*Menschenwirren*", i.e. a flow of figures moving over the stage. *Er* meets various women. The first one is *Mädchen*. In the second scene he tries to make love to another woman, *Weib*. The third encounter, with *Sie*, is interrupted when a prostitute, *Dirne* appears. *Sie* leaves, and *Er* rolls into the bush with *Dirne*. Here a fourth woman, *Beterin*, appears. *Er* takes recourse to *Beterin* and a fight unfolds itself between *Dirne* and *Beterin*. Finally *Dirne* leaves the scene and *Sie* returns. *Er* desperately follows *Sie*, while *Beterin* tries to draw him back.

The first section ends with a scene with a young man, *Mädchen*, *Beterin*, *Dirne*, a couple and a restaurant-keeper. The last emerges in the midst of a tantalizing interplay between the young man and the two women. The restaurant-keeper wants payment. There are comments from others. *Beterin* and *Mädchen* withdraw. The following dialogue takes place:

BETERIN und MÄDCHEN. (eng aneinander geschmiegt hinter dickem Baum): Was sagte der?

BETERIN. (zittert) ich!

MÄDCHEN. (zittert) ich!

(75)

The second section is set in front of a house.

Beterin in deep despair is harassed by *Dirne*, who eventually enters the house. *Sie* appears and consoles *Beterin*. *Sie* calmly accepts *Beterin*'s plea for help to reach the man *Er*. The door of the house is flung open by *Dirne*, who complains that *Er* has turned her down. *Er* too appears in the doorway and approaches *Sie* with another woman, *Weib*, hanging to him. The woman is a married mistress of *Er* and she cries out that her husband knows it all. Some men and women

bring in her husband, who has drowned, and their children. *Dirne* scoffs at *Er*, who chases *Beterin*, *Dirne* and *Weib* away and is left alone with *Sie*. The scene ends with the jubilant *Er* kissing and hugging *Sie*, exclaiming:

ER. (küsst, lacht, jubelt): ich habe Dich! ich habe Dich! ich fühle Dich!
ich küsse Dich! ich atme Dich! Dich! Dich! Dich! (hebt hoch und trägt
fort): Du! Dich!
(75)

In the third part we find *Er* in a mountainous setting. He is engaged in a struggle between his ego in the form of *Mich*, who appears personified, and *Sie*. *Mich* seems to represent action, will and knowledge. *Mich* has seen the man's Star, a recurrent symbol in Stramm for a man's destiny. When *Sie* steps between *Er* and *Mich*, *Er* becomes overwhelmed with defiance and anger. After having struggled with *Sie*, he pulls a lever while shouting out loud "ICH!", which brings about a total change of scene. In the fourth part *Er* is brought to the topmost summits. Among the appearing figures in this part one can find the *Earth* and the *Cosmos*. *Sie* still follows *Er*.

In this place the *Three Radiant ones*, "*Die drei Strahler*" appear. They venerate *Er*, call him their "Creator" and themselves his beams. They engage themselves in a jubilant dance, which is interrupted when *Er* yet again invokes *Mich*. The *We* of the *Radiant Ones* is repeatedly set against the *I* of *Er*, who is dazzled by the beams. *Er* invokes *Earth*, who is despised by the *Three Radiant Ones*. *Er* grabs *Sie* and utters *You (Du)*. The Universe answers "*Du*". The dance recommences and the jubilant word "Son" (*Sohn*) is heard. Now the *Earth* appears, much to the disappointment of the *Radiant Ones*. While repeatedly uttering the words "*Sohn*" and "*Sterne*" (Stars) and defiantly crying out "*We*" (*Wir*) they leave the place. The section ends:

AUFSCHREI: Sohn
AUFGELL: Ich!
(77)

The fifth part starts with a return to Earth. *Er* and *Sie* find themselves in a village.

An exchange of words turns into a struggle between two moods, two topics, characterized by the words Darkness (*Dunkel*), uttered by the man and Stars (*Sterne*), which is the woman's reply. The man surrenders and they both alternately utter the word I (*Ich*), going into a kind of contemplative unification.

A child appears and is called Child (*Kind*) by *Sie*. *Er* inquiringly tries the name I (*ich*) on the child, but is rejected. *Sie* explains to *Er* that children are children and that they do not fall within the categories of *Du*, *ihr* and *wir*.

Children appear and inform them that their father has died. When he lived, they say, the earth was warm and flourishing, whereas now it is cold and dark. When *Er* says he cannot see this, the children mock him for being blind.

Next *Women*, *Cripples* and *Old people* appear. They ask *Er* and *Sie* from where they come. *Er* and *Sie* say they come from the stars. The children tell them that their own fathers live among the stars. And they say:

KNIRPS. und fuhr den Himmell durch in Flammen und sucht das
Paradies das Paradies und wenn er heimkehrt wird die Erde wieder glühen
und Lichter strahlen und Blumen blühen und ich und du und dich und
mich und ihr und wir sind eins in Ewigkeit Ewigkeit Amen.

(77)

Lads: and travelled through the Skies in flames in search of Paradise Paradise
and when he turns home the earth will glow again and lights will beam and
flowers flourish and I and you and you /object form/ and me and you /plural
form/ and we are one for ever and ever Amen.

A Prelate appears and asks who *Er* is. He declares himself to be the Father and is reverently acknowledged as such. The prelate calls him a buffoon and a beggar and obtains the consent of all. The crowd abandons *Er* and *Sie*.

In the next moment *Er* once again exclaims "ICH". *Mich* reappears together with "babbling children" ("*plappernder Kinder*") and makes them accept him as the Father.

The play ends in the spirit of the "unification of pronouns". The children alternately utter *Du*, *Ich*, *Wir*, *Ihr*. *Sie* finally resumes in the last line of the play:

SIE. (tief gebeugt) Du Ich Dich Mich (schaut auf die Augen tief in Fernen
Rätsel) Wir!

Ende

(78)

The form of Stramm's play has certain similarities to the one Strindberg uses in *To Damascus*, a play that also describes a spiritual progress in the form of a journey. But whereas the spirituality in Strindberg's play is divine, Stramm, rather, gives expression to a kind of mysticism without any confessional bias. Another difference is that the hero in Stramm's play is rather *set* into situations in different locations and dimensions than exercising any control over his progress. Despite expressing prototypical masculine force *Er* is constantly dependent on outer forces in a way strongly reminiscent of Maeterlinck. The play lacks

- a specified time;
- a specified place;
- a specified intention of the protagonist;
- a specified action; and
- a specified identity of its protagonist, in spite of the question about identity actually being the dominant theme of the play.

Thus *Geschehen* does not give an answer to any of the questions listed as the "five Ws" nor lives up to the situatedness that fits into the BSI scheme, and thus well way qualifies as a good candidate for "drama without action". It is a play where the circumstances are demonstrated rather than being the point of departure for the scenic action.

As in Kokoschkas *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* tension between the sexes stands out as a major source of energy for the whole play, as well as for its symbolism. It is not important for our purpose here to delve any further into this symbolism. I content myself with the observation that "the sex issue", ("*Die Sexualfrage*"⁴³) was still a viable theme and that sexual desire could be viewed as a force capable of ruling out deliberation to the extent of even having dramaturgic entailments.

With its romantic mysticism Stramm's play may appear as utterly time-bound. Still it exemplifies a row of features which could also be found in much later examples of writing for the stage: the strong emphasis on language, not least as a means to create identity, the linking between poetry and drama, visibility, dissolution or deconstruction of the characters' identity, an element of cruelty, neglect of prerequisites for scenic representation, etc.

To sum up: Already through its name Stramm's *Geschehen* becomes an illustration of a cosmic fatality. The main character is merely set in situations, which form a cosmic scenario, rather than being involved in an action that he himself can steer. The audience is presented with a succession of events. Stramm's language scepticism is expressed in an urge to transform the very fundamentals of language in a way that makes it possible for language to express a form of pantheism, where everything is united in one single being. The play is unfit for an actual staging, not least because of its multitude of figures. Stramm needed someone who could translate his visions to actual stagings. The person who saw it as his task to do so was Lothar Schreyer.

Lothar Schreyer

In spite of the warm reception Herwarth Walden gave August Stramm it was never possible for him to stage any of Stramm's plays. The situation was altered when one year after Stramm's demise, Lothar Schreyer, a young poet and dramaturg, entered Walden's office for the first time. Schreyer, who was soon to become a close friend of Walden and his most important collaborator, pledged himself to create a *Sturm Theatre*, one of whose aims became the staging of plays by Stramm. During his many years with *Sturm* Schreyer published poems, plays and theoretical essays in the *Sturm* magazine, being also at the same time a prolific painter and sculptor. In 1917 a theatre activity, *Sturm Bühne*, was founded in Berlin with Lothar Schreyer as a member of the steering group, and the first number of a periodical with the same name was also issued that year.

Schreyer staged three of Stramm's plays, *Sancta Susanna*, *Die Haidebraut* and *Kräfte*. Still Schreyer cannot be viewed as just a follower of Stramm. As a writer and a director in his own right he both theoretically and practically became the most important representative of the theatre activities of *Der Sturm*, while also setting his own personal imprint on the activities of the group. He created a

theatre form based on "*Spielgänge*" for scenic action, where every detail in the performance was entirely predetermined and worked out by the author. Not only was the text of the play translated, but also rhythm, movements and every pitch of the diction were translated into a sign system, a notation. With this he not only continued Kandinsky's experiments with "scenic compositions". He elaborated a fully developed "choreographed" theatre in anticipation of for example some of Robert Wilson's stagings today. Because of the strictness with which it was carried out Schreyer's project stands out as one of the most radical new dealings with the element of action in modern theatre.

In 1919 Schreyer moved his theatre activities from Berlin to Hamburg, now under the new name of *Kampf Bühne*. Two years later, in 1921, Walter Gropius recruited Schreyer for the Bauhaus in Weimar, where he became in charge of the development of the theatre activities. At this time Schreyer was increasingly attracted by a kind of ritualistic aesthetics with strong religious (Christian) overtones. His orientation was very much in accordance with the mystic and spiritualistic vein typical of Bauhaus during its early, Weimar years. When new winds began to blow and a more functionalistic spirit gained ground at the institute, Schreyer's theatrical activity became one of the victims. After his play *Mondspiel* gained a negative reception from the other teachers he left Bauhaus in 1923. During the rest of his life he primarily preoccupied himself with the writing of novels and of treatises on art and religion.

According to his "*Erinnerungen ...*" Schreyer's ideas of theatre aesthetics were already fully developed when he first contacted Walden and *Der Sturm* in 1916. After having taken a doctoral degree in Law in 1910 he had worked as a dramaturg at *Deutsches Schauspielhaus* in Hamburg from 1911. His aim was to create an "*Einheitskunstwerk*", where all scenic means, i.e. words, sounds, movement and "colour form", would be brought together in one art work.

"[...] alle Mittel der Bühnengestalt, also Wort, Ton, Bewegung, Farbform, zur Ganzheit und Einheit einer in sich geschlossenen Kunstgestalt erhoben sind." (*Erinnerungen an Sturm und Bauhaus* 21–22)

Under his leadership the Sturm theatre developed into an endeavour to make scenic material simultaneously adaptable to untested theatrical practice and a

highly advanced spiritual framework. Stramm's *Sancta Susanna* was staged in Berlin in 1918, with Schreyer as responsible for the mis-en-scène, and with music composed by Walden.

During the year following the end of World War I, which was full of political turbulence, Schreyer left Berlin for Hamburg.

Kampfbühne was organised as a society, ensuring a stable public for its productions. According to Pirsich this also meant that Schreyer's own influence over the activities were disputed during the first years, but that after the staging of his own *Kreuzigung* in 1920 he became the sole central figure, since the opponents had either given up their critical attitudes or left. There are few sources extant as to the activities of the theatre except for Schreyer's personal notes. The contacts with the world outside were strictly regulated by the director himself. The ideal public consisted exclusively of "friends". Critics were not given admittance, unless on strict demand not to write anything, but Schreyer claims that he personally had interesting conversations with "many of them" (qtd. in Pirsich *Der Sturm* 509)

Perhaps the most important play Schreyer created during those years, *Kreuzigung*, was published as a plain text in the *Sturm* Magazine in 1920. This short, utterly condensed play has four characters: *Cross, Mother, The beloved woman, Man.* (*Kreuz, Mutter, Geliebte, Mann*). The three human characters engage themselves in shorter or longer soliloquies, which sometimes only consist of one word, often repeated. The general character of the play is set by the very first line:

MUTTER. Ich leide
(66)

The rest of the play turns into musing with strong ritualistic traits on the fundamental condition of man. The general character is lament, incantation and prayer. There is no identifiable situation in any particular site, no external circumstances accounted for, that could explain the exclusively verbal actions of the characters. The characters do not stand in any kind of conflict to one another. Rather there is one single situation that is conjured up by the words and exclamations, a situation of cosmic despair and longing for a redemption that seems to go via suffering. A dialogue between *Mann* and the two women has a prominent place:

MANN. Das Kreuz is leer
MUTTER GELIEBTE: Gott ist tot
(67)

The situation thus vaguely suggested is the one when the Crucified, according to the Gospel, had been taken down from the cross. The incarnation of God is dead; mankind is left in darkness and despair. Schreyer describes his concept as one where the word is incantation, exclamation, stammering and confession. A play like *Kreuzigung* unveils the ur-image of man, as well as alternately concealing it; it becomes a way to tear asunder the veil covering the being and a way to encircle being with the mask of becoming. In *Expressionistisches Theater* Schreyer writes:

Was da Wort wird, Menschenwort wird, aus Menschenwort Menschen werden wird, ist Anruf, Ausruf, Stammeln, Bekenntnis im Außersichsein und Untersichsinken, zugleich ein Ausbruch der Dunkelheiten und des Lichtes, jäh das Urbild Mensch entschleiern, jäh das Urbild Mensch verhüllend, ein Zerreißen des Schleiers vor dem Sein und ein Ummauern des Seins mit den Masken des Werdens. (193)

Like Stramm, whose influence could also be felt in other respects, Schreyer has a tendency in *Kreuzigung* to treat objects as equal to animate beings, as for example when the *Cross* appears in the list of characters, or when nouns like *Mutterweinen* and *Menschentanz* are used as stage directions.

