From the Inside Out, from the Outside In: Devising in Canadian Puppet Theatre

by

James Beauregard Ashby

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Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies
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Abstract

The ultimate goal of my dissertation is to address one deceptively simple question: Does the focus on the object in puppet theatre restrict the spontaneity and physical freedom that are so central to theatrical devising? Toronto-based Puppetmongers Theatre is my primary case study. Before I can begin to answer this question, I must chart a course through the history, practice, and theory behind each of the two axes of this study. These threads begin to come together as I identify a style of puppetry that is particularly compatible with devising: tandem puppetry. Practitioners of this style telescope the distance (semiotic and physical) between puppets and themselves and foreground their role as actors in their own right. They are therefore literally in an ideal position to act on any spontaneous creative impulses that they might experience.

A devising performer is trained to respond to such impulses and to suggestions from others, but there is always a border between two principal spaces: that which is located within the body and that which is located without. This results in a kind of bondage, one from which the puppet theatre artist is freed. The puppet always exists outside of the live body or bodies onstage, even if only conceptually, such as when a performer "puppetizes" part of her body and presents it as a separate character. Manipulators therefore have, in one sense, considerably more control over wholly inorganic puppets than devising performers have over their own bodies, as they both see and control them from the outside. This power of control has its limitations, however, as while the body of the devising performer can react

almost instantly to any impulse, the manipulator has an additional step to complete, as her reaction must be channelled through the puppet.

In the end, a spirit of (ultimately serious) play is necessary if one wishes to take full advantage of the "flexibilities" offered by devising: collaborative, narrative, design, movement, and space flexibilities. All of these are transformed once they pass through the object-centred prism of puppetry, and yet all still obtain in the world of devised puppet theatre.

Acknowledgments

Collaboration is at the heart of what is addressed in this dissertation, and it has also been at the heart of the very process of writing it. As my performance partner and dear friend Grey Muldoon has emphasized so many times, we are never truly alone, as we carry with us those who have come before us and those with whom we associate. Although limitations of space and memory preclude me from thanking everyone who has had a hand in ensuring that this project was eventually realized, I shall name those who have offered the most support, even when doing so required personal sacrifice.

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Introduction:

Here We Are (Again): Introducing Canadian Puppet Theatre

There is little doubt that puppetry is once again impressing itself upon the minds of audience members in theatres and cinemas, both in Canada and abroad. Popular American films such as *Being John Malkovich*, *Team America: World Police*, and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* stand as particularly obvious testimony to this. From a more theatrical and Canadian perspective, one notes the continued success of five major nationally and internationally touring Canadian puppet theatre companies—The Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Famous People Players,[1] Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes, Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, and, until as recently as 2012, when the company stopped "accepting bookings" (Coad Canada Puppets, "Coad Canada"), Coad Canada Puppets—at a time when such endeavours are becoming increasingly difficult to undertake. Canadian puppetry is not, however, a new phenomenon: evidence of it can be traced back to the sixteenth century, even further back if one takes into account traditional Aboriginal uses of puppetry. This raises an important series of related questions. What is "indigenous"— already a slippery term—Canadian puppet theatre? When does "Canadian" puppet theatre begin? Are there defining features that transcend regional borders? How has American cultural influence affected any Canadian understanding(s) of this art?

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these questions; as we shall see over the course of this dissertation, this is generally the case with regard to most questions that arise in relation to Canadian puppetry or the other complex but marginalized domain that this study takes as its focus: Canadian devised theatre. As Kenneth B. McKay, writing as late as 1980, argues in his seminal book *Puppetry in Canada: An Art to Enchant* (the only full-length text on Canadian puppetry in general that has been published to date), "Because of the relative youth of Canadian puppet theatre, it has not developed any traditional puppet character, such as is found in many older cultures" (*Puppetry* 29). Although "[s]ome of the work done by our leading puppeteers does have a distinctive style" (29-30), McKay continues, "it is that of an individual company [or artist, one should add], rather than of the country as a whole or even of a region." "If any generalities about Canadian puppetry can be made at all," he concludes, "they are simply such words as 'North American', 'varied', or 'increasingly internationalized'" (30). McKay is certainly justified to a certain extent in making this argument, as neither a "traditional puppet character," such as England's Punch, nor even a distinctly regional, let alone national, style of puppetry has in fact developed in Canada. Furthermore, it is unlikely that there will be any such developments in the foreseeable future, considering the size and cultural diversity of this country.

That said, there are two significant problems with McKay's argument. The first is related to his insistence on "the relative youth of Canadian puppet theatre" (*Puppetry* 29) and of the country as a whole

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[1] In the company's current publicity material, its name is rendered as *Famous PEOPLE Players* (Dupuy, "Re: Famous People Players").

(23), which is symptomatic of a wider issue in Canadian historical writing, while the second is connected to his emphasis on the "growing sense of individualism among puppeteers" (30) in this country, which is more endemic to the existing body of work on the history of Canadian puppet theatre.

The first problem is merely a facet of a larger one undoubtedly already familiar to scholars of Canadian theatre or history: the Canadian crisis of "identity." The supposed youthfulness of Canada as a nation is a common trope in historical and theoretical constructions of the country, but this "fact" is simply an element of these constructs. Canadian theatre scholar Alan Filewod emphasizes in *Performing Canada: the Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre* that "[a]s a state, Canada is no 'younger' than Italy or Germany," since, "[l]ike them, it is a product of nineteenth-century liberal nationbuilding." Moreover, as was demonstrated earlier, while determining a definitive start date for Canadian puppetry is most likely impossible, one can still follow a trail of historical references far enough back to confirm that it too is not particularly "young": the density of references at a given point along that trail may vary widely from that at other points until the advent of the twentieth century, but that does not mean that the trail does not exist. Filewod has a broader argument in mind, however, for he goes on to note that, unlike other states such as Germany or Italy, Canada could not be validated through "a mythic invocation of racial unity" or related "originary myths located in immemorial time." This was of course due in part to "the polyglot demographics" of the nation, which led to the Canadian ideology of "multiculturalism," but like other postcolonial states, Canada was founded on the "expropriation of aboriginality," not infrequently in grimly literal terms, from the original inhabitants of the area. As a result, "in the absence of an enabling transhistorical myth," Canada, along with other postcolonial nations, has been dogged "by recurrent crises of 'identity,'" "identity" here meaning "a marker of an imagined authenticity." Thus, the country is in fact a simulacrum or "a copy without an original," as "the narrative that enables nationhood" (2) must be simulated. This question of identity has compelled myriad scholars to ask what "Canada" and "Canadian theatre" are. Unfortunately, however, because of the continued marginalization of the art in the popular and academic presses, markedly fewer authors have inquired as to what "Canadian puppetry" is. This is nonetheless the very question we must begin to answer. In order to do so, the second problem related to McKay's argument must also be addressed.

As was noted earlier, McKay's assertion that there is no "traditional puppet character" (*Puppetry* 29) or performance style in Canada is sound. Furthermore, one should take heed of his implication that formulating "generalities about Canadian puppetry" (30) is difficult before leaping to any conclusions too rashly. However, the fact that McKay makes very few comparisons between the work produced by a given puppet artist or company and that created by another—whether it be a contemporary practitioner or an earlier artist—is troubling. Regardless of whatever McKay may have intended to communicate, relating his reluctance to make comparisons to his stressing the "growing sense of individualism among puppeteers" would not appear to be too outlandish a connection, for perhaps he believes that the work of

Canadian puppet artists and companies is so "'varied,'" with each artist or company developing productions that are so "distinctive and original" (30), that any possibility of fruitful comparison is precluded.

This suggestion is, of course, based in part upon conjecture. The fact remains, however, that scholars and critics tend to present Canadian puppet artists and companies in isolation from one another and to do so even more explicitly than McKay, furthering the illusion that each practitioner or group of practitioners is *sui generis*. This ahistorical attitude can, at the very least, lead to oversights and errors. There is more at stake, however, than the possibility of getting a few facts wrong. If comparisons are not drawn between the work of a given contemporary puppet theatre practitioner and that of another, and between their work and that of their predecessors, then there is no hope of bringing about a broader perspective on how the art has developed in this country. Deprived of such a perspective, one cannot begin to answer the question of what might be distinctly "Canadian" about the puppet theatre work that has been created here without resorting to the kind of vague generalizations that McKay uses.

The narrow focus of the limited number of texts addressing some aspect of Canadian puppet theatre is understandable to a degree. There is such a dearth of published sources on Canadian puppetry, due to its perceived existence on the margins of Canadian theatre, that a considerable amount of primary research remains to be conducted. Scholars and critics interested in writing on the subject may therefore simply be unaware that the art not only has such a rich history in this country but also is currently being explored by many talented practitioners across Canada. Even if one of these scholars or critics has some knowledge of the topic, she may become overwhelmed by its vastness. Whatever the reason, authors almost invariably choose to examine a particular company or artist. The strict boundaries that these authors impose on themselves have certainly yielded some invaluable studies in the past, as the information they provide is often not available anywhere else, unless one is willing, like their authors, to go back to the original primary sources, such as programme notes, press releases, and indeed any artists interviewed, for example. Of course, due to the ephemerality of theatre and of life itself, many such primary sources, particularly actual performances and the artists themselves, may no longer be available, increasing the value of these studies even further.

Thus, I intend to build on these foundational studies in order to develop a broader perspective on contemporary Canadian puppet theatre practice, especially with respect to the ways in which it overlaps with Canadian devised theatre practice. Doing so will require more than just historical knowledge, however. I will also need to apply to the study of puppetry theoretical tools that have been employed fruitfully elsewhere, tools gleaned from fields such as semiotics and dramaturgy. This will entail alternating between synchronic and diachronic forms of analysis, to draw upon the terminology of semiotics. The crux of the synchronic thread will be the development of a vocabulary and a methodology

with which to scrutinize the different components of devised puppet theatre and, just as importantly, to make some sense of the whole as well.

As American playwright, performer, director, and puppet-theatre theorist Steve Tillis argues in *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art*, "no satisfactory theory, and no satisfactory vocabulary, have yet been created for the puppet" (8). These must be established, however, "through painstaking observation and analysis, isolating and exploring the fundamental constants and variables of the puppet as it exists in all of its theatrical manifestations," before we can proceed to the central focus of this study. Thankfully, Tillis's work can be drawn upon "as prologue, extended as it may be" (9), as he brings a semiotic and phenomenological apparatus to bear on the puppet. This kind of analysis has been successfully applied to other related subjects, such as the theatre of human actors and film. His synchronic approach, however, will be complemented by my continued desire to place everything in a Canadian context by referring to the history of puppet theatre as it has been practiced in this country and to the peculiarities of Canadian theatre history and praxis more generally.

Having ascertained what a puppet is (and is not) and how it fits into Canadian theatre historically and currently, we will undertake a similar negotiation of definitions in order to explore some of the various understandings of what *devised theatre* means. The objective will not be to pin down the "correct" meaning but rather to give some indication of the breadth of "of very different objectives, techniques, and styles" (Barton, "Making" 1) for which devising allows while enabling the discussion to move forward. Once again, this synchronic approach will be balanced with diachronic contextualization, as this entire dissertation is unapologetically grounded in a particular time and place.