A strong rhythmic character is already felt in the text, where a trochaic pattern predominates. In the *Spielgang* version the play could be likened to the score of a musical work for an orchestra or a choral work. Everything is laid down: rhythm, dynamic signs, and the polyphony of all components, scenic action as well as music and changes in the setting. Schreyer had preceded this work with an essay, *Das Bühnenkunstwerk*, which was published in *der Sturm* in 1917. He here puts forward the idea of Scenic Art work as entirely controlled in time and space. It should be as calculated as a piece of music in a score or as a building in an architectural drawing. In the article Schreyer organizes the scenic work in separate elements ("*Kategorien*"). He calls these elements form, colour, form colour movement, human movement, crowd movement, word, language

sound, musical sound, cosmic sound (Pirsich *Der Sturm* 514). The Scenic Art work should be preserved in the form of a book. It should not be dependent on any performance, but the performance should be dependent on the book. Schreyer's first experiment with *Spielgänge*, in fact, dates back as early as 1916 when he made the first one for the play *Nacht*. By then he had created it without having any particular staging in mind. He subsequently made *Spielgänge* for several stagings at the *Kampfbühne*, now as outlines of different stagings he preoccupied himself with (Pirsich *Der Sturm* 510). By contrast, *Kreuzigung* was carefully preserved for the future generations in the form of hand-coloured woodcuts, which were collected in a rare book, issued in two editions. It was the first printed matter issued by the *Kampfbühne*, and it was expressly presented as a collectors' item. Pirsich calls the work one of the masterpieces of expressionistic book creations (512).

The Scenic Art Work, *das Bühnenkunstwerk*, becomes Schreyer's version of the total work of art, and one of the most definitive realizations of the Wagnerian vision. Schreyer saw himself as a Stage Artist, whose task it was to imagine and unite all elements of the performance. The most important unifying element, according to him, was rhythm: Alle Teile werden von dem Grundrhythmus des Gesamtwerkes zusammengehalten (*Das Bühnenkunstwerk* 51).

As Pirsich states, Schreyer frequently compares his theatre to music. Like all great musical works it is also necessary for the scenic work to be fixed in a graphic form. More importantly, this is also its prime mode of existence, as the performance of the work is not indispensable. Instead of making the director the central agent in the theatre production Schreyer rather turns the playwright into an *auteur* of the entire scenic work. The author might be his own stage director in the same way as a composer often assumes the role of the director of his own work. Then, according to Schreyer, he is the total master of all parts, and the other collaborators in the staging process are reduced to his organs, his hands, his eyes, his ears. Of the actor's relationship to the *Bühnenkünstler* Schreyer writes: "Der Schauspieler ist sein Mund" (*Das Bühnenkunstwerk* 51).

On the other hand Schreyer's hierarchy does not entail a view of the actor as only reduced to a reproducer. Brian Keith-Smith demonstrates how, according to Schreyer's vision, the actor, as well as the audience, take part in a transformational process, which is viewed as a liberation from existential

suffering. The author first attempts to find the Meaning of Life by using words and word images, by creating a poetic work. Then the Scenic Artist and the actor create "a symbol of a spiritual experience" ("*ein Symbol eines seelischen Erlebens*"). This process is then transferred to the production team and, in the end, to the audience. The actors and the public thus take part in a kind of "spiritual exercise" in which, through mystic insight, they become aware of their situation as human beings. A sacrifice of the private self is necessary for achieving this (Keith-Smith 98).

Schreyer's ambition is to create an abstract theatre, dominated by the elements Form, Colour, Movement and Sound. In the manifesto-like article *Das Bühnenkunstwerk* he fiercely proclaims the end of nature on the stage, the arch proscenium with its paintings, the false perspective and its lighting system, the theatre of illusion, the stage as a historical museum and history of fashion, as well as the stage as a museum for literature history.

Abgetan ist die Natur auf der Bühne. Abgetan ist die Bogenbühne und ihre Malerei, die künstliche Perspektive und ihr Beleuchtungssystem. Abgetan ist die Illusionsbühne. Abgetan ist die Bühne als Museum für Geschichtsanschauung und Trachtenkunde. Abgetan ist die Bühne als Museum für Literaturgeschichte. (51)

In this writing from 1916 he envisages a theatre, which turns out to have interesting features in common with Oskar Schlemmer's theatrical project. Schreyer identifies four basic elements of the theatre: primary forms, primary colours, primary movements and primary sounds. (*Grundforme, Grundfarbe, Grundbewegungen, Grundtöne*). And he explains:

The primary forms are the mathematical bodies and surfaces.
The primary colours are black, blue, green, yellow and white.
The primary movements are the horizontal and vertical, the raising and sinking movement, the opening and closing spiral movement.
The primary sounds are the pure tones.
(51) (My translation).

In his *Expressionistisches Theater* (1948), Schreyer refers to Vassily Kandinsky's Scenic compositions as an important background to his own theatre concept (80).

I am not going in more detail as to Schreyer's own way to realize this vision in his staging, as this falls outside the scope of my investigation, but rather I will content myself so far with an outline of the general concept.

Expressionistisches Theater was issued as late as 1948, i.e. long after the author's conversion to Catholicism, and his subsequent intensified preoccupation with religious themes. This might give his rendering of his *Sturm und Kampfbühne* period a more specific religious bias than it originally had. This also affects his interpretations of other artists and writers of the time. Particularly Schreyer has been criticized for his understanding of Kandinsky's idea of the "inner necessity", which he more or less equates with his own kind of Christian mysticism. As an account of the history of a radical expressionistic movement the book is strongly biased, but it is also a relic of the spirit of this movement. It is a commentary on early modernist utopianism written by one of its typical representatives. A complete rendering is given of early modernist aesthetic ideas and it is written with an intrinsic quest for systematicity. This is what makes Schreyer not only such a useful reference regarding the theatre of early modernist theatre, but also, as we shall see, such a good object of comparisons between this theatre and phenomena in more recent theatrical forms.

Schreyer acknowledges that theatre is action and spectacle. But it turns out that by "action" he actually means movement. In the expressionist theatre, he claims, man was rediscovered as the means to represent the shape of Movement (*Bewegungsgestalt*). Schreyer explains that what he defines as movement perhaps should best be exemplified in other activities, where movement is used differently from how we use it in daily life. As examples he mentions ballet, acrobatics and ice dancing, where there is movement around the centre of gravity and where the necessity of equilibrium is predominant. This kind of movement, he writes, goes from event to action. Not surprisingly, Schreyer mentions Heinrich von Kleist's essay on marionette theatre in connection with this idea. Schreyer claims that he and Oskar Schlemmer were the first expressionists who actually brought Kleist's vision to realization by making theatre dance the point of departure for the renewal of theatre. A similar idea

had already been championed by Mallarmé, in a way which proved to be very much in accordance with Nietzschean ideas about the Dionysian and which also recurs in for example Craig (Rose 33). By giving it a strict form, based on a few simple basic movements, they obtained a fusion of the Dionysian and Apolline elements in theatre and thus a reconciliation of these opposites. Schreyer stresses the similarities between Schlemmer's dance costumes and the body masks (*Ganzmasken*) he himself developed in the years 1919–1921. He also calls these masks "Übermarionetten" (*Expressionistisches Theater* 55).

Another important feature in Schreyer's concept is colour, the *Farbformgestalt* in his phrasing. Colours, he claims, could be seen as ur-phenomena, *Urphänomene*. The most important colours, according to him, are black and white and the triad blue-red-yellow. These are given spiritual interpretations. Blue, for instance, is a symbol of belief, faith and piety. Yellow is a symbol of revelation, red of life, green of hope, violet of sacrifice, and so on.

It is noteworthy that it is not until he has treated colour, form and movement that Schreyer in this essays treats the word, referred to by him as Word shape (*Wortgestalt*). This, however, should not be understood as if Schreyer leaves the importance of the word out of account. He believes that man manifests himself most importantly through the word. In a phrase echoing Schopenhauer he maintains that man belongs to the world of Will and the world of Representation. Schreyer's own version of Schopenhauer's vision is this: "Der Mensch gehört der Welt des Willens und der Welt der Vorstellung und der Welt der Gesetze an. Eine Dreifaltigkeit ist der Mensch." (98)

Stramm is not seen as the sole representative of the principles of *Wortkunst* in his time. Schreyer also refers to writers such as the Russian Kruchonich, the American Eugene O'Neill⁴⁴, the French Paul Claudel and the Italian Ruggiero Vasari (122).

In *Expressionistisches Theater* Schreyer makes a revised reprint of *Das Bühnenkunstwerk*, an essay published in the *Sturm* magazine 1916/17 VII. Schreyer mentions the painters Kokoschka and Kandinsky, the sculptor Schlemmer, the poets Scheerbarth and Stramm and the "language artist" (*Sprachkünstler*) Rudolf Blümner, as well as the Russian "Scenic artists" Alexander Tairov and V.E. Meyerhold as the most important names of expressionist theatre.

Schreyer underlines the fact that the Scenic Artwork is an artistic creation, not

a depiction of natural or cultural entities. The principles of the Scenic Artwork "obliterate" (*vernichten*) the existing theatre art (167–76)⁴⁵.

Schreyer's theatre vision as expressed in *Kreuzigung* builds on cosmic necessity, in his case with strong Christian overtones. Man is subjected to principles that Schreyer called Will and Law. In his artistic work the severity of these principles is expressed in rigid formal means that become imposed on the actors. These means combine several arts: they are both visual, musical, choreographic, and also ritual. Everything is thought of as being laid down in *Spielgänge*, where every sound, every pause, every pitch is meticulously prescribed. The concept has now become so ritualized that the audience, in fact, should already be initiated beforehand, in order to qualify as such at all. Schreyer also gives expression to *language scepticism*.

An important point of departure for the activities of *Der Sturm* is *Sprachskepsis*. There is a close connection between language scepticism and the concept of *Wortkunst*, Word Art, developed within the group, and which, in its turn, affected various expressions of the artistic activities of the group: poetry, drama, theatre, and Rudolf Blümner's recitations of wordless poetry. There is a close connection between language scepticism Kandinsky gives expression to in his works and the way the idea of *Wortkunst* was conceived within the Sturm Group.

For this group the way out of the dilemma that the *Sprachskepsis* gave rise to first and foremost was via music. The idea of music influenced by Nietzsche was a substantial and lasting element of the Sturm aesthetics. Herwarth Walden was himself an able musician, a pianist and a composer and a great admirer of Nietzsche⁴⁶. His philosophic ideas about the fundamental importance of music were particularly developed in the circle gathered around the pianist and Nietzschean Conrad Ansorge⁴⁷. In this context Walden also made the acquaintance with other important proponents of Nietzschean ideas of music, such as the Polish writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski (*Erinnerungen and das literarische Berlin* 92). A person who had great importance for the development of Sturm ideas about Word Art was Rudolf Blümner, who experimented with abstract poetry and who frequently performed recitations at the Sturm evenings (Pirsich *Der Sturm. Eine Biographie* 586–599).⁴⁸ He also published articles in *Der Sturm*, where he wrote about the relationship between word and music. Brühl maintains that the way in which he spoke his words was akin to how a musician plays his instrument (57).

LATE MODERN

Beckett

The one who makes the most important contribution to bridge the gap between modern theatre before and after World War II is, without doubt, Samuel Beckett.

There is the question as to how his seminal début as a writer for the theatre, *Waiting for Godot*, relates to the BSI-model. The two tramps refer to past events. Thus they do not lack background. If we accept their predicament of waiting as something like a situation, we will have this element too. Vladimir and Estragon also have a clear intention: to wait for Godot. But there are also features that challenge the stability of the circumstances: the background is obscure and inconsistent. The situation is fixed and beyond the choice of the protagonists. The intention is not one they have chosen themselves, but, as it turns out, a matter of necessity. And necessity, which one does not oppose, but is obliged to follow, is not a dramatic feature. On the other hand, in the course of this enforced waiting the two tramps do other things, which require/reflect intention and action.

The chief feature that will really transform this adaptation to the standards of basic verisimilitude is the repetition, particularly the way the first act is repeated in the second. Another such feature is the occasionally dysfunctional memory of the characters, which also leaves the spectator uncertain as to the antecedents of, especially, the second part of the play, and which brings with it an upheaval of temporal stability. This way of disseminating doubt in the temporal cohesion of the events is to be a recurrent feature in Beckett's plays. But the effect of this, not least in *Waiting for Godot*, is always caused by the audience's habitual expectations about consistency.

Brater indicates a feature that is typical of Beckett's writing for the stage as a whole, namely the central position of the spoken word, as well as of its marked absence, silence. In the final chapter, called *Play as Performance Poem* he writes: "Rockaby is Beckett's first play in which the language is not merely poetic, but a poem complete in itself." (170)

The poetic of Beckett's plays also incorporates the setting, the space and the props. Brater writes about the four long pauses prescribed in the stage directions of *Rockaby* that they "remind us that for Beckett the dramatic image

is the primary thing", and that "enormous attention is given to visual detail" (167) "...we watch a poem come to (stage) life". Brater sums up that with Beckett "Language art and theatre art have finally become one" (172).

In spite of the repetitiveness of *Rockaby* Brater does not view it as lacking in dramatic character. Rather, it is a play "in which the lyrical and the dramatic cease to be mutually opposing principles" (172).

This dramatic effect, on the other hand, is not achieved through opposing wills or through struggles between man and his fate, but through the contrast between the two elements of what we hear and what we see. The first is represented by the recorded voice that recites the poetic text, the second by the goings-on on the stage: the woman moving to and fro in her rocking chair, and the slight gradual transformation she undergoes in the course of the play. Thus if there could be talk about a dramatic effect this is totally freed from human intention. The recorded voice is impersonal and the movement of the rocking chair is expressly, according to the stage directions, "Controlled mechanically without assistance from w" (434). The only manifestation of a will in the play, and which Brater does not mention in this context, is the repeated "more" coming from w. This on the other hand suffices to indicate an intention, and prevents the ongoing from becoming entirely mechanical. W in her rocking chair repeatedly decides to go on listening to the words uttered by the voice, and thus to go deeper into a content which also transforms her gradually. According to Brater, Billie Whitelaw, Beckett's favourite actress, who also played *Rockaby*, stressed the musical qualities of the play. He quotes her: "Once I've heard Beckett say it – just once – I've more or less got in my head the music of what it is he wants. That doesn't necessarily restrict me, but I think 'Right. I know what music they're playing'" (Brater 174).⁴⁹ The musical element, in fact, is a striking quality in practically all of Beckett's plays, manifesting itself both in the form of their rhythmic character, in the use of pauses, and in the characterisation of the voices. The musical element manifests itself not least in the dramatic form, which frequently builds on repetition, essential in music, but traditionally considered undramatic in a play. One could say that Beckett's mode to do away with traditional dramatic structure goes via the transformation of visual, poetic and musical qualities into a scenic "genre of its own" in Brater's words (177).

Still, this "genre" has many features in common with previous radical attempts

to invent new structures for scenic writing. Even the early modernists took interest in visuality and in musical elements, not least the one of rhythm. Arguably, if one wants to lessen or do away with the element of dramatic tension based on action, an effective tool will be reinforcement of the rhythmic elements. Similarly, reinforcement of the visual element often has the effect of objectifying the figure on the stage, and thus of moving emphasis from the first-person to the third-person perspective. It could also bring about this objectifying effect by making the living person on the stage merge with inanimate scenic objects. As has been discussed earlier Stramm is a writer who even makes the syntax of the text serve this purpose by abolishing the difference between animate and inanimate agents. Visuality becomes a tool for lessening the element of psychology. Rhythm and visuality both lessen the element of fictional context, which in its turn lessens the importance of fictional action. This in its turn lessens the importance of the actor, which in its turn increasingly moves the initiative of scenic action to the director/creator of the scenic work. Beckett also, in different ways, from the making of his stage directions to his active involvement in the stagings of his works, assumes the role of an *auteur* or "Bühnenkünstler" in omnipotent control of all scenic means. Despite huge differences between the two writers there is an apparent similarity in this respect between Lothar Schreyer's way to notate every single element in the performance and the measures taken by Beckett to the same effect.

From the time around the turn of the 20th century musical elements, rhythm in particular, were given a different function from what was the case in traditional forms of music drama: that of representing the element of metaphysical necessity. Subordinating oneself to the rhythm means giving up one's personal will correspondingly. Rhythm connotes (and might also engender) states of trance and thus it is often used to represent the presence of natural or metaphysical forces.

Beckett also deals with necessity, never as a divine or even "Dionysian" element, but as a sad and at most tragicomical *condition humaine*.

In *Rockaby* also rhythmic repetition becomes an important element, present in all dimensions of the play: in the spoken words as well as in the space and the movement. Even the only manifestation of will to be found in the play, w's

repeated "More" is inscribed in this general rhythmic pattern.

Rhythmization has appeared as a possible strategy to prevent the actor from acting in a goal-directed sense. This also serves the purpose of lessening the importance of context, as rhythm does not presuppose or refer to a certain context, and neither takes its meaning from any situatedness, fictional or other.

As emphasized by Brater, Beckett's plays, especially the late ones, could be characterized as performance poems. It is "not drama in the shape of poetry, but poetry in the shape of drama". "The poem has been staged" (17).

This also brings with it the fact that the actor ceases to be an agent of his own in a context of "given circumstances". Instead he/she becomes what Brater calls "a vehicle for Beckett". Billie Whitelaw's account of her work with Beckett also testifies to this (for example 234–35). The author himself becomes the principal agent in the scenic work.

The emphasis on language is connected with a redefinition of the relationship between text and acting. Brater writes about Winnie's monologue in *Happy Days* that "Each section produces another in the emotional life that goes into *building a character through language*" (11) (My italics). As Brater also claims, the monologue is difficult to divide into separate units, thus it does not work as a series of actions, but functions as a flow of images reflecting the emotional life of the character.

The conception of scenic events as something that goes on primarily in the language is foreshadowed in the experiments with theatrical recitation in the early symbolist years and in many subsequent variations, such as for example the *parole in libertà* of the futurists and Blümner's recitations at the *Sturm* soirées.

Beckett and Mauthner

Interestingly, too, the "Wortkunst" developed within the *Sturm* circle was a response to the "Language scepticism", *Sprachskepsis*, prevalent in the German intellectual life of the time. As has already been mentioned, one of the most important philosophers representing this philosophical attitude was Fritz Mauthner. Beckett had already read Mauthner in 1929 or 1930 and took lasting impressions from his philosophy, and he is also reported to have read passages

from Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* to the blind Joyce (Ben-Zvi 183). Mauthner advocates a nominalism so extreme that it denies the ability of language to represent not only universals but individuals as well. Reminiscences from Mauthner can be felt in some passages at the end of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Mauthner also precedes Wittgenstein's idea of language as a game, subjected to conventional rules, or *Spielregel* in Mauthner's vocabulary. According to Mauthner man longs for knowledge, but the language he has at his disposal is inadequate. Similar ideas appear in Beckett's essay *Proust*. Mauthner's nominalism leads to both scepticism and to a mystical, godless religion (Hesla 234). Pilling (1976) maintains in a passage quoted by Ben-Zvi that "it would be difficult to overstate the relevance of [Mauthner's ideas of language] for students of Beckett" and that "Mauthner in fact provided Beckett with the necessary ammunition to destroy all systems of thought whatever, even 'irrationalism'" (Ben-Zvi 183).

Also, when Beckett abstains from the use of spoken words his plays bear characteristic resemblances to plays by radical reformers in the early 20th century. *Quad* from 1981 for Süddeutsche Rundfunk has the form of a strict pantomime with four actors who move in accordance with a scheme laid out mathematically in the script. The figures are deprived of all realistic individualization, and instead of dialogue there are only sounds, produced by percussion instruments, one for each actor, and by their footsteps, which according to the stage descriptions should sound differently for each actor. The figures are also characterized by means of light, which comes in four distinct colours. (Beckett suggests white plus the primary colours yellow, blue and red.) As for the actors the stage directions suggest "As alike in build as possible. Short and slight for preference. Some ballet training desirable. Adolescents a possibility. Sex indifferent." It should not be overlooked that the play is written for television, and thus to be recorded, which adds yet another dimension to its mechanical character.

Quad is, in fact, a kind of choreography. In Brater's words the play is more like "the scheme for some avant-garde modern dance" rather than the expression of any recognizable dramatic form. The rigidity of the prescribed movements, as well as the use of colour characterization, recalls Oskar Schlemmer's mechanical ballets, in spite of many differences in other respects. The way

in which Beckett makes musical and visual elements merge is particularly reminiscent of Kandinsky's *Der Gelbe Klang*. But, again, the ways in which the two writers make use of this element are entirely different. For Kandinsky necessity is a mystic natural force, a spiritual entity with the essentially positive connotations of being the secret source of art and creativity. The mathematical necessity imposed on Beckett's play is more like a bad dream, a "choreography of madness" in Brater's words (107).

It could seem next to blasphemous to indicate similarities between otherwise such different writers as Beckett and Kandinsky, not to speak of between Beckett and Schreyer. But from the point of view of practical work with the texts the comparisons are not so far-fetched after all. In a historical perspective the number of means to bring about, in practice, a reduction of the element of action appears restricted.

With Beckett it is no longer the director who dominates the theatrical process, but for once the author, at times in Beckett's work the author/director.

Beckett avoids all schematicism, as well as the frequently obsessive idea among early reformers that there should be a rationale for every divergence from normality. Rather Beckett questions rationality as such, and he is miles away from the proclamatory attitude of Lothar Schreyer.

Still, there are also links between Beckett and earlier avant-garde playwrights in terms of their relationship to theory and philosophy. In this context one can once again recall Beckett's reading of Fritz Mauthner. Mauthner was one of the most radical representatives of *Sprachskepsis* in German literature. Language scepticism is here previously mentioned in connection with the *Sturm* circle. In Linda Ben-Zvi the author addresses the influence Fritz Mauthner exerted on Beckett. The issue has also been discussed by Martin Esslin in his *Theatre of the Absurd* (34). According to Ben-Zvi, in Mauthner Beckett sought arguments against language. Among those themes in Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* that Beckett employs, Ben-Zvi takes up Mauthner's aim to "redeem the world from the tyranny of language" and his idea that this critique of language is "the most pressing task for thinking man". In Mauthner's view language and man alike are subject to constant change. Man is like living language and "believes that he has something to say because he speaks" (Ben-Zvi 187). Mauthner's critique of language is grounded in a strong influence from Kant's *Critique of*

Pure Reason and Schopenhauer's *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Ben-Zvi 184). Mauthner himself is aware that his endeavour is doomed, because he can never rid himself from language and because language is the only means he has to express his ideas. In the same way Beckett feels an obligation to "express what cannot be expressed". One feature in Mauthner's thinking that also appears in Beckett's writings to different degrees is the idea of thinking and speaking as one and the same activity. Another idea Beckett shares with Mauthner is that there are no absolutes, that the ego is contingent and does not exist apart from language, that communication between men is impossible, and finally that "the highest forms of a critique of language are laughter and silence" (Ben-Zvi 188). Mauthner equates thinking and language to the point of maintaining that there is nothing but language, and that what we refer to as thinking is only an aspect of language. Speaking and thinking are inseparable. Language does not offer any insights, but only illustrates how people use it in different circumstances. Beckett also equates words with thoughts and both with confusion. Mauthner, who rejects a reality outside expressions used to convey experiences, sees memory as the connection between these experiences and language. At the same time, memory is unfaithful and memory distorts. According to Ben-Zvi Beckett following *Proust* adopts this scepticism as regards the veracity of memory. In Beckett's writings the past never remains totally finished: "characters continually resurrect it, and their resurrections distort the present, on which memory is grafted" (Ben-Zvi 190). Memory can liberate man from the temporal, but in Beckett's writing language also hinders man from living in the present. According to Mauthner a great man can reach calm through a painful contemplation of his past. The word "calm" also frequently reappears in Beckett's writings, but, unlike the great man Mauthner is talking of, not one of Beckett's characters manages to attain the goals of his desire (Ben-Zvi 189). As memory is fallacious, it is not possible to verify the ego. Thus there is no such thing as an enduring ego. The self seeks the verification of an ongoing self in the nothingness of the past. This, according to Ben-Zvi, becomes one of the major preoccupations of Beckett's heroes. And since the sense of the self is tied to the past, it also becomes impossible to verify the self. According to Ben-Zvi "Mauthner provides Beckett not only with the theme of an ego trapped within the contingencies of time but also with the idea that an

ego even if it existed and could be found, would have no means of expressing itself” (Ben-Zvi 193).

Self-reflection is impossible, as language is a tool for understanding only the external world. The I never finds a *me*. The me inside the I can never merge with this I. This is also, according to Ben-Zvi, reflected in “the vehemence with which the speaker of *Not I* refuses to drop her third-person singular pronoun” (193). Mauthner indicates that our sense of an outer reality is only based on our subjective feeling that there must be an external world. In Mauthner, as well as in Beckett, there is only a semblance of an ego feeling, of an inner and outer world, and a unity between the ego and reality. For Ben-Zvi Beckett’s world is one where the characters hold on to this semblance of an “external world of which the self is a part”. Language is useful, but impure. As words stem from individual experience, no two persons can understand them in the same way. Language is only good for the gossip of alehouse guests and for shouts to a waiter. Similarly Beckett’s characters are aware that their use of language is only a way to fill time and to avoid silence. To Mauthner the use of simple language, without abstractions, would be a means for man to rid himself from “word-superstition”. According to Ben-Zvi, Beckett also sees the use of simple language as an aid in communication. But even when the characters speak simply they are not understood.

Mauthner’s extreme scepticism finally ends up in a “godless mysticism” (*gottlose Mystik*) and the only human articulation of this state, he says, is laughter. The same idea about laughter and silence as the final answers to the limitations of language are according to Ben-Zvi something one can find in Beckett “over and over again”, and, she adds, “the parallels with Mauthner are striking”. She finally concludes: “Silence for Beckett, as for Mauthner, becomes a goal that is never attained as long as man holds on to the futile medium of language” (197).