In fact, although I have already specified the contemporary Canadian frame of reference for this study, I should indicate more clearly the limits of what will be covered herein. This requires me to cut some substantial slices out of the diverse whole that is Canadian puppetry, an admittedly necessary task, since not every facet can even be touched upon in the span of a single dissertation, but one that I shoulder with considerable regret. My focus will certainly not be quite as narrow as that of the scholars and critics of Canadian puppetry who were censured in this regard earlier; that is, I will not discuss only one company in isolation from all others, although one company will become my primary test case— especially from the third chapter on—for the methodological and analytical concepts and tools that I will be developing as this study progresses: Puppetmongers Theatre.

Puppetmongers further serves as a convenient and accurate indicator of what I will and will not be addressing in this dissertation. To begin with one of the more contentious issues in Canada since at least the arrival of the first Europeans, language, Puppetmongers is based in Toronto, which is considered to be part of English-speaking Canada—even though, of course, many other languages are used within that city and the surrounding area, just as they are throughout the country. However heterogeneous a city Toronto is, it is definitely not part of French-speaking Canada, nor is Puppetmongers a French-speaking

company. There is no denying that Québec has played a prominent role in the history of Canadian puppetry or that it continues to be a hotbed of innovative and experimental puppet theatre. That said, there is also no denying that a linguistic and cultural barrier has ensured that puppetry in Québec has developed largely in its own direction. Puppetry in that region must be considered in light of its own context, for it comes with its own distinct history, traditions, conventions, and so on, as does theatre in Québec more generally—and theatre in French-speaking Canada more generally still. It is true that this barrier can be—and has been—penetrated to some degree by artists, scholars, and critics interested in learning more about what is happening in puppetry on the "other side," provided that they have at least a baseline familiarity with both the language and the cultural and historical context of that side. As will be explained further in the first chapter, puppetry organizations can further facilitate such artistic exchanges. Although I have only a working knowledge of the French language, my involvement with such organizations has allowed me to supplement the information that can be gathered from more standard published sources. Still, while I will therefore mention a few of the more significant artists, companies, organizations, and events associated with puppet theatre in Québec, I will limit myself to discussing only those that have influenced puppet theatre in English-speaking Canada somehow or that can illuminate in some way the issues, trends, theories, and so on that are more central to this study.

Another self-imposed restriction has already been indirectly disclosed in the foregoing, one related to medium instead of language; that is, this dissertation will centre on live puppet theatre, as opposed to puppetry as it has been adapted for and mediatized by other means of transmission, such as television, film, and the Internet. This is mainly because the intersections between puppetry and devised theatre constellate to form the heart of what is examined herein. Thus, the liveness of both the performances and the developmental processes that are employed in order to create them is something to which we will return repeatedly, given that it has such a shaping influence on the work and the audience's reception thereof, even when objects that have to be invested with lives of their own are the true stars. However, in the same way that aspects of puppet theatre in Québec that have specific relevance to some of the topics under consideration here will be analyzed, some aspects of mediated puppetry that are similarly pertinent will be investigated as well. After all, the history of theatrical puppetry and that of mediated puppetry as they have been practiced in this country have been intertwined since the 1950s, and a number of our best-known practitioners (including the members of Puppetmongers) have succeeded in rising to prominence in both fields.

Lastly, just as the work of one company in particular, Puppetmongers, will be emphasized but not to such an extent that the work of all other companies is completely neglected, so too will the historical period in which that company has been active be foregrounded but not without grounding it firmly in a broader context with respect to how Canadian puppetry has developed from the earliest signs of activity (long before the first Puppetmongers production, of course) to the current state of the art. I will be

referring to the work created during the period that is to be our temporal focus as contemporary puppet theatre, although I am aware that describing productions developed as far back as the early 1970s as "contemporary" is to be using that modifier rather loosely. Even so, as shall be shown in the first chapter, establishing a tidy chronology for the development of puppet theatre in Canada, with distinct periods neatly laid out, is ultimately impracticable anyhow. That notwithstanding, I will endeavour to respect this limit and the others that I have set for myself, or at least the spirit of them, as clearly they allow for some flexibility with regard to compliance.

Flexibility, as will quickly become apparent, is in fact a theoretical hallmark of this dissertation as a whole. In the first chapter, I propose some tentative answers to the questions that were posed at the beginning of this introduction. I commence by demonstrating the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of definitively establishing a "start date" for Canadian puppetry and the limited usefulness of doing so, given that there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that puppet theatre performances were consistently presented in the area now known as Canada from these early beginnings to the present day. Indeed, this argument expands to address how Canadian puppetry in general continues to be an elusive research subject, given that there is little documented history and what is available is typically narrow in focus, as well as ahistorical and atheoretical in perspective. In an attempt to begin to determine what makes "Canadian" puppet theatre precisely that, I present and evaluate a construction technique—or rather a group of related techniques—that has proven to be quite popular with Canadian puppet artists and has therefore been identified by some as particularly "Canadian" in and of itself. Although not sufficiently unified or developed to be considered a performance tradition in itself, this "Canadian control" design technique nonetheless acts as a microcosm of a broader, adaptive approach to puppet theatre that could also be described as "Canadian." This approach is in turn related to an even broader North American movement. There is something discernibly "Canadian," however, about the sense of cultural resistance that informs how this adaptive approach guides the developmental processes employed by our most innovative companies and artists. However one defines "Canadian" puppet theatre, as has already been stated, puppetry is not new to this country, although it has been presented as being in the midst of a "revival" and thus renewed, even if not entirely new, at various points in its history. This pattern can also be found in the history of puppet theatre in the United States. Consequently, these two related historical trends are briefly charted in order to understand what lies behind the apparent current renaissance. Once these historical and aesthetic relationships have been outlined, the discussion proceeds to address how organizational and institutional structures have helped to shape the art of puppetry in this country and how trends in Canadian puppet theatre have in turn affected these structures. A particularly dynamic period in the history of Canadian puppetry organizations is just beginning, so these topics merit careful analysis.

The second chapter confronts a deceptively simple question about the deceptively simple figure around which the aforementioned organizations revolve: What exactly is a puppet? There has been no

shortage of attempted answers, although the "[p]erfect definition eludes theorists, historians, puppeteers, [and] dictionary-makers" ("Puppet" 209), as A. R. Philpott writes, undoubtedly with at least a hint of irony, in his definition of *puppet* for his dictionary. Still, if we temporarily privilege the synchronic in order to follow Tillis in his examination of "the fundamental constants and variables of the puppet as it exists in all of its theatrical manifestations" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 9), we will surely arrive at "a workable definition, if not a perfect one" (15), as Tillis himself declares after citing Philpott. Before too much is assumed, however, the question of whether or not a synchronic approach is appropriate to any study of puppet theatre must be addressed, for at least one scholar has answered firmly in the negative, and the issue is far from resolved. Once it has been, at least in the context of this study, the path will be clear for an initial attempt to answer the little definitional question that becomes the surprisingly complex and expansive theme of this chapter. Tillis's own definition, which focuses on how the puppet is received by the audience, is presented, as it is useful when attempting to differentiate the puppet from both the performing object and the human actor. The reader may be surprised to learn that the puppet has in fact often been conflated with both of these. The distinctions that Tillis makes among the puppet, the performing object, and the human actor are referred to here and throughout the balance of this study. Even his definition, however, as with the rest of his theoretical apparatus, requires some kind of contextualization in order for its utility to be realized, as is stressed throughout this chapter. Once this essential foundation has been set in place and the theoretical antecedents to Tillis's work outlined, the three main taxonomic systems that have been used in the past, explicitly or otherwise, to make some sense of the puppet as it has been variously understood are described and problematized. There are theoretical and practical problems associated with each of them, and these are explored in detail, again using Tillis as a guide, before his own system of classification, which draws upon semiotic theory while always retaining the audience's perception and imagination as two key reference points, is analyzed. The more traditional taxonomies are not renounced altogether, however, as each, "substantially augmented, and set within the context of a more encompassing theory" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 112), is used when appropriate throughout this dissertation, or at least that is my hope. This chapter closes with a return to the refrain concerning the need to place all of this semiotic and phenomenological analysis in a specific context, not only because this is a "Canadianist" dissertation but also because the examination of the "work" produced through the "sign systems" under consideration here provides a richer analysis, even from a strictly semiotic perspective, as Teresa de Lauretis observes in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*:

> While formerly the emphasis was on studying sign systems (language, literature, cinema, architecture, music, etc.), conceived of as mechanisms that generate messages, what is now being examined is the work performed through them. It is this work or activity which constitutes and/or transforms the codes, at the same time as it constitutes and transforms the individuals using the codes, performing the work; the individuals who are, therefore, the subjects of semiosis. (167)

This is an important difference in emphasis that must be kept in mind as the still rather structuralist theories of Tillis are discussed. A few "diachronic questions . . . inevitably seep into" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 119) the predominantly synchronic second chapter, just as they do into Tillis's text by his own admission. Nevertheless, there is a much more marked shift towards the diachronic in the third chapter, for one of its primary purposes is to provide a more specific context for the theoretical concepts related to puppet theatre that are outlined in the second chapter. In other words, from the third chapter on, there will a greater emphasis on "the work performed through" (de Lauretis 167) the sign systems of puppet theatre by Canadian artists and companies, as opposed to those sign systems in themselves. As should already be clear by now, however, puppet theatre in itself as a signifying practice, even when limited to its manifestations within Canada, is not actually the subject of this study. Rather than the puppets themselves or the performances in which they have appeared (at least from the perspective of them as finished products ready for consumption), the intersections between these and the developmental processes employed to create the performances, as well as the mutual influence between all of these and the performance style adopted, will be the chief subjects of interest for the remainder of this dissertation. This is largely unexplored territory, and investigating it here will do much to open up further the discussion of puppet theatre as indeed a form of theatre.

Before this work can begin, however, an important theoretical comparison between puppets and human performers must be made in the third chapter and then related to the contemporary Canadian situation. This would seem to contradict the earlier claim that puppets in themselves are not our concern here, but this comparison is only drawn because it lies at the heart of the larger project of this dissertation. In fact, it addresses the element that arguably does the most to define the underlying practicalities of both the puppet and the human theatre: the body. Puppet bodies and human bodies, along with the merging of the two, are considered, but humans are to be found—even if absent from the performance space—in every form of theatre. Since puppets have understandably been the primary focus thus far, the ramifications of the organic nature of the bodies of human performers is initially foregrounded. The often thoroughly trained and disciplined body of the human performer is conditioned to respond quickly to commands, whether they come from an outside source (such as a director) or the performer herself. This same body, however, also acts as a kind of prison, as performers, just like the rest of us, cannot escape from their bodies in order to find a new perspective on and gain greater insight into them (Barton, "Making" 4). This paradox becomes particularly marked in the context of devised theatre, so we return to it in the fifth chapter. Puppet theatre practitioners, on the other hand, face a set of circumstances that is effectively the inverse of that which practitioners working in the human theatre must confront. The puppet always exists outside of the live body or bodies onstage, even if only conceptually. Manipulators therefore have, in one sense, considerably more control over wholly inorganic puppets than the performers in the human theatre have over their own bodies, as they both see and control them from the

outside. Nonetheless, there is generally at least one extra step that needs to be completed before the operators can realize any internal or external directions they might have received. This has significant repercussions for the use of puppets in devising, so this is another conundrum that is revisited in the fifth chapter. More general links are established in the third chapter, however, between the externalized objectness of the puppet and several related topics that are covered in the second chapter but which are here placed in a theoretically richer and more distinctly Canadian context. These topics are clustered around the concept of alienation, which is actually a defining element of all puppet theatre.