Now, in spite of apparent parallels between Beckett’s work and Mauthner’s philosophy and the fact that this connection has been confirmed by Beckett himself it would be reductive to view Beckett only as a “Mauthnerian”. Ben-Zvi repeatedly underlines that Mauthner is not to be read as a “key” to Beckett⁵⁰ and she argues that “Beckett’s genius is too great to be subsumed under any one influence” (879).

As has been mentioned earlier, Mauthner was influenced by both Kant

and Schopenhauer. In this respect he aligns himself with a succession of philosophical ideas originating in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and which is of particular importance for the development of theatre and drama from the end of the 19th century on.

Schopenhauer was an heir of Kant and belongs to the tradition of German counter rationalism from Fichte and Schelling to Nietzsche and Heidegger. He also, among others, strongly influenced Wagner and Proust.

In his major work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* he takes as his point of departure Kant's distinction of the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself. He agrees with Kant that the thing-in-itself is not the cause of our sensations or of phenomena. But Schopenhauer argues that this does not mean that we can form no idea of the nature of the thing-in-itself. Besides perceptions of the phenomenal world of things we are also aware of ourselves, both in the way we know external things and "from within" as Will, and more specifically, in Schopenhauer's words, as Will to Live. As I thus have knowledge of my own nature as the thing-in-itself, I can infer something of the nature of phenomena in general. Further I can also apply what I know about myself to other beings in the world as a thing-in-itself, and finally to the world itself. Hence, the natural world becomes the appearance of a cosmic Will to itself. This idea of the Will is also the basis for Schopenhauer's famous *pessimism*. The entire phenomenal world is powered by a drive to survive at the expense of others. There are two ways to escape the power of this will: aesthetic experience, whereby our faculty of knowledge, which is normally only an instrument for the satisfaction of the Will, gains independence as pure will-less contemplation. Here it is no longer particular things in time and space that are presented to us, but the very principles by which the Will manifests itself. Schopenhauer here approaches a Platonic view. The artist produces a perceptual representation, which makes us aware of the principles behind phenomena rather than of particular things. Music is the only art that expresses the will as it is in itself rather than as it is manifested in the world of phenomena.

This idea exerted a substantial influence on Wagner's thinking about music in epistemology. Beckett also took strong impressions from Schopenhauer, whose cosmic pessimism could be seen as reflected in Beckett's pessimism. Schopenhauer also influenced Beckett's idea of art. But to him it was not Wagner

who was the intermediary, but Marcel Proust, who on the other hand in his turn was strongly influenced by Wagner (Weiner).

In Samuel Beckett's view Proust "adapted Schopenhauer's theory of music to a fictional end, thereby raising the possibility of transcending ordinary perception by involuntary memory" (Ackerley and Gontarski 458). Proust had also described memory as something unstable and ephemeral. This idea is strongly reflected in Beckett's frequent use of impaired memory.

Even in *Waiting for Godot* Beckett started to thematize a dark fatality, which is also strongly felt in *Rockaby*. W is portrayed as subjected to necessity, further underlined by the fact that she appears to actually repeat her mother's death. Like all plays by Beckett *Rockaby* is also strongly visual. The movements of the character are stylized in a choreographic manner in the repetitious movement of the rocking chair. The relationship the play has to the public is not actually that it only displays something. Rather it has a strong suggestive trait which is further underlined by the poetic character of the text. Rhythm and recitation go together in a strong musical character. There is never any trace of religion in Beckett's plays. Still, a ritualistic trait could be found in some of his plays, not least in this one.

Peter Handke: The Hour

Early in his career, in 1966, the year after his literary debut with the novel *The Hornets*, Handke wrote his first play for the stage, *Publikumbeschimpfung* (*Offending the Audience*). With its lack of story and characters, as well as with its direct and provocative appeal to the public this play is already a canonic example of post-WW2 experimental drama. The play was one of five *Sprechstücke* (*Spoken pieces*), the others being *Weissagung* (1966; *Prophecy*), *Selbstbezeichnung* (1966; *Self-Accusation*), *Hilferufe* (1967; *Calling for Help*) and *Kaspar* (1968). The *Sprechstück* is a kind of performance play that could be characterized, at the same time, as a theatre text and an exercise in linguistic criticism. Handke's first works questioned the assumption of the "natural" connection between language and reality, signifier and signified. Influences ranging from the late Wittgenstein, Roland Barthes, Alain Robbe-Grillet, the Russian Formalists, as well as authors from the Wiener and Grazer avant-garde have been ascertained in Handke's texts, but could also sometimes be regarded as overemphasized

(Barry 89). Handke nevertheless inscribes himself in the tradition of scepticism, yet basic fascination regarding language typical of the European theatrical avant-garde since its earlier years.

In 1992 Handke wrote the play *Die Stunde da wir nichts voneinander wußten* (*The Hour We Knew Nothing Of Each Other*). The play presents the public with a flow of characters moving over a stage representing an open square. The play has no monologue and no action, but consists in its written form only of a description of the outer aspects and doings of the characters. These in their turn are described as ordinary people, but in the swarm also appear figures like Papageno, Chaplin, Abraham and Isaac, Moses with the tablets of law, Tarzan, Peer Gynt peeling an onion etc. In this way the play is transformed from just a "documentary" account of events unfolding themselves on an ordinary square to a kind of dream play. In *The Hour...* the first-person dimension is made away with entirely, and the third-person perspective is pushed to the extreme. In this respect *The Hour...* also stands out as one of the most radical attempts to do away with the element of action. The actors are practically reduced to their mere appearance. It is a play in line with Elfriede Jelinek's war-cry in her article from 1983 "I want to be shallow". It could also be seen in the light of a post-structural preference for the surface.

In her thesis *Unterwegs zum Ungesagten* Eleonora Pascu focuses on this aspect of Handke's work. The tradition of post-modernism, or at least the notion of it, emerged in the nineteen-forties in a debate about architecture, and was used later by literary critics such as Harry Levin, Irving Howe, Leslie Fiedler, Frank Kernode and Ihab Hassan to distinguish the post-WW2 experimental fiction of Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges, among others, from the classics of high modernism. According to post-modern theorists the belief that intellectuals and artists can enjoy autonomy from capitalism is illusionary. The materials of the artists, language and images, come from the culture, and the individual creator is seen as constituted himself by culture. The different usages of the notion of postmodernism are related to the nature of knowledge, i.e. of epistemology. Post-modern works of art are said to represent a fundamentally different way to look at reality. This also makes it a basic task for post-modernists to question the basis of established epistemological models.

A recurrent discussion about post-modernism is to what extent its ideas and

artistic forms actually stand in contrast to modernism. A problem here is the difficulty to find a satisfactory definition even of the latter notion. Hence it is also a recurring issue if the prefix "post" should be understood in an epochal way or as designating a chronological category in the sense of something actually taking place *after* modernism. The discussion is yet again actualized in the explication of the word "post-dramatic" in the sense accorded the notion by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his *Postdramatic Theatre*. Karen Jürs-Munby in her Introduction to this book emphasizes that "post" here should not be understood in this temporal aspect, but rather as a "rupture", as a way to subject the relation between drama and theatre to deconstruction (1). This is also a view Pascu champions in her thesis about Handke. As an introduction to her analysis of plays like *The Hour...* she quotes the idea from Lyotard that post-modernism, first of all, is a critique of the modernist idea that the human race should be emancipated through science and technology. In this sense postmodernism could also be seen as a continuation of modernist aesthetics, with other technical means at its disposal. Pascu quotes Peter Engelmann's reading of Derrida, according to which the concept of "text" could be widened to designate "practically everything", a speech, a gesture, and even reality itself. She also quotes Baudrillard's thesis that the opposition between real and imagination is abolished, and that there is no more fiction, that the entire reality is transformed into a *play* of reality. Finally, she cites the "groundbreaking" critic Michael Lützel's idea that a difference between modernism and postmodernism lies in the plurality of categories, styles and tendencies, as well as the author's ontological approach (Pascu 17–27).

Pascu includes Handke on her list of post-modern writers of the German language, while also mentioning that this classification, or any classification of Handke's works, remains strongly disputed among literary critics (29).

To Pascu Handke's *The Hour ...* is like a game of chess, directed by the "paradigmatic" movements of the figures. It is a play between stage and auditorium, fiction and reality, semblance and being (73). She devotes some interesting remarks to the temporal aspects of the play. According to her *The hour* takes place in an "atemporal" space, the word of "hour" in the title in fact, standing for a deceptive temporal limitation. In reality, it is question of a "timeless time" of the kind that in the philosophical tradition is designated by

"nunc stans", in which she finds an exemplification of the poetological concept "epiphania" (130–32). Finally she deals with the phenomenon of silence in Handke's plays, what she calls "die Sprachlosigkeit" (193–207). According to her, this crisis of dialogical speech in modernism and post modernism alike have opened up the room of silence. It is typical of such playwrights as Bernhard and Beckett and it is an "essential" part of Handke's "mute", language-less plays, like *The Hour*... . She also points to the fact that the title *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* thematizes a not-(yet)-knowing. The title designates the moment of silence when one does not know anything about each other. It could be seen as allowing the "we", the "you" ("du"), "he", "she" and "it" and the "all" to experience the hour in the form of a limitless spatio-temporal unity. The vision culminates in a vision/*epiphania* of a "People", a collective body (198).

Some distinctive traits in Handke's *The Hour* ...: The play has more the character of a happening, an event, than being an account of human volitional interaction. It is extremely visual and lacks dialogue. This, as has been pointed out, could be related to Handke's Language Scepticism: meaning is to be sought for more in what we can see than in language.

Innes stresses Handke's deconstruction of identity and the connection he makes between this and language. Innes takes some of Handke's *Sprechspiele* as examples. In "reducing actions to words", Innes argues, Handke turns his plays into a type of linguistic analysis similar to logical positivism, and Innes here sees an echo of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.⁵¹ He also sees Handke's rejection of representational conventions as "the theatrical equivalent of minimal art" (253).

According to Gilman (1987) "For Handke theatre is the place where one can see what the world is really like only by being placed outside its ordinary actions and, most important, its self-definitions, which are of course our own" (277). The use Handke makes of language in his *Sprechstücke* is not dialogue, but structures of speech, and, Gilman adds, "the very facts of speaking and listening become paramount and the sheer phenomenon of language is laid bare" (279). Gilman also compares Handke's plays with Beckett's "static" plays. Gilman writes about Handke's *Self accusation* that it is actually less of a self-accusation than an "indictment of the action of language in creating false selves" (281). These remarks about the role language plays in Handke's

Sprechstücke do not apply, of course, to a wordless play like *The Hour*.... However, they become interesting commentaries on Handke's relation to language and also demonstrate to what extent Handke in these early works already foreshadows writers like Crimp and Kane.

Martin Crimp: Attempts on her Life

Martin Crimp, born in Dartford in 1956, Kent, was one of the most acclaimed English dramatists of the final years of the 20th century. He started his career during his student years in Cambridge, when he wrote plays in the European anti-naturalistic tradition for a fellow student, Roger Mitchell, later a film director. His experiments were developed further in his collaboration at the beginning of the eighties with the fringe venue Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond, and later with the Royal Court Theatre, where he was to become one of the theatre's most prominent writers.

Martin Crimp's plays have been said to be "characterised by its vision of contemporary society as a place of social decay, moral compromise and barely suppressed violence" (Sierz *Literary Encyclopedia*). Crimp's most important work so far is probably *Attempts on her life*, which was premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 1997. The play consists of seventeen scenes, giving a fragmentary, disrupted account of a woman, sometimes called Anne, sometimes Annie, Anyushka, and other variants. As the play has no list of roles, the director or the ensemble have to extract the characters from the text. The play does not even require the protagonist herself to appear on stage. What we get to know about Ann ... is contradictory. Is she a victim of violence? Or is she herself a terrorist? Or is she a porn star? Or is she, in fact, an Italian car?

Attempts on her life is a drama without action in that it does not even give a physical form to its main character. What she does is less important than other sources of information, in the first case the sayings of different persons, sayings that are often contradictory.

Crimp, first of all, dissolves what is traditionally called a scenic situation. One of the few conclusions we can draw about Ann ..., if she exists at all, is that she is moving across the world. In this she becomes a personification of the element of globalisation, which in itself constitutes a problematic extension of the element of situatedness. Frequently the text also has an impersonal

character of mediality. It could be a form of news, given in countries where, again, we have no detailed knowledge about the political situation or moral norms, and where words could be anything from trivial reports to important facts or insidious allegations. The play reflects the relativity of information and a joint objectification of human beings. Ann ... never gets any identity of her own, but is made up of what different persons, or voices, say about her.

Martin Crimp's text offers the interesting challenge to the actor that there is never sufficient material to conclude about the identity of any character.

An interesting feature, however, in *Attempts on her life* is its narrative character. Ann... appears to the audience in the form of different stories. In this sense Crimp in his play actually makes use of the idea of the "narrative self". On the other hand, the narrative self, as Dan Zahavi also points out, is a matter of what story out of an infinite number of stories that is actually selected, which risks making the idea of the "narrative self" part of the "no-self doctrine". This is, in fact, exactly what Crimp in this play makes use of as a primal artistic principle by constantly providing new stories, each one of which is detailed and makes claim on trustworthiness at the same time as it is inconsistent with other accounts, or only partly consistent.