Although intentionality is therefore not required in order to generate alienation in puppet theatre productions, some Canadian artists, such as Felix Mirbt, have indeed actively laboured to foster this effect through various means, including a presentational style of puppet manipulation. Mirbt and those who have been influenced by his style or at least who could be considered part of the same historical strain of thought on puppetry in this regard compose an identifiable school of puppet manipulation, one that can be connected back to much earlier theorists on puppetry, namely Edward Gordon Craig and Heinrich von Kleist. In fact, given the ritualistic quality that is often present in this kind of puppet theatre work, it can even be linked to the earliest forms of puppetry and indeed of theatre. That said, a Brechtian influence can also be discerned in the work of Mirbt and his colleagues, and this makes for an intriguingly contradictory element when juxtaposed with the aforementioned ritualistic, even mythopoeic aspect. The inconsistencies go beyond this, however, as there is a fundamental contradiction between Mirbt's theory and practice with regard to the place human performers had in his form of puppet theatre and the degree of agency that they were to be granted—a contradiction that in itself is also quintessentially Brechtian. A specific kind of estrangement remains intrinsic to all forms of puppetry, however, one related to the semiotically productive gaps between the body of the operator and that of the puppet that can never be fully bridged. Building on this point, I reexamine with greater specificity some of the essential characteristics that differentiate puppet theatre from closely related forms, with what Tillis identifies as "mask or costume acting" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 81) serving as the main example. Viewed from a more deductive and prescriptive perspective, these essential characteristics could be seen as preconditions that must be met before a given production can be considered puppet theatre. Although it remains a liberating theatrical form in many ways, these *sine quibus non* of puppet theatre, most of which revolve around Tillis's theory of double-vision, place limits on it as a category of performance work. In essence, if the members of a company decide that they want to start being acknowledged as puppet theatre artists, they have to "play by the rules" to a certain extent.

That said, notwithstanding these "rules," which are for the most part related to the always-already alienated and alienating nature of puppetry, it need not always be performed in a presentational style; in fact, there is considerable latitude in this regard. Two specific but dynamic styles of manipulation have dominated Canadian practice, however: the presentational or alienated style and an as yet unidentified

style that is in some significant ways its opposite. In the fourth chapter, my analysis of this style is put forward. Tandem puppetry, as I have named it, has yet to be the focus of an organized stylistic movement in Canadian puppetry. Nonetheless, it is a rival tendency that merits close examination in the context of this study, as it has proven particularly conducive to the other theatrical approach that is of concern here: devising. It should be noted that this style is by no means the outright antithesis of the presentational style employed most famously—at least in terms of the Canadian context—by Mirbt. Indeed, the overlaps between the two are as revealing as their differences. As the intricacies of tandem puppetry are explored, several related but distinct issues are also addressed, such as the elements of the work of human performer in puppet theatre that can and cannot be considered acting proper, the differences between a form and a style of puppetry, and the ofttimes-troubled relationship between puppetry and both spontaneity and collaboration. Later in this chapter, Bruce Barton's reworking of Eugenio Barba's dramaturgical concept of "turbulence" (Barba 56) is temporarily abstracted from its original context and metaphorically applied to the semiotic and phenomenological turbulence created by the collision of the sign systems of puppets and actors in a tandem puppetry performance. Although this type of theoretical extraction can be risky, not only does it provide us with valuable insight into the experience of witnessing this type of performance, but it also facilitates a shift to concerns related more directly to creation processes once the original context has been restored. This subsequent thematic direction, once taken, carries us through the final two chapters.

In fact, in the fifth chapter, we take the next step after Henryk Jurkowski's emphasis on the significance of process in both the contemporary puppet theatre and the contemporary theatre of human actors ("Towards a Theatre" 42-43) and look at the similarities and differences in how devising processes are deployed in both of these theatres in Canada. Before the focus is narrowed to this degree, however, some background on new work development in English-speaking Canada has to be supplied. Consequently, this chapter begins with an overview of the historical "obsession" (Filewod, "National Theatre" 424) with developing a national Canadian dramatic canon, which can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at least. This obsession is presently as strong as ever, for, in part because the Canada Council for the Arts rewards such activities, there is now an unprecedented level of new play development in this country: playwrights units, resident dramaturgs, script readings, and workshop productions can be found at theatres across the country. Nevertheless, very few of the new pieces that are developed through these efforts are ever actually produced on the mainstages of the country's theatres (Hayes; Taylor, "Shiny New Stuff").

There are certainly some Canadian puppet theatre companies that seem to share this preoccupation, particularly Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes and Eldritch Theatre. Those responsible for generating the playtexts for both of these companies—Burkett himself in the first case, Eric Woolfe in the second—have even succeeded in achieving the loftiest of the ideals of canonization:

having some of their plays published. Thus, these companies, which are aligned to a significant degree with the aforementioned literary tradition in Canadian drama and theatre, are examined first, as they compose a relatively conventional counterpart to the large group of companies in the theatre of human actors who share their text-centred emphasis. This leads into a detailed examination of some of the ways in which source texts are incorporated into puppet theatre productions by Canadian companies, including some of those that remain part of our literary tradition in drama and theatre, such as Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes. This in turn allows us to problematize and ultimately move beyond the historical framework provided by the concept of canonization. Moreover, through an exploration of closely related topics, particularly the permeable boundary between "popular" and "elite" culture (as well as the associated one between puppet and human theatre) and the ways in which the "perceived accessibility" (Corbett 125) of a given text or performance can be evaluated, we reach the point at which developmental processes can be analyzed with due rigour. Even companies that do not normally prioritize textual content, such as Puppetmongers, have frequently devised productions inspired by specific texts, and an examination of puppet theatre's relationship with text also sheds light on its relationship with human theatre.

Puppetmongers and other companies that likewise generally invert the hierarchy of theatrical elements as it typically organized in more conventional Canadian theatrical endeavours—not that this hierarchy or its subversion is endemic to this country, of course—by refusing to grant text "primary or 'sacred' status" (Barton, "Evoking" 1) differ radically from more text-oriented companies, however, despite the commonly shared tendency to borrow from source texts (among other things). Devised theatre companies, such as Puppetmongers, whether they consistently use puppets and work to make them the centre of attention in their productions or not, break with the dominant literary model for theatre in Canada: for them, what is important is staging new works, not writing new scripts. Beyond this general characteristic and a scant few others, however, there seems to be little common ground to allow for a stable definition of *devised theatre* endorsed by the majority of scholars and practitioners familiar with this mode of performance creation. Starting with the fifth chapter, devised theatre companies and their developmental methods form the secondary axis of this study. So it is in this chapter that we investigate some of the different ways in which the term *devising* has been understood. Indeed, difference is as much a theme of this chapter—this dissertation, in fact—as similarity is. Certainly, all devised theatre projects rely upon the spontaneity and intuition of those involved, and the frequent focus on the human body in devising facilitates the performers' exploitation of these resources. The human body and that of the puppet are compared in a general way in the third chapter with regard to this issue of responsiveness and the related one of control. These concerns become even more significant in the context of a developmental approach that authorizes performers to exercise their creative agency, so they must be revisited with greater specificity in this chapter.

Indeed, this more egalitarian perspective on who has the "right" to contribute directly to the creation of new work suggests that the ideology behind devised theatre is as empowering in its own way as puppetry is as a form in which to work. Working within the constraints inherent in puppetry presents challenges, even as it often simultaneously stimulates ingenuity, and the situation is much the same in devised theatre. In our contemporary context, at least some of the constraints associated with theatrical devising have been linked to the general shift from collective ideologies and collaborative frameworks "to more hierarchical structures" (9) that Alison Oddey identifies in her agenda-setting book *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*. While this supposed shift is examined in the fifth chapter as well, I have striven to keep in mind Barton's suggestion that "a . . . distinction between collective and collaborative philosophies and frameworks, on the one hand, and devising techniques, on the other" ("Introduction" xvii) should be maintained. Although some of these "devising techniques" are certainly described and assessed in this and the sixth chapter, it is the related but distinct "collective and collaborative philosophies and frameworks" that do the most to bridge the two chapters. The parallels with regard to particular developmental methods are still vital to note, especially since I am trying to broaden the context in which puppet theatre is discussed.

In the fifth chapter, commonalities are emphasized, which requires more attention being paid to the broader frames, principles, values, and intentions that underlie the work of a number of devised theatre companies—both those that make puppetry their primary means of expression and those that do not. The focus on the stage object that devised puppet theatre companies such as Puppetmongers—not to mention those puppet theatre companies that do not in fact regularly employ devising techniques—share, however, necessitates the invention of new methods or the modification of existing ones, so as to take into consideration both the constraints associated with puppet theatre and those related to devising. Both sets of constraints can even be turned to advantage, as we discover in the sixth chapter, which centres on Puppetmongers. Puppetmongers has, more than any other individual company, helped to shape my perspective on both puppetry and devising. I have researched that company's approach to new work development over a number of years now, but I have also seen it in action and in fact participated in it on a few occasions. Nevertheless, the give-and-take working process that its members follow remains difficult if not impossible to dissect with complete thoroughness, in part because of their "humongously ridiculous history together" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006), as David Powell phrases it, both personally and professionally. After all, he and his sister Ann Powell founded the company in 1974. Although their rich sibling and creative relationship has effectively precluded adding a third permanent company member as an option, it is the deceptively casual fluidity of their approach to creating new work—which could only have developed over so many years of being a part of each other's artistic endeavours and indeed lives—that has allowed other temporary collaborators to move in and out of it as needed.

The Powells' ability to accommodate other collaborators is just one aspect of what could be described as their often ultimately quite serious sense of play. Four other key "flexibilities"—in addition to the aforementioned flexibility with regard to collaborative structure, as "Puppetmongers" as a collective entity can expand to incorporate more than just the brother-and-sister team at its core for a particular project or even just for a specific stage in a project—characterize both their works and the methods deployed to produce them: narrative flexibility, design flexibility, movement flexibility, and space flexibility. By scrutinizing each of these in turn, we can construct a revealing, if constantly shifting, mosaic that illustrates how one Canadian troupe continues to thrive within the challenging but fertile tension between spontaneity and the object as they devise new puppet theatre productions. These flexibilities are actually attributes of devised theatre more generally, but they are all transformed once they pass through the object-centred prism of puppetry.

These flexibilities allow for a process that is never really "finished." It must, however, have a beginning, as must any analysis of it. Although the initial stages of this investigative journey may seem tangential at times, I entreat the reader to trust that every step that we are about to take is a necessary one.