The problem with the play, however, appears on the actor's level. Again, an actor is not identical with his appearance on the stage, but is also a person who acts. Thus, to the actor as to anyone, every movement of his body is part of a web of deliberations over which he exercises some kind of mental control. Inevitably, the actor has a first-person awareness. The problem has to do with the specificity of the actor as an artist, that of being a human being, and lacking a distinct technique of for example a dancer to let go inbetween himself and the one he is to represent. Again, what an actor does is to act. Now, actions are never general, but are always personalized as the actions of somebody. Action of any kind is so closely connected to identity that one cannot deal with the one at the same time as losing sight of the other. In terms of identity there are only two options for the actor: to appear as himself (whatever this implies) or to appear with the "borrowed" identity of someone else. It is impossible to appear in any situation without a first-person awareness. It is impossible to appear rationally without having any idea as to who one is, and it is no less impossible to do it on a stage in front of a public. On the other hand, when appearing in Crimp's play

one is obliged to deal with this difficulty, as lack of identity is the very theme of the play. The solution could be that the actors invent situations for themselves in order to make it possible for them to understand and gain artistic control over their actions and doings on the stage. The only difference from traditional acting is that the audience in this case should not know anything about what (imagined) situations the actors actually acted in. Thus it is not impossible to find a technical solution to the problem about the lack of identity, a solution that could work out very well scenically and remain entirely unnoticed by the audience. But thus it also gives deceptive support to the idea that identity could be reduced to narratives or interplays of language games.

On the other hand, is this really what the play wants to say? Is *Attempts on her life* at all about identity? Or is the play rather, as the playwright Ken Urban puts it, after the question how it is that we come to know each other? According to one scholar, Mary Luckhurst, the play demonstrates how coming to know somebody always involves an element of violence. In this sense it is no coincidence that the object of investigation in this play is a woman. The absent first character becomes filled with the others' expectations, including those of the audience. In this way Aleks Sierz's claim, supported with a quotation from David Edgar, also is confirmed that *Attempts on her life* is essentially a play with the audience's expectations (Sierz *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* 52–54). – In fact, the way to present an ambiguated identity by means of contradictive narratives was already tried out by Handke in for example *Selfaccusation*. Crimp's works should be seen in relation the the kind of English naturalism that developed in the pursuit of Osborne's *Look back in Anger* from 1956 and which long dominated the English stage, with its preference for slice-of-life realism at the expense of metaphor, symbolism or imagination. According to Sierz it is in opposition to this genre that Crimp works (111–12).

Sierz makes an interesting remark about Crimp's use of language. He quotes the journalist Robert Butler, according to whom "Crimp sculpts apparently shapeless speech-overlapping lines, simultaneous conversations, stacked thoughts, delayed replies, hesitations, interruptions and repetitions" (*qtd. in* Sierz *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* 112). Although it is obvious to Crimp that stage language is not the same as everyday speech, the relationship between playtext and ordinary speech is very important. The energy comes from the

fact that the lines are spoken. Sierz quotes Crimp from a conversation with the director Luc Bondy, among others, where Crimp explains his fascination with the spokenness of the stage texts and how this comes from his love of listening to people talking (113).

In an interview with Aleks Sierz in the *Ensemble Modern Newsletters* Crimp recounts how in his early career he was heavily influenced by Beckett. A recurring feature in Crimp's writing that seems to go back to this influence is, not least, his way to focus on the way people speak, to the extent of reducing his characters to mere monologues, a trait that could already be found in Beckett from *Happy Days*. In his answer to the question Crimp maintains that besides this influence he also had something more personal, a penchant for satire. The passage is interesting because of the actual incompatibility between these two elements. Whereas Beckett's monologues have a tendency to go inwards or towards an enigmatic void, the mention of satire signals a more extrovert attitude. It is symptomatic of a new use of the means Beckett developed for entirely new purposes. This seems important, as it also bears witness to a divide between Beckett's firm roots in the ideological underpinnings of early modernism for the benefit of a new, more versatile application of the new writing techniques and dealing with a society in constant change. This also means a shift from an essentially ontological and epistemological attitude to a more "empirical" one. What, on the other hand, Crimp retains from Beckett is the strong focus on the written text, which once again puts the playwright rather than the actor in the centre. Yet another important difference between the two writers is the degree of control they claim on the staging process. There is a stark contrast here between Crimp's writing mode and Beckett's way of conditioning every detail in the performance. A novelty in the kind of writing for the stage exemplified by Crimp is an unprecedented freedom, i.e. it is not only the drama and the action that are "fading away", but the whole notion of performance as structured by a written text, as well as the entire relationship between scenic action and speech. Speech is no longer action, but a matrix for someone's understanding, with a total openness in relation to the multitude of variants this can lead to. This is a trait that could be seen as bringing Crimp closer to Handke and his *Sprechstücke* than to Beckett. In an interview Crimp makes this interesting remark about his way of writing for the stage:

I have consciously developed two methods of dramatic writing: one is the making of scenes in which characters enact a story in the conventional way – for example my play *THE COUNTRY* – the other is a form of narrated drama in which the act of story-telling is *itself dramatised* – as in *ATTEMPTS ON HER LIFE*, or *FEWER EMERGENCIES*, recently produced by Vienna's Burgtheater. In this second kind of writing, the dramatic space is a mental space, not a physical one. (Crimp Interview)

Like Handke's *The Hour*, Crimp's play takes on the form of an *event*, unfolding itself unaffected by human volitional intervention. The difference is that Crimp's play is disrupted, and that the information it gives to the audience is constantly deceptive. *Attempts on her Life* becomes a game the theatre plays with the public, which is challenged to find a hold in the narratives presented, which, on the other, hand repeatedly, and eloquently, contradict each other. The staging is no more actually integrated in the play as text, but is left to the theatre to design *ad libitum*.

Sarah Kane: *Crave*

Crave, the fourth and penultimate play by Sarah Kane, was originally published under the pseudonym Marie Kelvedon, supposedly in an attempt by the author to let the play be judged without side glances at her earlier production, which had so far gained a reputation mostly on the basis of some extremely violent scenes.

Crave has the form of a conversation between four voices, each having a letter for a name. There are no stage directions. The occasion and context of the conversation remain unclear to the point of also disseminating doubt as to whether the voices are really characters, i.e. four distinct persons, or if they are just voices, which in principle could be resounding within the same individual. Or if they oscillate between those functions. Sometimes one voice repeats lines previously uttered by another one. Sometimes they join each other to utter different phrases which are split up from the same sentence. Still, it seems possible to attribute sexes to each one of them: A is probably a man, B, C and M women. A seems to have been involved in a love affair, possibly with M. B is addicted to cigarettes and alcohol. C expresses nausea because of herself, she mourns the day she was born and she talks repeatedly about an exit out of her present existence. The play ends up in a

celebration of a freedom that seems to be identical with liberation from life.

Sierz, who in his *In-Yer-Face Theatre* emphasizes the "musical" qualities of *Crave* suggests four different interpretations. According to the first, the "rational" one, A stands for abuser, B for boy, M for mother and C for child. The text can be worked out in a coherent way for example in the form of a story accounting for how an older man, the abuser, is infatuated with a black girl who cannot reciprocate because she is haunted by an abused past that she cannot forget. The problem, Sierz adds, with this understanding is that it limits the interpretations of an open-ended play.

Second, the play can be read in an intertextual manner as echoes of the Bible, Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot.

Third, it could be read as a personal play by Kane, private allusions making it an ideal candidate for biographical criticism.

Fourth, it could be seen as a performance, without working it out, but only letting oneself be dazzled by its images and the mix and collision of phrases. On the other hand, Sierz argues, *Crave* is more of a poem than a play. However well one describes its visual aspects, this appears trivial in comparison with the words (*In-Yer-Face Theatre* 118–19).

Sierz sees *Crave* as reminiscent of Crimp's *Attempts on her life* in the sense of being an attempt to recast theatrical form. The play "puts into question the ruling conventions of naturalism" (120).

Now, even though it is possible to make characters out of the four voices speaking in the play, this way of viewing the conversation seems based on a cliché, the one that there are characters to be found in every play. The only thing we are actually being told is that somehow four individuals should be present on the stage. We find no situation, no actions except for the ones of the mere uttering of the lines. We see very little of anything like "dramatic progression". The play does not present its characters with obstacles to be overcome. Rather the difficulties they face are described as beyond remedy and reconciliation.

As in many of Beckett's plays action in Kane's *Crave* is replaced with sayings, with language. It becomes more important what the author says through the mouths of the performers than what these are supposed to find in an assumed situation. The perspective is very decisively that of the author, and the role of the actors becomes that of interpreting her rather than a situation in an imagined

time and space. In this respect, also, *Crave* lives up to Kane's own words in an interview that in the first case she is writing for herself, "the smallest audience possible", which she is convinced is the most essential one if she wants to attract the interest of others (*qtd. in* Saunders 18). The play forms a world of love, desire, painful memories, despair and struggle to make life worth living, an existential situation connected to one individual who speaks through the characters.

The form sometimes becomes ritual. The frequent repetitions develop something of incantation. A universe is formed where there is passion but where one has also lost even the kind of faith involved in waiting for a Godot. If Beckett places himself at the border of language and meaning, Sarah Kane's position seems to be where life itself ends.

Like Crimp Kane distances herself, in her plays, from what has been called English naturalism. According to the director James McDonald, she 'removed the psychological signposts and social geography' of English plays of the earlier generation. She rejected the conventions of realism, her plays contain no lengthy "state-of-the-nation" monologues. According to another critic, Clarie Armistead in the *Guardian*, Kane challenges linguistic, logical and linear narrative structures in a way that made the audience instinctively say "this is not theatre" (*qtd. in* Saunders 8, 10). Saunders quotes a noteworthy remark made by Kane in an article in 1998, where she draws a distinction between theatre and performance in the theatre and text for performance. She here claims to find performance more interesting than acting, and theatre more compelling than plays, and that *Crave* for her is more a text for performance than a play (17). But Saunders also stresses her close affinity with theatrical tradition, not least apparent in the fact that the redemptive process in classical tragedy, gaining insight by suffering, is also a motif to be found in her plays (20).

Graham Saunders also stresses the poetical character of the text, quoting Kane herself when saying that with it she ventured to try out how good a poet she could be while still writing a dramatic work. The most important influence guiding the writing of the play is according to Saunders, T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, a poem that is also a precursor of Western interest in intertextuality. Saunders sees the play as reminiscent of Beckett's wireless plays and his later work for the theatre. But, as Saunders points out, *Crave* has certain narrative strands. The character M craves a child from B; there is also a relationship between the

older man A and the young girl C. Beckett's shadow is revealed in the play's dramatic structure and is also felt in the long monologue of one of its characters, reminiscent of Lucky's monologue in *Waiting for Godot* (100–08).

In his monography of Sarah Kane Saunders includes some conversations, with Phyllis Nagy among others, an American playwright who, like Sarah Kane, is addressed by Sierz in his *In-yer-face theatre*. Phyllis Nagy does not agree with the idea expressed by Sarah Kane herself that her work was moving closer towards poetry than theatre. Still, Nagy sees in her plays a trait that she finds problematic, an absence of character, a tendency towards stripping the figures of identity. According to Nagy one cannot or is not required to respond to characters floating in a void. Nagy thought that the lack of reference to the world we mutually inhabit, in contrast to the one Sarah Kane exclusively inhabited, was not necessarily a strength. Nagy questions Kane's penchant in her later work to immerse herself in her self, something that reaches its peak in her last work, 4.48 *Psychosis*. It could result in the fact that as part of the audience one does not feel one's presence necessary. Phyllis Nagy also finds the concept of a "text for performance" problematic. In fact, she reminds us, Kane's last two plays were not written as performances but as plays. What really happens with them, according to Nagy, is a movement towards a literary form, rather than a purely theatrical one. In contrast even to Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her life* Kane's last two plays lack characters, which Phyllis Nagy equates with abandoning drama. She puts the question as to whether it is possible for a play to be open-ended to the point of defying any meaningful interpretation. According to Nagy, Kane's plays represent viable ways of experiential literature rather than viable ways of experiential theatre. And she questions whether Kane in them does not actually abstain from adapting herself to the exigencies of the medium she is working in. Sarah Kane's private world was her real world. But according to Nagy she perhaps failed to communicate this world to an audience in the way one can do as a playwright in contrast to an essayist, say (Saunders 154–62).

The way in which Kane in her last plays blurs the boundaries between theatre and performance is an interesting aspect of her specific contribution to late modern theatre. The discussion Phyllis Nagy enters upon in her conversation with Graham Saunders and the critical views she gives expression to is a rare example of critique that could not just be qualified as a conservative clinging to

traditional conventions. In contrast to Saunder's own repeated claim that Kane questions the conventions of naturalism Nagy suggests that the conventions she defies could be stretched to the fundamental constitutive conventions of theatre, the involvement of an audience, and the articulation of the material in accordance with the exigencies of the medium. Nagy's critique is interesting also in that she speaks it out in full acknowledgment of the unique qualities in Kane's writings. Thus, in the end, the question about the dissolution of forms becomes one about the existence or non-existence of theatre as a medium.

To sum up: As the plays by Handke and Crimp, Crave also takes the form of something that only happens, basically unaffected by the will of the characters. The voices in the conversation are more like parts in a musical composition than "word acts" aimed at bringing about a change in the situation. The play describes situation more than action and there is a strong presence of necessity set against the vulnerability of the characters.

DRAMA WITHOUT ACTION. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These are some characteristics typical of the dramas "without action" addressed in this section:

- Human agency is ascribed on outer forces rather than to any deliberation within the agent himself.
- The conflicting element lies outside the scenic events.
- There is an emphasis on the third-person aspect of the scenic figures.
- Anti-illusion.
- The aim is to substitute a (higher) element of reality for scenic illusion.
- Language scepticism.
- Emphasis on the static aspect of the basic situation, "*nunc stans*".