Chapter 1:
Canadian Puppet Theatre: Innovative Recycling?

Patterns in and of Puppetry: Where to Look in Canada

The primary purpose of this first chapter is to establish a historical context for all that follows it. Ironically, it begins with an examination of why that is so difficult to do. It is not, however, a positivist chronology of Canadian puppet theatre. I would certainly not describe it as either exhaustive or neutral: it does not cover all aspects of Canadian puppetry equally, as to do so would be, in fact, to preclude the possibility of a focused purpose in the name of a thematic evenhandedness that would probably be impossible to realize, at least within the scope of a single chapter. Rather, this chapter addresses several interrelated patterns that can be perceived in historical and critical writings, construction techniques, attitudes towards borrowing from other traditions and artists, ostensible revivals, and organizations associated with Canadian puppet theatre. These particular patterns have been selected for scrutiny because they have the greatest relevance to how the work of the most innovative contemporary puppet theatre companies in this country has been created, received, and supported. They are also still broad enough to offer a more general picture of the contemporary puppetry scene in Canada and the factors that contributed to its development.

Canadian Puppet Theatre: Where to Begin?

When describing the current state of puppet theatre in Canada, one may be tempted to use a metaphor related to the concept of arrival. Toronto-based Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes and Mermaid Theatre are not only two of the most famous contemporary Canadian puppet theatre companies but also two of the most successful Canadian cultural exports. Indeed, in 2001, the latter company was the recipient of both the Canada Export Award, an award they won again in 2005, and the Nova Scotia Export Achievement Award.

The increasing number of puppet theatre festivals is another sign of vitality. The province of Québec alone hosts two major festivals—Le Festival de Casteliers (known until 2015 as Les Trois Jours de Casteliers), presented annually in Montréal since 2006, and Le Festival international des arts de la marionnette, formerly known as La Semaine mondiale de la marionnette, produced biennially in the Saguenay region since 1989, with a brief hiatus from 2013 to 2015 due to bankruptcy (L'Équipe Web)—and a variety of smaller-scale events. English-speaking Canada does not lag far behind. Calgary, Alberta, for example, is home to both Puppet Power (now a biennial event, it was held annually from its inception in 2001 to 2003) and the International Festival of Animated Objects (which has been presented biennially since 2003). The much smaller community of Almonte, Ontario—part of the Town of Mississippi Mills since 1998—has been the rather unlikely annual setting for the Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival

since 2005. Although there are currently no plans to make it an annual or even biennial event, Celebrate the Puppet 2006, which was coproduced by the Ontario Puppetry Association (OPA), one of a small handful of active Canadian puppetry organizations based outside of Québec, and the Great Lakes Region of Puppeteers of America, with some support from the Great Plains Region, was nonetheless a landmark conference and festival. It not only marked the fiftieth anniversary of the OPA but also signaled the end of nearly a decade of relative dormancy on the part of that organization. This kind of regional festival is familiar to members of Puppeteers of America,[2] as similar festivals have been organized by the various regional divisions of that organization ever since John Zweers instituted the regional system during his 1960-61 presidency (McPharlin, *Puppet Theatre* 638). Since 1988, these events have been held on even-numbered years, so as not to conflict with the national festival, which has been held on odd-numbered years since 1988 (E. Johnson).[3] A festival of this scale had not been held in English-speaking Canada, however, since 1996.

While all of this contemporary activity is encouraging, one must not, as so many theatre critics and scholars already have, overlook the fact that puppets have been an integral part of Canadian theatre from its earliest days. As Kenneth B. McKay reveals in *Puppetry in Canada: An Art to Enchant*, "the first permanent puppet theatre in Canada operated near Quebec City from 1775 to 1837" (44). The first appearance of a puppet in a European performance in Canada could be dated much earlier, however, if David Gardner's suggestion that 1583 marked the "date for the beginning of play production in Canada" ("David Gardner" 226) and indeed North America[4] is correct.[5] Although the focus was generally on

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[2] Puppeteers of America is, if one can forgive the use of such a gendered but colourful phrase, "[t]he patriarch of puppetry in North America" (Anthony, "Snapshot" 18). Canadians are free to join it or one of the regional guilds with which it is affiliated. Founded in 1937, Puppeteers of America sponsors its own festivals that Canadian members may attend; offers several awards and scholarships, all of which Canadian members are eligible to receive; and possesses an extensive collection of audiovisual materials related to puppetry from which members may borrow up to three items at a time. Two Canadian guilds have been founded: the Vancouver Guild of Puppetry (chartered in 1970) and the Puppetry Guild of Victoria (originally chartered in 1988). Although no Puppeteers of America guilds have been chartered in Ontario, the OPA has developed close ties with several regions of the organization by co-presenting festivals such as Celebrate the Puppet. Indeed, the first major collaborative effort involved Puppeteers of America at the national level: the Puppeteers of America Festival held in Waterloo, Ontario in 1967. Moreover, Puppeteers of America has also recognized the work of Canadian puppet artists on numerous occasions. David and Ann Powell of Puppetmongers, Luman and the late Arlyn Coad of Coad Canada Puppets, and Ronnie Burkett, for example, have all received the organization's highest award, the President's Award, "for outstanding contributions to the Art of Puppetry" (Puppeteers of America, "Past Award") and "for lifetime achievement" (Puppeteers of America, "Awards").

[3] The first national puppetry festival in the USA was organized by McPharlin in 1936. The idea of a national organization dedicated "to further[ing] the cause of puppetry" (*Puppet Theatre* 388) was first discussed at this festival, but it was not founded until the following year at another national festival, this one coordinated by Martin and Olga Stevens, McPharlin states. This organization, Puppeteers of America, then assumed responsibility for the festival. It continued to be an annual event up until the 1987 iteration, with the exception of the wartime years from 1942 to 1945 (Puppeteers of America, "1936-2013").

[4] Paul McPharlin dates both the first appearance of European puppets and the first European performance in North America to even earlier in the sixteenth century, noting that, "[i]n conformity with the practice of the period, Hernando Cortés had a puppeteer among his servants when he set out on 12 October 1524 from Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City, on a six months' march to rumored gold fields in Hibueras (Las Higueras, Honduras), although "[t]he

human performers in the kind of mummers' play that may have been performed in 1583 in or by St. John's, Newfoundland, this production seems to have involved a "Hobby Horsse [*sic*]" (qtd. in Gardner 227), a kind of body puppet that the performer wore and therefore controlled from the inside (229).

If one can accept the puppetry traditions of the original inhabitants of the area now known as Canada, particularly the First Nations of the West Coast and the Inuit, in this kind of discussion, given that they ostensibly were used "for religious and ceremonial purposes" (McKay, *Puppetry* 9) and not for theatrical performances proper, one can trace this history even further back. This is, of course, a highly complex issue that cannot be explored in great depth here. Thankfully, Richard Schechner has provided some relatively objective guidelines for separating "ritual" from "theatre," although he emphasizes that framing the issue around these two terms is not particularly productive:

> Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum. . . . The basic polarity is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theater. Whether one calls a specific performance 'ritual' or "theater" depends mostly on context and function. A performance is called theater or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances.

He cautions, however, that "[n]o performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (*Performance Theory* 116).

Heeding this advice, James Hoffman examines one First Nation performance tradition that was closely related to puppetry and that has received some scholarly attention. Employing Schechner's famous theoretical model of "the efficacy-entertainment braid" (*Performance Theory* 115), which gives the history of theatre "an overall shape as a development of a braided structure continuously interrelating efficacy (ritual) and entertainment (theater)" (118), Hoffman argues that "a close braid existed in the winter ceremony of the Kwakiutl" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 233), a common misnomer for the Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw, a West Coast First Nation (Bryant-Bertail 48).[6] Thus, this ceremony was both efficacious—that is, capable "of achieving 'real results'" (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 115) and "effect[ing] transformations" (116)—and entertaining and could therefore be discussed, with appropriate qualifications, in a theatrical context. In fact, when claiming that "a close braid existed in the

first European play to be done with human actors in America was not performed until 24 June 1538," when "four sacred dramas were . . . presented in Mexico for the edification of the Indians" (6). Perhaps Gardner does not consider Mexico a part of North America, an unusual position to take.

[5] A "post-voyage account" by Captain Edward Haies, whose ship, the *Golden Hind*, was part of the fleet that accompanied Sir Humphrey Gilbert on his "historic visit to St John's to reclaim Newfoundland for Elizabeth I" holds "[t]he essential evidence" ("David Gardner" 227) for Gardner's argument. Haies writes, "[F]or solace of our people, and allurement of the Savages, we were provided of Musike in good variety: not omitting the least toyes, as Morris dancers, Hobby Horsse, and Maylike conceits" (qtd. in Gardner 227). Gardner does concede, however, that "no actual performance is confirmed, either on shore or on board ship in the harbor of St John's, at least in the scant research material so far available" (227).

[6] As is noted in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, once "sustained contact" with the Kwakwaka'wakw had been achieved "in the late 18th century, Europeans applied the name of one band, the Kwakiutl, to the whole group, a tradition that persists." The actual name of the people "means those who speak Kwak'wala, which itself includes five dialects" (Webster).

winter ceremony of the Kwakiutl" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 233), Hoffman explicitly relates the ceremony to the theatre of the Elizabethan period. Schechner himself proposes that "when the braid is tight . . . theater flourishes" (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 118) and argues that "[f]ifth-century-BCE Athenian theater, Elizabethan theater, and possibly the theater from the late nineteenth century to our own times" all exemplify "the kind of convergence" (*Performance Theory* 119) to which he is trying to give a representational form in his model of "the efficacy-entertainment braid" (*Performance Theory* 115). "During these relatively brief historical moments" and the winter ceremony of the Kwakwa̱ka'wakw, Hoffman would add, "the theater answers needs that are both ritualistic and pleasure-giving" (Schechner, *Performance Theory* 123).

Hoffman stresses that, "[l]ike many traditional rites," the Kwakwa̱ka'wakw winter ceremony "was closely concerned with numerous communal transactions: in this case relationships were altered, debts were rearranged and status was both displayed and gained." He even offers the reader a table that summarizes how "the very real transactions – 'actuals' Schechner calls them – could be shown." Just as important, however, was the "strong entertainment aspect": "From the first, the anthropologists report a substantial theatrical flavour" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 234). This perspective on the ceremony was apparently shared, at least to some extent, by the Kwakwa̱ka'wakw themselves, for "the special winter season of the ceremony was called 'tsetsehka,' a term that translates as 'secrets' or 'tricks of legerdemain,' as Hoffman notes. This is not to say, however, that everyone present was "in on" the performance-ceremony to the same degree. "All members of the Hamatsa society" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 235), the most prestigious of the Kwakwa̱ka'wakw societies and the one at "the center of the whole winter ceremony" (Sewid qtd. in Spradley 83), "became both actors and priests for, along with the irrational and mysterious call of the supernatural followed by the esoteric rites of purification (which the profane could not witness), there was much that was planned, rehearsed and quite calculated to have maximum effect on the spectators," Hoffman explains. In order "to successfully manipulate the 'uninitiated,' the spectators," as well as "to 'play to the gods,'" the members of the Hamat'sa society "had . . . available a prodigious stagecraft of which they were acknowledged masters" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 235). McKay draws attention to the fact that masks[7] and even puppets were used extensively in "the Hamatsa or Cannibal Society"[8] performance-ceremony. For

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[7] The ceremony featured a ritual participant wearing an articulated mask representing "BaxbakualanuXsiwae, the fearsome cannibal of the North" (Hoffman, "Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 244n15), as well as other performers wearing masks to which were attached "strings to work appendages or reveal another face" (235).
[8] In his introduction to *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, A Kwakiutl Indian*, James P. Spradley writes that the Kwakwa̱ka'wakw Nation "was made up of about twenty-five politically autonomous tribes" and that "[i]n each tribe there were several ranked kinship groups called *numayms*, which anthropologists have sometimes referred to as clans." Either the paternal or the maternal side to one's family determined the *numaym* to which one belonged, "although the paternal line was stressed." Each of these *numayms* was associated with "a mythical ancestor who had visited the earth and founded the numaym" (8). Spradley emphasizes, however, that although "the numayms were the most important kinship groups, the secret societies were the most important

example, "[c]ords and ropes suspended from the roof were used to move carved birds, skeletons, angels or ghosts so that remained invisible in the dim room until miraculously exposed in the firelight." An even more spectacular "effect involved a puppet with detachable parts which were carried away by puppet birds operated by men on the roof of the longhouse," although "[l]ater the various parts were 'flown' back, the figure was reassembled, and it walked away" (*Puppetry* 17).

More recently, Sarah Bryant-Bertail, in "Old Spirits in a New World: Pacific Northwest Performance: Identity, Authenticity, Theatricality," echoes several of Hoffman's arguments (albeit without actually citing his article as a source) while also making some other larger connections that will find resonance in some of the threads running through my own dissertation. Although she focuses primarily on the dance mask (and not the puppet proper), she points to Michael Taussig's "new definition of mimesis" (46-47), which "respects the creation of non-European-based cultures, including those of the Indigenous people of the Americas," and which, in fact, "applies to Pacific Northwest Native representation in general." Instead of foregrounding the "copying of exterior surface, which is still the predominant Western definition articulated by Plato" (47), Taussig's understanding of mimesis stresses the "suturing [of] nature to artifice . . . by means of what was once called sympathetic magic, granting [to] the representation the power of the represented" (qtd. in Bryant-Bertail 47). Consequently, mimesis, for Taussig, "involves embodiment, not just the replication of surface, and by embodying powerful spirits, one is both empowered by and protected from them" (47), Bryant-Bertail elucidates.

Thus, Bryant-Bertail, sharing Taussig's perspective on mimesis, discerns in the traditional performance forms of the West Coast First Nations a strong copresence of efficacy and entertainment, much like Hoffman. She argues further that this union of "mimetic and authentic, sacred and theatrical, is an unacceptable paradox in Platonic and Cartesian thinking, even though the European medieval theater accepted it" (46). She attributes to the West Coast First Nations mask specifically "a dual life," as it is both "object and performer" (45), an interpretation that, as we will begin to see more clearly in the next

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religious groups," and it was these "secret societies" that governed how Kwakw<u>a</u>ka'wakw society was organized during the winter. There were approximately eighteen of these societies, and them "[m]embers of each society were usually of the same sex and had similar ranks in their respective numayms" (10). The dominant society "was the Cannibal or *hamatsa* society," as Spradley explains; accordingly, "[c]hiefs in all the tribes were members of this group or other high-ranking groups such as the Bear or Fool society" (10). All of these societies were "grouped according to the spirits which . . . initiated them" (Boas, *Social Organization* 418), and thus the Hamat'sa or Cannibal society was under the aegis of the BaxbakualanuXsiwae mentioned in the note above. Each of the major societies comprised "a limited number of names, because the members of the society derive[d] each their membership from the initiation of one of the ancestors of the nobility" (418-19), and each of "[t]hese ancestors . . . [had] only one representative at a time," as Boas reports. Consequently, an individual could only be admitted into one of the societies when a current member retired, and it was this "transfer of a position" (419) and a special winter name that was one of the "actuals" at the heart of the winter ceremony. For more personal accounts of the Hamat'sa ceremony and related topics from insider perspectives (namely those of Kwakw<u>a</u>ka'wakw chiefs), the reader should turn to the aforementioned *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, A Kwakiutl Indian* (especially pp. 81-93), which was assembled by Spradley from interviews with Sewid, and *Smoke from Their Fires: The Life of a Kwakiutl Chief* (especially pp. 110-21), which contains the recollections of Charles James Nowell as reported to Clellan S. Ford. My thanks go to my colleague Jill Carter for directing me to these sources.

section, has much in common with the definition of *puppet* that American puppet theorist Steve Tillis proposes, since it too has a dual nature "as an object and as a life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 64). Moreover, Bryant-Bertail's examination of embodied mimesis, a "multidimensional mimesis [that] draws no closed boundary between exterior and interior space, or between animal, human, and spirit" and that allows for a markedly grotesque approach to "design in which outside and inside flow into and out of each other" (47), may well come back to mind as we analyze tandem puppetry, a performance style that similarly challenges such corporeal boundaries, in the fourth chapter.

We should not draw too close a parallel between traditional forms of Aboriginal performance and contemporary forms and styles of puppetry, of course, for many of the former have an explicitly sacred character that most of the latter do not. Even so, to reword Schechner's point slightly, no performance form is purely sacred. Furthermore, Bryant-Bertail reveals that "[t]he dance masks" of the "profoundly theatrical" Kwakwaka'wakw, for example, "had two functions, for imitative secular performance and ceremonial religious performance," and even though each of these performance types imposed a different set of design features upon the masks to be used for them, "the spirits of humans, animals, and plants appear[ed] in both" (48). Still, just as a spiritual quality can be perceived even in the traditional secular performances of the Kwakwaka'wakw and other West Coast First Nations, "[e]ven the most sacred mask dance performances are highly theatrical and contain secular elements." Bryant-Bertail goes so far as to claim, in fact, that, "for the Northwest Coastal Natives, theatricality is at home in both realms" as "the accepted medium for both sacred and secular"; even more significantly, theatricality "sustains Native identity rather than threatening it" (46).

As Hoffman also attests, however, not all of the Kwakwaka'wakw had the same level of access to this theatricality. Members of the Hamat'sa society (and other similar groups) were able "to successfully manipulate the 'uninitiated,' the spectators" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 235), as Hoffman puts it, because their performance "techniques were a closely guarded secret," Bryant-Bertail confirms. When attending "initiation ceremonies," for example, "the spectators knew that the young initiate would only appear to die and would miraculously be brought back to life again at the end, but they didn't know *how* the illusion would be effected" (48), as Bryant-Bertail elaborates. She cites an account of one such initiation ceremony recorded by anthropologist Franz Boas, who reported that "[h]er relatives knew she [the initiate] knew she wasn't really dead and would in the end be restored to life, but they 'cried and cried anyway'" (49). The relatives of the initiate certainly had a more personal connection to both the performer and the performance, but what is more significant in the present context is that neither the efficacious or transformational aspects nor the theatrical or explicitly fictional elements precluded this kind of emotional response. Indeed, it would seem that "qualities" associated with each of the two "poles" of Schechner's posited "continuum" (*Performance Theory* 116) were responsible for eliciting tears from the initiate's relatives.

Thus, the Kwakwa̲ka'wakw winter ceremony can be accepted not only as theatre—provided that one can also accept that it is simultaneously something quite different and that neither its efficacy nor its entertainment cancels the other half of its dual nature out—but also as object-centred theatre more specifically. What is even more pertinent to this study is that puppets, along with masks, are an important part of the repertoire of objects at the disposal of the Kwakwa̲ka'wakw. To return to the original reason for bringing up the subject of traditional Aboriginal performance forms, however, ascertaining these facts is of little use with regard to establishing a precise date for the genesis of puppetry in the area now known as Canada, even if keeping this precontact history of puppetry in mind is of more general importance lest one fall into the assumption that puppetry "arrived" with European settlers, as so many aspects of "civilization" have historically (and, in many cases, incorrectly) been thought to have done. As Bryant-Bertail underscores, the masks and puppets that feature in these performance forms "belong to both the material culture and the performance culture of the Northwest Coast people" (45), which "make[s] it impossible to trace the history of" the performance forms and the cultures to which they belonged "through the physical artifacts alone." Moreover, the artifacts "themselves, especially pre-twentieth century masks"—and puppets, one could safely add—"resist attempts to date them and to decipher their messages" (44), in part due to "the fact that they have probably not changed in basic symbolic design principles for at least a thousand years, even though new materials . . . were quickly substituted for the original materials that had involved the labor of gathering and processing" (44-45). These "new materials" could only be exploited after contact with the European settlers had been established. Although those responsible for creating the masks and puppets of the Kwakwa̲ka'wakw may therefore have benefited from this particular instance of intercultural exchange, there were more controversial instances—ones still related to the history of Canadian puppetry—to come, as will be shown later in this chapter.

Even if the challenges outlined by Bryant-Bertail could somehow be overcome and the date of the first performance of the Kwakwa̲ka'wakw winter ceremony could be determined with relative certainty, there is hardly enough extant evidence to suggest that puppet theatre performances were consistently presented in the area now known as Canada from the tentative date of 1583 put forward by Gardner to the present, much less from whenever the Hamat'sa ceremony was introduced into Kwakwa̲ka'wakw culture to the present. Although McKay's assumptive claim regarding "the relative youth of Canadian puppet theatre" (*Puppetry* 29) has already been challenged (in the introduction), the reality is that there is not a consistent trail of historical evidence to follow until one reaches the twentieth century. Even then, the record is relatively spotty until the cycle of apparent twentieth- and twenty-first-century revivals of puppetry—which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter—begins in Canada in the 1920s. The fact that scholars and critics, when they write about Canadian puppet artists and companies at all, restrict themselves, for the most part, to covering puppetry-related activities from this more recent period

is therefore to be expected, but the inordinate concentration on only the most contemporary artists and companies should still be questioned. Even more problematic, despite the useful details that they offer, which often cannot be found elsewhere (aside from primary sources, assuming that they are still accessible), are studies that address only a single artist or company in isolation from all others. Such studies compose the bulk of Canadian puppet theatre criticism and scholarship. Their authors are usually so focused on constructing some kind of narrative history of these companies and artists that they rarely leave themselves room to examine how they fit into the wider context of Canadian puppet theatre in general. Lists of dates and production titles, descriptions of individual productions, and perhaps some brief analyses of how the work of the companies and artists has "evolved" therefore come to dominate these pieces. Although, as has already been emphasized, this is all helpful information, even the factual purpose that each of these texts serves can be compromised by refusing to look beyond the given company or artist being examined.