All these elements serve the purpose of doing away with or downplaying the element of action in the sense of deliberate acts performed by the character, as well as the actions performed by the actor on his behalf in the playing mode.

Other typical features are these:

- The writer and the director are the dominating agents in the theatrical process at the expense of the actor.
- The dominant epistemology takes the form of *ideas* or visions about reality, not of reality understood as possible situations encountered “phenomenologically” in the play on the stage.
- Unsituatedness, or situatedness within a universe created by the author.

More concretely, the similarities between the early modernism and post-WW2 experimental writing for the stage consists in similarities regarding expressive means. Some of the ones listed here conform with those also listed by Lehmann:

- Stage poetry
- Musicalization
- Increased control from the *auteur* over the acting. Choreography
- Visual Dramaturgy
- Ritualisation

This could be exemplified thus in my selection of plays:

Stage Poetry

The tendency to transform the dramatic text into a poem already starts in symbolistic drama and becomes an important feature in Maeterlinck’s *Interior*. It is the core of Mallarmé’s attempt to create a new form of scenic play, further stressed in his reference to Poe’s essay *Philosophy of Composition*. This became an endeavour to remake drama from the ground. The talking person forms his identity in relation to a poetic vision. There is a continuation in the futuristic “parole in libertà”. The cultivation of the art of recitation brings with it the fact that the author takes the stage himself, either directly, as in the recitations of the symbolists and those of Rudolf Blümner, or indirectly by speaking to the public through the actor’s mouth, which was Schreyer’s ideal and which is also what Handke does in his *Public Insult*. One aspect of the speechless play

The Hour is the fact that what the public witnesses, in fact, is not a fictional square, but the process of the author giving free rein to his production of poetic images. The author addresses the audience directly, without any intermediary fictional situation, not with insults this time, but with these images. Once again it is the author who takes the stage. Handke exemplifies, before Crimp does it, what the latter phrased "the act of story-telling is itself dramatised". The poetic element is also strong in Kokoschka's and Kandinsky's plays. The development of Stramm's works for the stage took place in direct interaction with the development of his poetry. This connection, in turn, heavily influenced Schreyer. Similarly, Beckett's plays are often described as "scenic poems". The same holds for the dramas by Kane.

Musicalization

To an important extent modern theatre had its start in the works and writings of Richard Wagner. With him came, not least, the idea of music as the quintessential art form, implicitly bringing with it a scepticism vis-à-vis the art forms based on words. Wagner's theory and his way of forwarding the legacy from Schopenhauer was further developed by Nietzsche. Music was to occupy an important part in modern theatre aesthetics. Kandinsky makes reference to it in his *Yellow Sound*, and in his theoretical writings such as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* and *On Stage Composition*.

Schreyer's *Spielgänge*, including *Kreuzigung*, are deliberately conceived as musical scores. Music had already become an essential part of *Der Sturm* aesthetics owing to the fact that Herwarth Walden at the bottom was a professionally trained musician, and that many of the ideas behind the activities of the group could be traced to Conrad Ansorge and his circles of disciples.

Beckett's affinities with music are too well-known to be further dealt with. The play by Handke, *The Hour*, does not display any specifically musical quality. Crimp has co-operated with a composer, George Benjamin, but he makes no claims to equate playwrighting with composing (Crimp Interview). In addition, in the case of Sarah Kane, the mention of musicality can only be seen as metaphorical.

Choreography

The choreographic element becomes a consequence of the stress on rhythm and musical elements. This can be observed in all theatre texts referred to here up to Beckett. "Choreography" could also stand for the way the playwright and/or director exerts overriding influence on the actor's work.

Visualisation

This is a strong element in the plays by Maeterlinck, Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Schreyer, Beckett, Handke and Crimp. Like choreography emphasis on visibility also brings with it stress on the third-person aspect of the scenic figures.

Ritualisation

A strong ritual trait can be observed in many symbolic plays, in Kokoschka's *Murderer, Hope of Women*, in Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound*, in Schreyer's *Kreuzigung*. Beckett's plays have at least incantatory traits. Pascu also finds a ritual element in Handke.

The Significance of Nietzsche

I started the review of dramas without action in Maeterlinck. For him it became necessary to purify the plays of "a certain human materiality" in Fuchs' phrasing (30). With reference to a passage from Mallarmé about Hamlet, Fuchs concludes that one of Hegel's chief examples of a tragedy of character had turned into a realm of abstraction bordering on allegory. At the beginning of modernism the Hegelian autonomous character is about to vanish, one sign of this being the avoidance of actors in favour of puppets, marionettes and mask-works.

At the end of her survey Fuchs discusses the development of character in relation to the "dehumanization of art", which starts in modernism and continues in contemporary theatre. She argues that the actor marks a difference between theatre and the other arts. Unlike painting and sculpture, abstraction in theatre could not be pushed so far that it left the human form behind. On the other hand, she denies that this, in any way, entails the survival of character. Rather, she maintains that the disassemblage of character in modern theatre is a sign of its newly-problematic status. Modernist drama introduces as its own questioning of the human image a humanistic problem, which becomes

further normalized in the postmodern.

I find Fuchs' account of the development of philosophic ideas about character in Western drama highly useful⁵². I particularly agree with Fuchs' contention that "Nietzsche's resonance in modern and contemporary theatre has not even now been fully accounted for" (27). Nietzsche's discussion about human action is strongly influenced by Schopenhauer's idea of the will as something other than a matter of human choice. For Nietzsche the will is not free in the sense of being subjected to deliberate choice. As the acts of the individual are only consequences of elements and influences from the past and the future, man cannot be held responsible either for his character or for his motives nor for his actions. What we call freedom of will is only a *sense* of being free (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* 479–81). Thus Nietzsche's idea of action goes contrary to the one closely connected with human and moral responsibility which is central to much Western drama and theatre.

Nietzsche opposes to many features that are prerequisites for the BSI pattern. He rejects the idea of free will and personal responsibility, which according to him is introduced only in order to justify moralism, guilt and punishment. He sees the psychology of the will as an invention of priests with the aim to justify the imposition of sentences (*Götzen-Dämmerung* 976–78).

Nietzsche's idea of human will is "antiteleologic", even in the sense that he holds purposefulness and will to be deceptions. He is opposed to the mechanistic ideas about human volition, which were becoming prevalent in the science of his time. But he shares with them the view that moral and aesthetic judgements pertain to physical, chemical and mechanical principles (Fragment VIII).

Nietzsche's own idea of human volition, instead, took the form of the crucial concept of "will to power". Nietzsche intended to write a separate book on this theme (*Zur Genealogie der Moral* 897), but this was not realised in his lifetime. The posthumous *Will to Power*, compiled by the philosopher's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, does not count among his canonical works. But the concept itself appears in many of his writings. For Nietzsche the will to power is a principle that is active in nature generally. It is defined as a "will to life" (*Also sprach Zarathustra* 370, 372). Life itself is a "will to power" (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 578). This is also the power behind our instincts; it is the power to which all that strive for propagation and feeding pertain; it is the basic principle for

all life (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 600–01).

But the concept also has ontological implications. Nietzsche, in fact, tries to replace the very will to find truth with the will to power. In this way he turns the whole question about truth to a matter of power (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 676–77).

Nietzsche's influence on modern theatre can hardly be measured. Among the playwrights reviewed in this chapter traces of Nietzscheanism can be found in Kokoschka and Stramm. Nietzsche's impact on the Italian futurists was massive, and the entire *Sturm* circle, including Schreyer, was imbued with Nietzschean influence. The language scepticism that exerted influence as late as on Beckett and Handke was extensively inspired by Nietzsche, albeit in the case of Beckett mediated by Mauthner. Another source of influence for the writers reviewed in this chapter was Wagner (Kandinsky) and Schopenhauer (Schreyer and Beckett). Thus the impetus to free theatre from action has partly drawn inspiration from ideas about man as subjected to forces outside himself, a Will of the Schopenhauerian kind or a "will to power" of Nietzschean origin. In the latter case it is interesting to observe that Nietzsche's idea was brought forward in acceptance of the mechanistic view of man, i.e. by a belief that free will was at odds with scientific principles of causation.

In sum, the "drama without action" presented here displays the following characteristic features:

- scepticism towards human action;
- scepticism towards the possibilities of language to deal adequately with reality (*Sprachskepsis*); and
- scepticism towards depictive representation.

In my selection of texts here these are thus exemplified:

- scepticism towards action (all the selected examples of plays);
- scepticism towards the adequacy of descriptive language (Kandinsky, Schreyer, Beckett, Handke in particular);
- scepticism towards representation (non-"realism": Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Stramm, Schreyer, Beckett in particular).

From my summaries of each play one can read certain characteristics that are treated differently in the respective plays, but which still form a pattern diverging from the one I here call the BSI pattern. Such features are these:

- the events in the play are subordinated to an undefined transcendental principle;
- this principle also dominates the interaction between the figures;
- the play demonstrates something rather than involves the public in empathic understanding of conditioned action; and
- there is a strong element of fatality or determinism in the play.

As regards expressive means, the following characteristics become recurrent:

- Musicalization,
- Visualization,
- Poetization, and
- Choreography (in the sense that the movements of the actors are prescribed as a part of the concept).

I find that the plays referred to by Maeterlinck, Holz, Kandinsky, and Schreyer live up to all the above mentioned criterias. Stramm's plays are, as has been pointed out, concepts that do not seem thought of in terms of concrete stagings, at least not as regards the play focused on here, *Geschehen*. Thus this play complies with the first four criteria and the criterias of poetization and visualization, as regards the expressive means. Beckett's *Rockaby* complies with the first two, in the sense that w is subordinated to a dark, unknown fatality that more than her own will influences the scenic events. As regards the relationship to the audience Beckett in this play does not open for situated empathic understanding of actions. On the other hand, owing to the domination of musical and poetic qualities, the address to the audience could not only be described as "demonstrative". As regards the expressive means, *Rockaby* complies with the criteria of musicalization, visualization, poetization and "choreography". Unlike the earlier plays, Handke, Crimp and Kane do not

portray their figures as subordinated to transcendental principles. Their plays have more the character of events unfolding themselves, without any grounds in circumstances accounted for, and particularly not in ones that give support for deliberation. Thus, also in these instances, the characters are seen "from outside", from the point of view of their external behaviour rather than in terms of their motivations. Handke's and Kane's plays are demonstrative, taking a "from outside" perspective, rather than involving the audience in the actions of the characters in a relationship of empathic understanding. If Crimp's *Attempts on her life*, as has been suggested, rather involves the audience in a play about significations, this is an alternative form of relationship with the audience. But the character of a game with ways to talk once again underlines the "from outside" perspective. Identity on the stage is created less by situated action than by language. As regards the expressive means, it is more difficult to assess *Attempts on her Life*, as the text gives little information as to how it should be staged. Kane's play seems to involve both musicalization, visualization and poetization, but not choreography.

Expressive means such as musicalization, visualization and choreography frequently appear together. As rhythm is often a metaphor for the influence of external forces it is often connected with an idea of a dominant principle, or *will*. Rhythm and choreography also structure the doings of the actors and impose patterns on them that take away both personal characteristics and deliberation.

As has been demonstrated, many of the plays are conceived in a critique against referentiality, both in its depictive and linguistic forms (*Sprachskepsis*).

The strong tendency of poetization puts the emphasis on the unifying function of the writer rather than on the interplay between scenic agents. The function of the writer was gradually taken over by an "auteur" of the scenic event, in the form of a strong director or of an author/director (Kokoschka, Schreyer, Beckett).

As has been referred to earlier, Szondi argued that in Maeterlinck the *situation* becomes more important than action. This is consistent with the idea of *nunc stans* mentioned by Pasqu in connection with Handke, an idea which is mentioned in the quote from Schopenhauer that opens this chapter. *Nunc stans*, i.e. an *unchangeable situation* rather than human intervention in the world,

seems to be a recurrent feature in the plays I have referred to in this section.

The plays express a scepticism towards action in the sense that the grounding concept is no longer that background, situation and intention in an assumed situation motivate the play-actions of the actors. The difference does not have to do with the degree of realism with which the actor renders his actions, but the very *play* in which the actor becomes involved. A pure non-action based drama does not provide conditions for this play in the way this is structured in a BSI setting. Again, such conditions can be invented by the actor himself as a means to make it possible for him to act at all. But this is seldom a part of the concept in a "drama without action", which rather extensively is to present an alternative structuring principle for the scenic events. This structure is seldom conceived as a game in the original sense, but often takes on the form of implied or imposed *instructions* to the actors of a more choreographical kind (Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Schreyer, Handke, Beckett). The actor becomes more an interpreter of the author's vision, or that of a "Bühnenkünstler". (Holz, Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Stramm, Schreyer, Beckett, Handke, Crimp, Kane.)

Ben-Zwi demonstrates that a metaphysic with roots in Schopenhauer exerts heavy influence as late as on Beckett. Beckett has in turn been influential on later dramatists such as Crimp and Kane, in my selection. This influence, on the other hand, does not necessarily include the metaphysical ideas that inspired Beckett.