Liz Nicholls exhibits this authorial tendency in her well-known article on Burkett's career up to 1998 entitled "World on a String." In it, she proclaims that Burkett has broken "all the sacred rules engraved on the stone tablets of puppetry, starting with the one that says 'never appear with your puppets on stage'" (32). As many are undoubtedly already well aware, the manipulators working in the Bunraku tradition of Japan have appeared onstage with their puppets for centuries, but even in the West, this is not a new technique. As Bil Baird, the famous American puppet artist and author of *The Art of the Puppet*, probably still the best-known work on puppetry in the English language, reveals, the New York-based puppet artist Frank Paris "was the first to operate his show in full view," and "his short-strung marionettes" (229) were especially well suited to this technique. This staging method soon came to be one of the defining features of "cabaret" puppetry for adults (Philpott, "Cabaret Puppets" 43), a form Paris began to popularize in 1937 (McPharlin, *Puppet Theatre* 452; Cook). This technique of appearing onstage with one's puppets was gradually embraced by artists working in other forms of puppet theatre, so that by 1978, puppet theatre theorist and historian Henryk Jurkowski felt compelled to declare in a somewhat patronizing tone that "[n]owadays it is fashionable to display the operators and the speakers," as "[o]ften you can see the puppeteer onstage beside his puppet" ("The Language" 54), demonstrating "who is the passive object and who the principal of the action" (55).

Even in Canada, Burkett was not the first puppet artist to share the stage with his creations. Determining with any degree of certainty which performer was indeed the first to do so is perhaps impossible, once again because so little of the history of puppet theatre in this country has been documented. One of the first major artists to employ this technique, however, was German-born Felix Mirbt, whom many Canadian puppet theatre artists have cited as being a significant source of influence. Summarizing the lengthy and celebrated career of this "renowned master of the art of puppetry" is difficult, but the anonymous writer of the obituary for him in the *Puppetry Journal,* the official

publication of Puppeteers of America, does so concisely but eloquently: "His career, starting at the age of ten in his native Germany, spanned 6 decades and produced an extraordinary body of work. He was a master of his craft. In the words of a colleague, 'He could make a pencil cry.'" Mirbt was often praised for his dedication to formal experimentation, which was manifested in his puppet designs, choices of productions to stage, and staging techniques. "[S]tarting from the traditional string puppet and enlarging to the use of abstract sculpture," he continually explored the possibilities each different puppet type offered. He also elected to work in a variety of dramatic forms, ranging "[f]rom large-scale opera to intimate fairytale," often in collaboration with other artists. His most famous productions, however, were his interpretations of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and August Strindberg's *The Dream Play* (he first staged the former play in 1974, the latter in 1977), both of which "originated at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and . . . toured Canada and Europe, including the Edinburgh Festival" ("In Memoriam"). Mirbt and his fellow manipulators appeared onstage with their puppets, as did those who spoke for the puppets, in both of these productions, as well as in several others.

His choice of play in these two cases clearly indicates an interest in performing for adult audiences. Natalie Rewa indeed notes that Mirbt "[i]nitially . . . concentrated on productions for children—Henry Beissel's *Inook and the Sun*, which premièred at the Stratford Festival in 1973, was written specifically for Mirbt puppets—but subsequently moved to adult scripts" (341). In an interview with Robert Astle conducted in 2001, Burkett acknowledges the debt he owes to Mirbt in this regard: "Felix Mirbt was doing adult puppetry long before I did it. I certainly didn't start it in this country" ("Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 110). Nonetheless, Nicholls emphatically pronounces that Burkett "has almost single-handedly wrested puppetry in this country from the vice-like grip of kids' entertainment and side-show razzle-dazzle and given it a rightful home in the legit, adult theatre" ("World" 31). Here again is evidence of Nicholl's lack of familiarity with the history of puppet theatre. She could perhaps be forgiven for failing to mention—or even to research, one must assume—either Frank Paris or the Bunraku tradition in a relatively brief article on a Canadian puppet artist, particularly since it was published in *Canadian Theatre Review*, a magazine intended for a mixed audience largely composed of theatre practitioners and scholars, and not a peer-reviewed journal such as *Theatre Research in Canada*. That said, her overlooking of Mirbt's career in Canada is far more inexcusable, not to mention more conspicuous, given that Mirbt himself wrote an article entitled "My Story" for the very same issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*.

Stephen Kaplin, a puppet artist and scholar based in New York, confirms that this lack of authors with a firm grounding in the history, theory, and practice of puppetry is not actually endemic to Canada. Despite "a growing sophistication in the use of puppetry forms on the American stage," as well as "decades of popular success and technical advances, scholarly interest in the field has been scant," Kaplin laments. "There are few puppet scholars in" America "and no puppet critics," as he further notes, and

while there are a small number of emerging Canadian scholars who have chosen this field as one of their areas of specialization, such as Janne Cleveland, a recent PhD graduate from Carleton University, and myself, describing any theatre critic writing for a Canadian periodical, whether it be popular or scholarly, as a "puppet critic" would probably be overreaching. Consequently, just as in the USA, there is "no coterie of informed insiders to critique and champion new work" (29), as Kaplin states in reference to his own country.

In another statement that applies as much to the Canadian situation as to the American one, Kaplin remarks disappointedly, there have not "been many attempts by non-puppet-minded theatre scholars"—or critics, one could add—"to write about puppetry in a way that relates it to human theatre, dance, opera, vaudeville, or performance art" (29). One must turn to the few articles and considerably fewer books on Canadian puppetry specifically that have been published in order to find any discussion of the art form, as most other sources on Canadian theatre mention it briefly at best. Although Mermaid Theatre and Puppetmongers Theatre were both founded in the early 1970s, when the "alternate" movement[9] was in full swing in English-speaking Canada, for example, they have yet to be discussed in this context,[10] even in revisionist examinations of the period, such as in Filewod's article "Erasing

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[9] "It is necessary to distinguish between alternate theatre as a phase of postcolonial consolidation in the arts . . . , linked to international currents of theatrical innovation in the 1960s and 1970s, and a continuing tradition of experimental and popular theatre—sometimes called 'alternative theatre'—that defines itself by its opposition to mainstream theatre" ("Alternate Theatre" 16), as Filewod notes. Although the terms *alternate* and *alternative* have been used interchangeably by Canadian theatre historians, the former term, "following the usage most common in Toronto at the time" (Filewod, "Erasing" 202n2), is best reserved for describing both the "phase" described by Filewod and the theatres associated with it. Filewod himself, however, uses both terms when providing an incisive historiographical analysis of how and where this "phase" and the theatres connected with it have been positioned in Canadian theatre history:

> Critical orthodoxy of the alternative theatre in English Canada locates the period of the late 1960s to the mid 1970s as a point of historical crisis during which the mainstream regional theatre system was challenged and overshadowed by the emerging alternates. The regionals are usually characterized by conservative repertoires, a mistrust of Canadian drama, middle-class audiences, and a marked tendency to prefer foreign, usually British directors. The alternates are the heroes in this cultural drama: nationalistic, committed to Canadian playwrights, young, radical, and self consciously experimental. ("Erasing" 202)

Please refer to Filewod's article for his responses to this model. He adds that the regional theatres to which the "alternates" were supposedly responding were the "civic theatres that came into being during the 1950s and 1960s in most Canadian cities" (203), following the publication of the *Report* of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada, of which Vincent Massey
was the appointed chairman, in 1951. The Canada Council of the Arts (known until 1978, when its mandate was changed to focus solely on the arts after the establishment of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences), created in 1957 in response to the Royal Commission, sought to establish these regional theatres "as the flagship theatres of their respective regions" (Filewod, "Erasing" 203), which resulted in "capital funding to construct or renovate large physical plants." For more on the evolution of the regional theatres, see Mark Czarnecki's article "The Regional Theatre System," included in *Canadian Theatre History*, edited by Don Rubin.

[10] In *Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada*, for example, Renate Usmiani does note that puppets were used occasionally by a few of the companies traditionally considered to have been "alternate" or, if based in Québec, "*jeune théâtre*" companies, such as Toronto Workshop Productions (29), the Mummers Troupe (102), and Le Grande Cirque Ordinaire (120). Outside of these isolated and brief references, however, no space is made for a discussion of the puppet theatre companies that were active during this period.

Historical Difference: The Alternative Orthodoxy in Canadian Theatre." This is particularly surprising in the case of Puppetmongers, as it was established in the city that was the supposed centre of the "alternate" movement: Toronto. Similarly, Burkett's early relationship with the fringe theatre movement has only begun to be explored (Burkett, "Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 110-11; Nicholls, "World" 32; Nicholls, "Puppet State" 39-40).

       There are a few exceptions, of course. Sarah B. Hood, for example, in "Theatre of Images: New Dramaturgies," examines and compares the histories and dramaturgical practices of several Canadian artists and companies known for their innovative image-based work, such as Robert Lepage in Québec City; Primus Theatre[11] in Winnipeg; Caravan Farm Theatre near Armstrong, BC; Caravan Stage Company, which tours throughout much of North America and Europe on its combined sailing barge and theatre; and, most relevant in the present context, Shadowland Theatre, a company based on Ward's Island off Toronto that often incorporates various forms of puppetry into its imagistic productions. This kind of scholarship is particularly exciting, for, as Kaplin affirms, "[w]hatever historical conditions contributed to puppetry's isolation in the past have been swept away by a new set of realities" (29), given the popularity in the United States and abroad of the America-based artists that Kaplin mentions (Peter Schumann, Jim Henson, Julie Taymor, and Lee Breuer) and the success of the Canadian puppet theatre artists and companies already mentioned, as well as several other particularly prominent companies. Now, more than ever, puppetry needs to be studied in relation to the broader domain of theatre in general. With audiences gradually becoming more accepting of puppetry as a "legitimate" form of theatre, thanks in large part to popular festivals such as Puppets Up!, scholars and critics should be helping to further this trend rather than lagging behind.

       Kaplin criticizes two American authors in particular: Scott Cutler Shershow for his book *Puppets and "Popular" Culture* and Harold B. Segel for *Pinocchio's Progeny: Puppets, Marionettes, Automatons, and Robots in Modernist and Avant-Garde Drama*. He explains that the former "is a social history of the puppet as paradigm of popular 'sub'-culture in Europe" in which "Shershow uses puppet theatre to examine issues of conflict between 'high' and 'low' culture, but not as a subject in its own right." The latter "is a survey of modern dramatic literature seeking evidence of puppetry as a recurring leitmotif . . . exploited by artists in the 20th century to advance the avantgarde" (sic). Although these texts provide the reader "with juicy tidbits of historical research, both approach puppet theatre from without, stressing the distance separating puppets from the mainstream of Western theatre" (29). As has already been mentioned, Hood begins to move beyond the limitations imposed by this enforced isolation of puppet theatre. However, she appears to be attempting to include as many companies as possible in a relatively short piece; thus, her analysis can inevitably only go so far. Furthermore, the direct relevance of

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[11] Primus Theatre disbanded in 1998, although its cofounder Ker Wells went on to form Toronto's Number Eleven Theatre, which unfortunately later disbanded in 2006.

her article to the subject at hand is limited, as while she touches upon puppetry in discussing the work of Shadowland, she fails to engage with it in sufficient detail or with due rigour. Hood should nevertheless be applauded for her effort, however, as she has opened the door to further comparative studies that could fruitfully treat puppet theatre as just that: a form of theatre, as opposed to an isolated and closed system.