At the beginning of this dissertation I quoted Hans-Thies Lehmann's claim that "the reality of new theatre begins precisely in the fading of this trinity of drama, imitation and action" (*Postdramatic Theatre* 37). My observations as regards the expressive means of actionless drama match Hans-Thies Lehmann's criteria for what he calls "post-dramatic theatre" (86, 110), with the reservation that Lehmann does not confine himself to written plays, but conversely sees as a characteristic feature in his vision of a new paradigm in theatre that this is emancipated from dependence on the text. He finds out that distinctive features in "post-dramatic theatre" in fact were already present in the theatre of symbolism, but he does not make mention of its roots in thinkers like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (57). As for their presence in recent "postdramatic theatre" Lehmann mostly draws on semiotic, deconstructivist and Lacanian theory. Lehmann's book is a broad and detailed review of contemporary

tendencies in theatre and performance. An important background of this development is the fact that theatre today can be much more than only the staging of a written text. Now, paradoxically, while describing how theatre liberates itself from old limitations, one easily runs the risk of setting up new limits. It could seem difficult to understand by what intrinsic necessity new forms in theatre automatically urge one to do away with existing potentials. Not only does such an economy tempt one to cede vast areas in theatre to the lens based media. Not only does it tempt one to leave significant contributions to modern theatre, such as plays by Koltès, Hare, Norén, Fosse, and Pinter, out of account, or to implicitly bundle them up with "mainstream". One conclusion here is that when in theatre one discards the possibility of exploring human actions by means of fictive texts, one also abstains from artistic means and capacities that are deeply rooted in basic human cognitive and communicational abilities.

Much traditional drama presents man as largely in conscious and intentional control of his doings. This reductive image already became untenable in the 19th century in the light of modern scientific insights as regards human dependence on biological and social conditioning. Directly and indirectly, and in connection with other factors, the new scientific insights came to spark an unprecedented creativity in theatre, partly described in this chapter, and exemplified in the selected plays. In the development of new theatre, from symbolism onwards, the pendulum now often swung to the other extreme, and human deliberation was more or less dispensed with as a structuring principle of the scenic events. Much new theatre seemed to be written under the influence of an obsessive idea about man as crucially influenced by external forces: unknown transcendental forces in Maeterlinck, social determinism in Holz/Schlaf, "Inner Necessity" in Kandinsky, impersonal language processes in Crimp, to name but a few. This image of man was further expressed in theatre in a refunctioning of the actor, who increasingly became subordinated to the unifying interpreter of this external necessity, the author/director. In theatre as in psychology, "teleology, ..., was analyzed away as nothing but the lawful regularity of stimulus-response patterns", to once again use a formulation from Juarrero (4). This idea of man was so radically opposed to that of volitional teleology, that if correct it would indeed revolutionize the conditions for how man is presented on the stage from the very bottom. A veritable paradigmatic shift with this content

was already envisaged from early modernism, and resounds in writings about theatre as late as Lehmann. Now, with the weakening position of behaviourism and the emergence of cognitive science in the 21st century the image of the human mind is becoming more complex, but also more contested. Juarrero's dynamic systems description of the human mind, as well as Thompson's notion of "circular causation", are built on a rejection of the idea of causation that underpinned 20th century mechanistic explanations of human mind. But, as has been pointed out in this dissertation, these have also been challenged in other ways within contemporary cognitive science.

This, of course, does not imply a criticism of the art works discussed in this section, or of other exponents of new theatre. Art is never just implemented theories. What on the other hand now appears as questionable is the traditional utopian idea with deep roots in theatrical modernism of the total "paradigmatic shift". Human intentionality, human consciousness and human capacity of intersubjective understanding are parts of the "human brain's astronomical dimensionality" (Juarrero 180). As Juarrero also points out, narrative, and scenic narrative based on a text remain privileged means to deal with this complexity. In the light of such considerations, new forms in theatre are not necessarily expressions of a shift, destined to deprive theatre of some of its basic expressive capacities, but a way to extend the potentials of the art, by presenting new embodied aspects of man and mind.

To sum up, Nietzsche's idea of action, which inspired the early development of 20th century experimental theatre, is formed against the background of mechanistic ideas about the human mind prevalent in the science of his time. This is one significant example of such an influence on the development of modern theatre. The impact does not necessarily take the form of direct influence (as was actually the case with Holz's and Schlaf's *Selicke family*), but probably consisted in the fact that the mechanistic view of man and mind was something the theatre had to *respond to*. But a more detailed account of the relationship calls for further research. During the 20th century the mentalism of action-based theatre was constantly at odds with prevalent scientific views on the human mind. Much experimental theatre came to share some characteristics with behaviouristic psychology: in particular, a preference for displaying the characters from a "from outside" perspective. Empathic, intersubjective

understanding became extensively as much anathema in experimental theatre as in behaviouristic psychology.

Truly, the legacy of behaviourism is far from being done away with entirely today. But the width of the debate about the human mind within contemporary cognitive science, owing also to the multitude of disciplines involved, offers radically novel possibilities of contacts between this field and theatre. A new turn has taken place in contemporary dealing with the human mind and world interaction. This is likely to exert an important influence on the development of theatre as well.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main topic of this dissertation is the relationship between the text of the play and the action on stage.

In Chapter one I asked myself the question as to how findings within cognitive science and cognitively oriented philosophy apply to the process from play text to scenic action.

I have discussed this in the light of a selection of writings in cognitive science and philosophy, dealing with new theories about action, intention, consciousness, and intersubjective understanding. I conclude

- 1) that findings within the specified parts of cognitive science match basic experience from the actor's process with the text of the script, as described by representatives of a broad tradition in Western acting and actor training, and that such coincidences connect these experiences with an ongoing, interdisciplinary discussion within contemporary science on the human mind. I have also discussed some theories in this field that seem particularly interesting from the point of view of theatre.
- 2) that new findings about the human mind challenge ideas that have been strongly influential in the course of the development of modern theatre, and which have prompted an urge to do away with the element of action. This calls for a reconsideration of the element of action in theatre.

At the beginning of this thesis I introduced the notion BSI (Background, Situation, Intention) to describe a basic pattern in Western, action-based theatre. BSI is a structuring principle for the narrative of the play, both in its written and in its acted form, and the background, situation and intentions of the characters become the most important features in the transition from written text to embodied action on stage. I have pointed out that the BSI pattern does not essentially have to do with depiction and realism, which are often seen as

central issues in discussions about traditional versus new theatre. I have used the template of BSI as a means to free the discussion about acting method from habitual associations with degrees of realism and to open up a discussion about its cognitive aspects. In chapter two I have suggested that not even the shift in the middle of the 18th century from rhetoric-based acting ideals to more realism makes any significant difference as regards the BSI pattern. BSI is thus identified as a basic and elementary pattern in Western drama and acting.

In Chapter three I have reviewed some important representatives of modern acting methodology. I have pointed out that for all of them *action* stands at the centre, and that they in their view of action comply with the BSI model. I have pointed out that a mentalism and more particularly a focus on intended action and action understanding are distinctive of these authors, whereas none of them advocates any form of external realism. I have also concluded that the mentalistic approach they all give expression to is not of the traditional kind, based on introspection, but rather emphasizes embodied man-world interaction. The writings of the authors mentioned imply that the successful outcome of the preparatory part of the actor's process, as they describe it, is a precondition for the success of the performative part of the process. Thus the work on the text assumes the character of a cognitive process, of embodied understanding of actions in a given context, and the core of the action-to-audience relationship becomes a sharing of the outcome of this process.

In Chapter four I have discussed how different theories in contemporary cognitive science and the philosophy of mind deal with concepts such as action, intention, consciousness, empathic understanding, and first-person perspective. I have found that the actor's process, as described in Chapter three by authors such as Stanislavski, Cohen, Hornby, Penciulescu, and Donnellan involves cognitive capacities of a kind that today attract renewed interest within important parts of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind. Thus, from the point of view of theatre practice, some experiences within the pragmatics of acting and actor education display striking similarities with observations made within cognitive science and the philosophy of mind. I come to the conclusion that the theories I explain in Chapter four, to different extents, become significant approaches for theoretical and empirical dealing with the actor's process with the text. While this dissertation was being written, scholars

such as McConachie and Hart (2006) and Rhonda Blair (2006, 2008) have given expression to similar views.

Next, in Chapter five, I turn my attention to dramatic texts that are not action-based. The attempt to do away with action in modern theatre is a major endeavour, affecting one of the basic elements of both drama and acting. Thus, too, this challenge is often referred to as crucial in the creation of a new paradigm in theatre (for example Lehmann 1999, 2005). At the beginning of chapter five I conclude that the referred to findings within cognitive science and the philosophy of mind, with their emphasis on action and intersubjective understanding of others' minds via action understanding, accentuate the difference between action-based drama and drama that is not action-based. Thus, too, I have found the theories about cognition that I discussed in earlier parts of the dissertation unfit for dealing with drama that is not based on action.

In accordance with this I have left the earlier cognitive approach aside and instead focused on the ontological preconditions for this development in theatre, in a historical overview. I have made a selection of modern and recent theatre texts and reviewed different means to do away with the element of action. I have pointed out how these attempts from their appearance in the 19th century originate in another metaphysic, bearing with it a different ontology, partly of religious and mystical character, partly inspired by Nietzsche's writings about intentionality and will. Both directions originally display influences from Schopenhauer, an influence that is partly mediated through the works and writings of Richard Wagner. Ultimately, this tradition within philosophy and theatre is a response to basic tenets in Kant's *Critique of pure Reason*.

The idea of human mind as caused by external forces was already strong in the theatre of the late 19th century. We can already find this idea in Maeterlinck. One idea about "scientific" determinism is to be found in Arno Holz/Johannes Schlaf. In some examples metaphysical forces (such as variants of "inner necessity") were substituted for mechanistic deterministic causation. Still, the idea of man as involved in some kind of free interaction with the world and with others became nearly as much anathema to new theatre as to scientific dealings with the human mind.

Nietzsche conceived his influential idea about the "will of power" against the

background of a mechanistic idea about mind and causation prevalent in the science of his time, an idea that Nietzsche, in fact, subscribed to. As recounted in Chapter four, Alicia Juarrero argues that the idea of man as necessarily subjected to external causes originates in an idea of causation that is, in fact, unfit for dealing with the human mind. Against this she sets her dynamic-system explanation of human agency. A similar idea has also been developed by Varela, Thompson and Rosch and Thompson in their idea of *autopoiesis*.

In theories such as some of them referred to in this dissertation a re-consideration takes place of human world interaction, of intersubjective understanding, of how consciousness and first-person awareness are formed, and of how they relate to the emergence of meaning in and through action. I have addressed this development by referring to a selection of important cognitive scientists. On the other hand, as pointed out in Chapter four, even cognitive scientists who are proponents of representative computation theories acknowledge such elements as dealt with in Chapter four as phenomena worthy of serious attention.

The preoccupations with action, intention, consciousness, intersubjectivity and first-person perspective in important parts of cognitive science and cognitive philosophy also brings with them a revaluation of potentials in theatre that for long have been regarded as irrelevant for a modern view of man and mind.

If fictional action, as Hans-Thies Lehmann writes, is "fading away" in modern theatre, this is no longer quite the case in contemporary science.

Rather modern cognitive science can provide useful explanations of the practice of theatre. It can "enrich Stanislavskian approaches to acting", like McConachie (2006) writes, and arguably also enrich other writings within acting methodology that are not necessarily dependent on Stanislavski, but process similar experiences.

The mechanistic view of man and mind had an important, but complex, impact on the development of modern theatre. In various instances modern drama could be viewed as a response to mechanistic ideas about man and mind, rather than as an adaption to these.

Ideas, beliefs and theories about man and mind exert a potent influence on theatre. Arguably the forming of the mechanistic and behaviouristic view in the end of the 19th century played a decisive role in the development of modernism,

an influence that is still felt in theatre today. Findings within cognitive science, and this time in a wider sense than adopted here generally, are likely to alter the view of man and mind correspondingly. Thus, also, there is reason to assume that the broadened debate today about human cognitive abilities will deeply affect the development of theatre and acting.

On the stage we have the opportunity to exhibit and view how human interaction with the world unfolds itself in practice, how human intersubjective understanding works in practice, how a sentence in the language takes on meaning in and through language use. The news is that today we also have the opportunities given by a broad and increasingly testable theoretical back-up, with radically novel potentials for enriching our insights as to what actually is going on.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Krasner in Krasner and Saltz (203–20). While criticising this opposition primarily in the form it has been given in semiotic theory, Saltz rightfully traces its origins back at least to Plato. Saltz draws a lot on Wittgenstein's analysis of "seeing aspects", where the latter stresses the interpretation of the seer as the origin of the fictitious element, in contrast to the view that fiction is somehow intrinsic in the artwork itself. My own formulations should not betray the fact that from the text-acting-oriented view adopted here I find myself entirely at ease with Saltz/Wittgenstein on this point. Saltz's target in the essay is an idea within theatre theory, but, maybe more importantly still, his critique hits one of the most long-lived myths within theatre practice, the one that theatre in general by means of fiction cultivates a false reality, and that, as a consequence, a means to avoid this is to make no fiction at all, or to transform fiction into a rite. Virginie Magnat has addressed this problem in an essay that will be referred to further on in this dissertation. Like Saltz, Magnat criticizes the opposition frequently made between theatre and performance art in this respect. Magnat's point is that Stanislavski with his stress on the reality element in action in fact anticipates the entire idea behind performance art. Stanislavski adopts an "infiction" perspective, to use Saltz's vocabulary, i.e. he focuses on the means by which the narrative becomes performance. It could be argued that Stanislavski's "system" begins once he recognizes the reality aspect of acting, i.e. in the moment when he proceeds from his earlier naturalistic ideal about theatre as "true depiction" to his view of the theatrical performance as a real event.
- 2 A candidate, for example, to one of the state acting schools in Sweden has to compete with up to one thousand other applicants for one of at most twelve places. The course lasts four years.
Schools like these generally reflect, and respond to, varying demands the students will be confronted with in their professional life in contemporary theatre. Doubtless one such demand is also to work on the basis of untraditional texts.
- 3 All actors who leave MTA are trained in this as a central part of their education, and according to Järleby this is also the case with actors educated at other schools in and outside Sweden.
- 4 The issue has famously been addressed by Louis Jovet during one of his classes at the *Conservatoire National d'Art Dramatique*. In discussing the work on the character of Tartuffe with the students Jovet insists on the necessity for the actor not to have any preconceived idea about the character. Gradually, his discourse develops into a veritable apology for Tartuffe. Jovet argues with detailed references to the text that Tartuffe is not an impostor,