Although Nicholls was censured earlier in this chapter, she is actually another author who has taken a step in the right direction. In her article "Puppet State: Alberta—Home of the New Puppet Radicalism," she examines and draws connections between Alberta's most prominent puppet theatre companies, all based in Calgary: Green Fools Theatre, The Old Trout Puppet Workshop, and W. P. Puppet Theatre Society. She also includes Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes in her analysis of puppet theatre in Calgary, since Burkett's company was based in that city until the spring of 2000. Nicholls's article, although brief, is incredibly valuable, as it is the first of its kind: a piece that recounts the recent history of the puppet theatre developed and staged in a particular region of Canada and attempts to demonstrate how the companies and artists based in that region have influenced one another. If others were willing to take up this task, each choosing a different region, then enough research would be conducted to allow an ambitious soul to begin compiling an updated and more detailed and rigorous version of McKay's text, one that could illustrate how puppet artists across this country have influenced each other and how they continue to influence each other's work.

That said, Nicholls's exclusive focus on Calgarian puppetry, while understandable, as she has been the theatre critic for the *Edmonton Journal* for the last twenty-six years, has its shortcomings. Just as she reveals her lack of familiarity with the history of puppetry in "World on a String," here, she betrays a lack of awareness of the contemporary Canadian puppetry scene outside of Alberta. She does not challenge Burkett's overly bold statement that "[p]eople aren't making real puppet theatre in Canada—except in Calgary" (qtd. in Nicholls, "Puppet State" 39), for example, even though it is unjustifiably dismissive of a great number of puppet artists, only some of whom have already been named here. Furthermore, even within the strictly delimited boundaries that she establishes for herself, Nicholls's analysis only goes so far. She is careful to quote Dean Bareham, cofounder of Green Fools Theatre (a company that draws upon puppet, mask, physical, and processional theatre forms in its productions), who declares, "Ronnie [Burkett] was always an inspiration. . . . Puppets as actors in an adult theatre: we'd always been very impressed with his work . . ." (qtd. in Nicholls, "Puppet State" 41). Indeed, Burkett is once again presented by Nicholls as the true revolutionary in Canadian puppet theatre, since supposedly he "almost single-handedly change[d] the fortunes, the profile, the aspirations of puppets and puppeteers in this country" while securing "for puppets something they hadn't had in Canada: a rightful home in the theatre" (37). At this point, the reader needs only to be briefly reminded that Mirbt succeeded "in gaining the support of major theatres" (McKay, *Puppetry* 46) long before Burkett did. One should certainly not infer that Burkett has not in fact been an influential puppet artist; on the contrary, the current resurgence

of interest of puppetry in North America is due in no small part to his work. That said, Nicholls clearly overstates the case. Burkett, moreover, like the other artists and companies that Nicholls discusses in "Puppet State," is not working in a vacuum. Although she outlines how Burkett has influenced other Calgarian artists and companies, she offers little insight into who might have influenced Burkett himself.[12]

Interestingly, Nicholls, following Burkett's lead, ties the innovative nature of the work of these Calgarian artists and companies in with the *terroir* of the city itself. She credits "his obstinacy in finding his own way as an artist and creating a 'theatre puppetry,' no matter how exacting or labour intensive, rule defying or just plain against the grain," to "prairie individualism and . . . the artistic environment in Calgary" ("Puppet State" 39): "The thing about Calgary is the freedom. There isn't a community out there telling you 'we do it *this* way not *that* way,'" Burkett explains. He adds that an additional practical benefit is the relative ease of finding available "studio space" (qtd. in Nicholls, "Puppet State" 39). Certainly, this argument would seem to fit with the mythos of the "frontier." Given Filewod's argument concerning the "expropriation of aboriginality" that characterizes "the postcolonial state" (*Performing Canada* 2), however, one should not be surprised that Canadian puppetry in general has described in similar terms. Jim Morrow—then Associate Director and Designer at Mermaid Theatre and now the Artistic Director— seems to have been filled with the "frontier spirit" when he boldly declared in 1998 that when the theatre artists associated with Mermaid Theatre first began to experiment with the use of puppets in their productions in the early 1970s, "no truly 'Canadian' puppet tradition existed." Morrow goes on to argue, however, that what could best be described as a tradition of innovative recycling has since been established, as while Canadian "theatre artists who chose to explore this ancient medium were forced to borrow concepts and techniques from the more established puppetry cultures" (13), they were soon able to make them their own. Indeed, "[t]he absence of a recognizably Canadian puppet style" was not "perceived as an impediment to the legitimate use and exploration of the medium"; on the contrary, aspiring puppet artists were free to experiment with "proven techniques . . . adapting them to the processes which define our own theatre," thereby helping to create "an approach which can be identified as truly Canadian" (14).

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[12] Indeed, when discussing Burkett, Nicholls says very little that she has not already said in "World on a String." She does mention that, "[i]n Burkett's view, a big part of what has made Calgary 'such a vital and exciting place for new artist-created work, like puppet theatre,' is the active presence of the city's experiment One Yellow Rabbit theatre and their annual High Performance Rodeo, a showcase for the latest, coolest performer-generated work across the country and beyond" (39). In his interview with me, Burkett actually went considerably further than this. Burkett claimed that his work is more informed by theatre artists who "create their own movement-based vocabulary around text" (Personal interview) than it is by puppet theory (or Calgarian puppet artists, one would be tempted to add after reading Nicholls's article "Puppet State"), citing One Yellow Rabbit as an example of a group of such artists. One should not completely dismiss the idea that Burkett could have also been influenced by other puppet artists in Calgary during his time there, however.

The "Canadian Control": A Microcosm of a Canadian Approach to Puppetry

There are certainly many instances of Canadian puppet artists successfully adapting "proven techniques" appropriated from other cultures that could be cited here as evidence to support Morrow's conclusion. One example—or rather one cluster of related examples—has particularly attracted the attention of Ann and David Powell, the sister-and-brother team who founded Puppetmongers Theatre in Toronto in 1974. In fact, they have gone so far as to assert, albeit not in a formally published form, that this particular method of puppet construction not only originated in Canada but also soon became popular throughout much of the country. Consequently, it could indeed qualify as "a recognizably Canadian puppet style" (14), *pace* Morrow.

Since the mid-1970s, the Powells have argued that the term "*Canadian control*" should join a list of similar existing terms, such as "the Australian control (a way of attaching the rods to shadow puppets) and the Czech control (a method of building the head moving mechanism on rod puppets)," as David Powell states. He explains that the term "referred originally to any puppet built to stand up on its own" ("Re: Canadian Control"). An early source of inspiration that led the Powells to formulate this concept was the now defunct Canadian Puppet Festivals, once known as Ledo Puppets, which was founded and led by the late Leo and Dora Velleman. This husband-and-wife team, once famous for their extensive national and international tours, eventually became "ensconced in their own permanent theatre, The Leading Wind" (McKay, *Puppetry* 35), now known as the Chester Playhouse, in Chester, Nova Scotia. It was the only puppet theatre playhouse operating in Canada at the time (Smith, "Professional Puppeteers" 5), although it had a rather short lifespan, remaining open only from 1978 to 1983, when the Vellemans retired.[13] The Vellemans decided to settle in Nova Scotia after having been drawn to the region by the opportunity to participate in the once annual Nova Scotia Festival of Puppetry, hosted by Mermaid Theatre at Acadia University from 1974 to 1980. They still continued to tour after they had acquired their facilities in Chester, although they no longer regularly performed outside of eastern Canada (McKay, *Puppetry* 41).

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[13] Sara Lee Lewis, one of the three cofounders of Mermaid Theatre and currently the managing director of the company, relates the rather unfortunate tale of the demise of Canadian Puppet Festivals, a company with which Mermaid was intimately involved during the last days of the Vellemans' careers as puppet artists. Having restored The Leading Wind "with both personal and public funds," the Vellemans' relationship with their creditors became "very complicated when the operation went bankrupt." In part because of their participation in the Nova Scotia Festival of Puppetry, the Vellemans had developed a close relationship with the members of Mermaid, who were therefore willing to come to their aid, despite the fact that they had little to gain from doing so: "When the Velleman debts accumulated, intermediaries from provincial and federal funding agencies attempted to broker an arrangement which would enable the company to pay its creditors. . . . Mermaid received special assistance which enabled us to pay the Velleman creditors, with the understanding that we would remount Velleman shows for the period of a year, and meet their touring commmitments [sic] in Ontario" ("Re: Misc[.] Questions"). Nevertheless, by 1983, Canadian Puppet Festivals had ceased to exist. It had been established, as Ledo Puppets, in 1950, making it, at the time of its dissolution, "Canada's oldest professional puppet theatre" (Walsh 87).

Powell states that he first noticed their use of this method of construction while watching a performance of their production *The Firebird*[14] in the small theatre located in the basement of the Palmerston Branch[15] of the Toronto Public Library system before the company moved to Nova Scotia ("Re: Canadian Control"; "Re: One More"). The puppets used in *The Firebird* were rod puppets, "some of which were built onto wheeled stands" ("Re: Canadian Control"), as Powell notes, and thus were able to remain standing without human assistance. Ann Powell cautions against overemphasizing the impact of the Vellemans' style on the Powells' own then emerging style, however, and will admit no generalizations: "[T]he Velleman's [*sic*] style wasn't one we were interested in emulating" ("Re: 'Canadian Control'"). The Powells were clearly intrigued by the freestanding puppets created by the Vellemans, but that was as far as their curiosity went. As McKay notes, the Vellemans favoured "hand or rod puppets" (*Puppetry* 38), both of which are controlled from below, whereas the Powells discovered their passion for puppetry through playing with marionettes, which are controlled from above, as children. The Powells, moreover, already preferring to work from above as a result of their "habit and thinking" (A. Powell, "Re: 'Canadian Control'"), were by this time trying to reduce the distance between them and their puppets. Thus, the Powells were hardly interested in copying wholesale the rod puppets from *The Firebird*, although the technique of wheeling "secondary characters and crowd scenes" (D. Powell, "Re: One More") into place onstage still caught their attention. They therefore immediately dispensed with the "wheeled stands" (D. Powell, "Re: Canadian Control") and adapted the "Canadian control" method to their own needs for many of their productions. For their very first show as Puppetmongers, *The Miller*, first performed in 1974, the puppets representing the supporting characters of the Wife of the Miller and their children were built upon bases, so that they could be moved onto the stage when required but stand on their own while the Powells manipulated other puppets. The puppet representing the wife was attached to its own base, while the children—with the exception of the eldest, who had his own base—shared a common base, "so they would all turn together," as David Powell elucidates. Powell further recalls that the principal puppets for *The Miller* were initially manipulated while "working on the floor" via short rods attached to the elbows and head, as well as a handle attached to the back. Several years later, however, the puppets migrated to a tabletop, which placed the Powells "among the groundbreakers" of

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[14] *The Firebird* was based on "a combination of several Russian [f]olk tales that deal with the story of Prince Ivan, the Gray Wolf, the magic Firebird and Kaschei the Deathless" (Canadian Puppet Festivals).