- hypocrite etc. The play, he argues, should be seen strictly from the point of view of the action, as should the character be played strictly according to the circumstances. If the actor himself forms an idea about the personal traits of the character, this will seriously compromise his work. All judgements about the character should be handed over to the public (Jouvet 26–37).
- 5 If you characterize a role, Louis Jouvet argues, it is no more possible to play it. The only thing an actor should do is to set his role in a series of circumstances, and then the role's behaviour will be what these circumstances make him do. Jouvet also denies that this has anything to do with psychology. "L. JOUVET: Non, la psychologie n'a rien à y voir. Placez un homme dans certaines circonstances, son comportement sera ce que les conditions l'obligeront à être" (31).
 - 6 A "drama without action" is not only a "post-dramatic" drama in Lehmann's sense. Lehmann sees "post-dramatic theatre" as an established term for theatre with specific characteristics emerging "roughly" within the time span from the 1970s to the 1990s (*Postdramatic Theatre* 25), whereas the drama I designate with the term "drama without action" already originates from the end of the 19th century.
 - 7 According to Cohen practice "not only precedes theory, it outlasts it" (Cohen *After Stanislavski* 4).
 - 8 "Turing machines, first described by Alan Turing [...], are simple abstract computational devices intended to help investigate the extent and limitations of what can be computed" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).
 - 9 Again, the claim is *not* that a play only builds on a duplication of conditions in real life or that a dialogue just functions like plain talk. The claim is that a play would be unintelligible without the audience's basic ability to set it in relation to real events and language use.
 - 10 One example of a case when they are not identical is in Molière's *Don Juan*, where one infringes the logic that statues cannot walk and talk.
 - 11 This is the same in the acted narrative on the stage as Gadamer talks about concerning the writer.
 - 12 Even at the same school the ways to apply action analysis can vary dependent on the person who makes use of it. This, on the other hand, seems to be generally the case with practical pursuits: the way to execute them may vary from person to person, without altering basic elements. Talking for example about the practical pursuit of playing tennis, strokes might be executed differently by different players, while still being applied in similar situations for similar aims and with a similar effect. Thus, despite the existence of basic principles for launching a serve, in practice not two players do this in exactly the same way.

- 13 At my institute, MTA, as well as probably at other similar schools, the two forms of analyses exist side by side and are often used alternately.
- 14 As Y does not say anything and all information comes through X one possibility of course is that the entire malevolent pattern she detects is just a result of her own paranoia. It would also be possible that for some reason she is mistaking someone else for Y. Maybe one should not entirely disregard this kind of far-out interpretations, as the possibility of them shows to what extent a play also comes with some kind of ideal understanding. We tend to look away from the possibilities that do not offer the kind of tension we expect from the play. I will leave out such possibilities here, too, for several reasons. They are probably not intended by the author (whose intentions we respect here but do not necessarily expect to be respected in a staging of the play) and, finally, we use the play as an example (of a naturalistic drama) and consequently we are also free to select our hypothetical interpretations. We here favour those interpretations that promote a real contact between the two women around that which X is talking about. But this is our only reservation, and such interpretations, in fact, allow for infinite variations.
- 15 The Swedish actor Börje Ahlstedt, who played one of the main parts in Ingmar Bergman's film *Fanny and Alexander*, and who repeatedly also worked with him in theatre, told the following story in a Swedish television program that was broadcast in July 2007 on the death of the director.
- "His greatness as a director also consisted in his settings ... They were so concrete, one could almost touch them with one's hands. I remember in *Fanny and Alexander* it was that scene... I should shake a Christmas tree and then I should proceed and tap my fingertips on the chest of drawers and then I should suck off the blood 'and then you walk to the bed and lie down and then you cry and then you say to your German wife "Uuuh, you're disgusting", and then you sit down in the rocking chair and your teeth are aching because you have caught a cold and then you blame her for it. - Now, if you please ...'" (My translation).
- 16 Which does not imply that they have an illusion of this really being the case.
- 17 Michel Saint-Denis studied with Jacques Copeau from 1920. He was a member of Copeau's *Compagnie des Quinze* from 1929 and worked as an actor at the *Vieux Colombier*. He was a founder of the *London Theatre School* (1936), where he further developed the teachings from the French school. Among those who followed the training at the LTS one can find actors such as Laurence Olivier, Alec Guinness, John Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft. In 1939 Saint-Denis was one of the founders of the *Old Vic Theatre Centre* under the mantle of the Old Vic Theatre. When in 1964 the three state schools for acting

- were founded in Sweden out of what had previously been training centres at state and city theatres, Michel Saint-Denis was called in as a supervisory expert.
- 18 Chaouche gives high value to sources emanating from practitioners (763). This approach seems more reasonable than Roach's, who largely treats acting in accordance with his declared view that the history of theatre is a history of ideas (11).
 - 19 The idea is not necessarily linked to rhetoric. Students at acting school are still today warned against identifying truthful action with strong feelings and of letting their emotions carry them away from the scenic situation.
 - 20 The metaphor of the mirror, which in fact underscores the reality aspect of the theatrical performance, as opposed to the one of realism, is also used by Penciulescu. The most famous use of this metaphor is perhaps the one in Hamlet's speech to the actors (III.iii.).
 - 21 "realism - 1817, from real (adj.), after Fr. réalisme or Ger. Realismus, from L.L. realis "real." Opposed to idealism in philosophy, art, etc. In ref. to the scholastic doctrine of Thomas Aquinas (opposed to nominalism) it has been recorded since 1826. Meaning "close resemblance to the scene" (in art, literature, etc., often with ref. to unpleasant details) attested 1856." (*Online Etymology Dictionary*).
 - 22 See for example Abirached (77).
 - 23 Stanislavski knew that this idea had existed before. In other translations than Elisabeth Hapgood's, the name of the chapter in his autobiography dealing with the "magic if" is "Discovery of Truths known since Long Ago".
 - 24 Or as S. H. Butcher expresses it in his commentary on Aristotle's *Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*: "Plot does not overpower character; it is the very medium through which character is discerned, ..." (357).
 - 25 The list could, in fact, be much longer, by including important writers on the actor's art like Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, Robert Lewis and other representatives of American "method acting", including for that sake Lee Strasberg. Some of the authors I refer to here implicitly or explicitly address his teaching, often with a polemic point. I have elsewhere mentioned the debate about differences between Strasberg's teaching and that of Stanislavski himself, but I have no intention of going into greater detail about different forms of Stanislavski oriented actor training in the US. Obviously there are also many non-American teachers that could be mentioned in connection with ideas presented in this chapter. But I prefer to keep the list short in the conviction that the ideas put forth by the writers I address are representative of a wide range of contemporary acting methodology.
 - 26 Ola Johansson puts it thus "Action on stage, like performative utterances,

- does not describe what it is doing, it is *doing it*" (83).
- 27 This is what Stanislavski refers to as the objective and the super-objective of a play or a scene.
 - 28 As we see, the idea about the "magic if" is tantamount to the one about "given circumstances". If I am in A's situation, I find myself in the circumstances given for A.
 - 29 The idea was also to play an important role for Stanislavski only during a short time, whereas, later it became crucial for Lee Strasberg.
 - 30 Again, unlike the academic world, practitioners in theatre do not primarily get their ideas from reading the texts of other practitioners. Rather, influences go from one practice to the other. This also sheds light on the possibility for a writer like Stanislavski to influence acting and acting method. It seems likely that many of those practitioners whose practice is consistent with Stanislavski's ideas have actually spent little time reading his books. See also Hornby's comment on page 90 about the character of Stanislavski's influence.
 - 31 This idea is also strongly advocated by Sjöström in his treatise on the goal-directedness of the actor's work (168–171, 298).
 - 32 Declan Donnellan is a renowned director who has been associate director of the National Theatre in London, who has directed for the Royal Shakespeare Company, for the Avignon Festival, the Salzburg Festival, for the Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow and for the Maly Theatre in St Petersburg and who has received prestigious awards in many countries.
 - 33 A similar idea is to be found already in Aristotle. According to Halliwell, Aristotle's idea about action implies "that the fabric of tragedy, or indeed of all poetry, is the representation of human purpose striving for realisation, and therefore falls within the purview of 'practical' or ethical philosophy" (140). This should be added to the following commentary: "[...] the true locus and realisation of character is in action" (149). Halliwell also cites "Aristotle's own unequivocal definition of character in terms of moral choice and intention (*prohairesis*)" (154).
 - 34 For the sake of simplicity I use the word "writers" for all experts quoted in this chapter, including Radu Penciulescu, despite the fact that none of the quotations from him are first-hand, but all come from notes and records from lectures, classes etc.
 - 35 After Alan Turing, who before the invention of the modern digital computer interested himself in what is meant by something being computable. He came to the conclusion that a task is computable if one can specify a sequence of instructions which, when followed, will produce the completion of the task. Turing specified a series of devices that came to be known as a

Turing Machine (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). The Turing Machine thus is not a real machine, but rather an idea in mathematics about the principles of computation. The idea, however, has been influential in the development of computers.

- 36 Moreover, as Davis points out, the term "serious" in Searle's use of the word came at the centre of the famous debate between him and Jacques Derrida raised by the latter's essay on Austin's speech act philosophy, published in *Marges de la Philosophie* in 1972. In the article Derrida criticizes Austin for also seeing performatives as subjected to the true-false dichotomy by making them at least in principle constative. Derrida's point is that not only does the performative escape evaluation in terms of truth and falsehood, but so does the *analysis* of the performative. The article was heavily criticized by Searle, who even went so far as to allege that Derrida was not serious. In a reply, published in a later work, *Limited Inc a b c* Derrida retorts by questioning Searle's mere notion of seriousness. In Derrida's view the reference to seriousness puts the theoretic on a pedestal of in fact deceptive impartiality regarding an issue where his own argumentation is involved (Davis 159–163).
- 37 *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* 2 635.
- 38 As for the historic material in the following part about Mallarmé I am in the first hand indebted to Deak.
- 39 Schober argues that Kandinsky's "image" technique originates in Strindberg: "Die Bezeichnung 'Bilder' verweist aber auch auf die Technik des Stationendramas, die sich, von Strindberg ausgehend im Expressionismus grösster Beliebtheit erfreut." (133)
- 40 The idea about the "inner necessity" was strongly anticipated by Wagner himself, and already at an early stage. See for example *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (44–46).
- 41 In this survey of Stramm's dramas I refer to the versions published in *Der Sturm*. The reason is that I am dealing more with the theatre of this group than specifically with Stramm, and that it was in this form that his influence reached other members of the group.
- 42 It seems reasonable to see in this use of stage directions an influence from pantomime, which still was in vogue in Germany. Two other dramatists with affinity to the Sturm group, Paul Scheerbarth and William Wauer, wrote for this genre.
- 43 The question was very much in vogue in the years around the turn of the century, not least through Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Character*, issued in 1903. An important influence for the Sturm group was the poems of Richard Dehmel, whom Walden also met in the period close to the group's

- formation. Poems by Dehmel were published in the magazine.
- 44 Schreyer here is in the first case referring to O'Neill's *Lazarus laughed*, published 1928, i.e. many years after Schreyer's own practical work with theatre in connection with the Sturm group.
 - 45 To a large extent this chapter is a reprint of the essay *Das Bühnenkunstwerk* published in der Sturm 1916/17 VII and referred to above.
 - 46 In 1905 Walden planned to issue a Nietzsche periodical, but the project was thwarted by Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in a letter dated 28 April 1905. In an earlier letter, dated 19 January 1905, she had declined an offer from Herwarth Walden to lecture on Nietzsche in Weimar. This letter gives evidence that Walden had given such lectures previously, both in the *Verein für Kunst* and in the Ansorge circle.
 - 47 In his autobiography *The Story of my Life* Rudolf Steiner tells about how he made friends with Conrad Ansorge during the latter's Weimar years in the eighteen-nineties. Steiner recalls how Ansorge already then had his own circle of friends and that they were all united in fervent admiration of Nietzsche.
 - 48 Rudolf Blümner (1871–1945) was also an actor. He appeared in some films, most importantly perhaps in Fritz Lang's *M*.
 - 49 About the musical element in Beckett acting, see also Whitelaw 76, 78, 121, and 141
 - 50 Beckett himself previewed this possibility. Ben-Zvi indicates a passage in Beckett's play *Radio II* where Mauthner's name is mentioned in a way that could be read as an ironic commentary on those scholars who use Mauthner in this way (PMLA 185).
 - 51 Innes 240. Pascu also recalls Wittgenstein's famous words in *Tractatus* "Worüber man nicht sprechen kann, soll man schweigen" (sic) (Pascu 194). Correctly: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen" (Wittgenstein *Tractatus* 114).
 - 52 A commentary that could be made to Fuchs' account is that the concept of character in Western theatre and drama appears to originate not least in comedy, in Commedia dell'Arte, and, earlier, in Greek and Roman comedy. Strindberg, who had already launched a seminal attack on the traditional theatrical character before his Dream-play period, in his foreword to *Miss Julie* (1888), rather traces the origin of his target back to the stock characters in the comedy of Molière (xiv).

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