[15] The Palmerston Branch has always been a popular venue for puppet performances but particularly those intended for young people, as it opened in 1971 as a children's library. Its collection of children's books was eventually moved to the Lillian H. Smith Branch, which also has an invaluable collection related to puppetry, the Marguerite G. Bagshaw Collection, which comprises a thousand books, subscriptions to three periodicals, two hundred and twenty puppets and dolls, and the stage materials needed to present eighty different puppet theatre pieces (Toronto Public Library, "Marguerite G. Bagshaw").

the tabletop style of puppetry, of which they "have become leading exponents" ("Re: Almonte Performances"), as Powell himself asserts.[16]

A very different kind of "Canadian control" puppet appeared more recently in *Foolish Tales for Foolish Times* (which premièred in 2003) in the form of a chef with a seemingly insatiable appetite, which "has a body that only goes down to the base disc at . . . [its] waist," which frees both of David Powell's hands to allow him to control the chef's right arm, as well as its gaping mouth, into which properties representing food items are thrust. The left arm remains limp at its side for much of the play, as Ann Powell must join David in order to give it motion in addition to the chef's other arm, neck, and body, all of which David controls, the last two through a handle attached to the back of its head. The flat base allows the chef to be placed securely atop a box behind his employer's kitchen table, giving him "the required height" (D. Powell, "Re: Canadian Control") in order to be seen by the audience.

The Powells went to the trouble of producing a humorously illustrated single-sided information sheet on the "Canadian control," although it did not circulate widely. David Powell claims that it was intended as a "tongue[-]in[-]cheek" ("Re: One More") exercise, and yet it lists several "means of maintaining puppets on stage with minimal puppeteer involvement." One of the methods that they outline is the "[r]eclining" puppet, which is pictured seated in an armchair, which need only be engaged in some "slight activity . . . periodically to maintain audience interest" (Puppetmongers Theatre, *Some Self-Supporting Puppets*). They in fact used this very technique in the sequel to *The Miller*, *The Miller's Wife*, which was first staged in 1976: the Miller himself remains seated for the entire show (D. Powell, "Re: Canadian Control"). The primary focus of the sheet, however, is the tabletop-style puppet that, because of a built-in stand or other design feature, is able "to stand up on its own" (D. Powell, "Re: Canadian Control"). The puppets from *The Miller* discussed above and the chef from *Foolish Tales for Foolish Times* were constructed in this manner, although the chef, as was noted above, is actually located behind a table rather than on top of one during the playlet—the production is composed of four such short pieces— in which he is a main character, appearing again briefly in the final piece when he peeps through a curtain, held aloft by David Powell. Powell would indeed come to proclaim, "The term ["*Canadian control*"] best refers to tabletop figures who have this inherent ability" ("Re: Canadian Control").

The fact that the Powells choose to emphasize their own favoured variation on the "Canadian control" should hardly come as a surprise. That said, when David Powell discusses some examples of "proven techniques" from other cultures that most likely served as sources of inspiration for those experimenting with the "Canadian control," this emphasis shifts:

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[16] For their next production, *The Miller's Wife*, a follow-up to *The Miller*, the Powells developed these construction and manipulation techniques further, although, as David Powell emphasizes, this piece "has never been raised to tabletop, as it can't be staged thus" ("Re: Almonte Performances"). Consequently, when the two shows are presented in succession, they are both staged on the floor. When they are performed in such a manner, they are given the collective title of *The Miller and His Wife*.

> The idea also comes from marionette work: on the bridge there is often a hanging system to allow a marionette to be held on stage while another is manipulated, or to hold a couple for minimal movement in a dialogue scene. It can be related to the use of the banana logs that hold characters on stage in the Indonesian wayang (both shadow and golek)[.] ("Re: Canadian Control")

Powell is referring to two related traditions in his second example, namely *wayang kulit*, in which "flat leather figures" are used to create shadows on a screen, and *wayang golek*, which is "performed with three-dimensional wooden figures that are manipulated [from below] with rods" (Baird 56). Both of these traditions will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter. Their relevance here is that even these figures, which have rods extending below their bodies proper, can be made to stand on their own, albeit with some assistance, just as the Vellemans' could through the use of the "wheeled stands" ("Re: Canadian Control") mentioned by Powell. Indeed, the ornate, flowing costumes and elaborate headdresses of the human characters in *The Firebird* serve as further evidence of a possible link between the Indonesian *wayang* traditions—particularly *wayang golek*—and the Vellemans' design and performance style in this production.

As is usually the case when discussing any aspect of Canadian puppet theatre history, ascertaining which company or artist was the first to develop the "Canadian control" is difficult; indeed, in this case, it becomes impracticable, given the inclusiveness of the term, especially in its original definition. Other companies and artists, such as Orléans-based Rag & Bone Puppet Theatre, Puppetmongers, Mermaid Theatre, and Mirbt, discovered their own variations on this control method. These variations have proven to be so disparate, in fact, that subsuming them all under a single control style may appear seem like forcing the issue. The only thing that all of these puppets have in common is that each of them can be left on its own onstage while the manipulator or manipulators move on to operate another puppet, bring in a necessary stage property, or do whatever else the production requires.

The "Canadian control" method was clearly developed in the hope that it would help to keep a puppet from "dying" onstage, especially the puppet were occasionally given some movement or sound by an operator. American puppet theorist Steve Tillis has defined the puppet as "a theatrical figure that is given design, movement, and frequently, speech, so that it fulfills the audience's desire to imagine it as having life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 65). The spectator, through a reception process Tillis refers to as the "double-vision" of puppet theatre, "sees the puppet, through perception and through imagination, as an object and as a life; that is, it sees the puppet in two ways at once" (64). This "double-vision" is in fact, for Tillis, the defining element of puppet theatre. Maintaining an illusion of life is therefore an essential part of the work of the puppet artist, and the "Canadian control" technique—or more accurately, the "Canadian control" group of techniques—is a tool that allows the artist to do just that, even when a given puppet may not necessarily be the focus of a particular scene.

Perhaps such a varied style cannot qualify as a unified "'Canadian' puppet tradition" (13), to quote Morrow once more. Its diverse nature as a matrix of related solutions to the same problem (that is, how to ensure that a puppet can support itself onstage without assistance from a human manipulator) rather than a more homogeneous "tradition" in danger of ossification is, however, precisely what connects it to the flexible "approach" that Morrow does indeed describe as "truly Canadian" and "indigenous" (14), albeit without unpacking the potential problems in using a term such as *indigenous* in connection with an aspect of Canadian culture. The Powells' concept of the "Canadian control," along with Morrow's theory concerning Canadian puppetry more generally, can also be related back one of the statements made by McKay that was criticized earlier, giving it greater specificity and refining the context provided by him: "If any generalities about Canadian puppetry can be made at all, they are simply such words as 'North American', 'varied', or 'increasingly internationalized'" (*Puppetry* 30).

Establishing Difference: Creative Resistance in Canadian Puppet Theatre

By now, one should have some understanding of why Canadian puppetry as a whole—as well as the "Canadian control" method, as it is a microcosm of Canadian puppetry as presented by Morrow—could be described as "varied" and "internationalized." Characterizing Canadian puppet theatre as "North American" may still seem unwarranted, as, following Morrow, thus far, it has been represented here as unique in its reliance on appropriation and adaptation. As McKay observes, however, Canada "shares in the general North American culture, one based on that of Western European immigrants and modified by regional conditions and, more recently, by contact with other traditions and by technological changes" (*Puppetry* 23). The impact of these last two influences has, of course, become even more apparent since McKay's book was published in 1980. Still, despite the increasing influence of "traditions, techniques, and technology from all over the world" (24), one might struggle to counter McKay's charge that the USA has proven to be an "overwhelming influence" on this nation, given that "[t]he attraction of a rich and powerful neighbour, so close and linguistically the same as most of Canada, is irresistible" (23).

Several Canadian puppet theatre companies have nevertheless demonstrated that this cultural influence can in fact be successfully resisted through choices related primarily to either content or form. Some of the topics they have decided to address in their work have proven to be particularly obvious manifestations of these attempts to establish difference. A common strategy has been to draw upon material of national, regional, or local significance when developing new work. The artists at Mermaid Theatre have been particularly successful at following this approach, in both the sense that they have created engaging and formally experimental productions based on local history and folklore and that they have attracted a great many spectators to these productions, so many, in fact, that in the 2007-08 season, for example, production revenues accounted for 66% of the company's operating budget (Lewis, "Re: Accounting"). This is not to say, however, that all Mermaid productions have been local in content;

indeed, its production history has been somewhat inconsistent in this regard. Still, the company established its admirable reputation largely through its stage adaptations of Mi'kmaw[17] myths and legends, beginning in 1973 with *Micmac Legends*. This apparently raised the spectre of "cultural appropriation" (Lewis, "Conversation" 24) eventually, but Sara Lee Lewis, one of the three cofounders of Mermaid, is careful to emphasize that the company did "regularly consult . . . with Noel Knockwood, who was Spiritual Advisor" ("Re: Your Paper") for the Eskasoni Band, "[t]he largest Mi'kmaq First Nation in the [w]orld" (Eskasoni Band Council), regarding the Mi'kmaw myths and legends that they were adapting, and that the company usually premièred these adaptations "at the reserve schools, in the hope of getting some constructive feedback" ("Re: Your Paper").

Whether or not the efforts on the part of the members of Mermaid in this regard were sufficient—or sufficiently recognized—remains an open question, however. Lewis states firmly that Mermaid "moved away from" developing productions based on Mi'kmaw cultural material for a "reason . . . that . . . was external rather than internal": the company was not composed of "First Nations people[,] and the Canada Council, . . . [Mermaid's] major funding agency, has a policy concerning cultural appropriation" ("Conversation" 24). Guylaine Normandin, head of the theatre section of the Canada Council, on the other hand, states just as firmly that "that there never has been an official Canada Council policy concerning cultural appropriation," and thus, Mermaid's "move away from using Mi'kmaq [sic] source material was not the result of conforming to a new Council policy." Interestingly, Normandin does note that "a practice of peer evaluation has evolved": "The issue arose in the early 1990's [sic] in the Writing and Publishing Section[,] and it was hotly debated as part of the Writing Through Race conference organized by the Canada Council for the Arts in 1994." Although "no official policy" came out of these discussions, "the practice that evolved was that Peer Assessment Committees asked for reassurances from an applicant that representatives from the specific Aboriginal community be included in consultations about the appropriateness of the use of tribal stories in the proposed project." At first, "this practice was developed and applied to non-Aboriginal applicants using Aboriginal source material in their proposed project," but following "the intervention of the Aboriginal Secretariat [now the Aboriginal Arts Office] at Council, it [was] extended to Aboriginal applicants using source material from other Aboriginal cultures than their own." It could therefore justifiably be argued—based on Lewis's claims, at least—that the members of Mermaid had already been following this unofficial "practice" before it had even been developed, albeit perhaps in a less formal manner.

That notwithstanding, Alice Walsh, in her book on the company, *Mermaid: A Puppet Theatre in Motion*, maintains that, in the late 1970s, "cultural appropriation was becoming a major issue in Canada" and that this was part of the explanation for the shift in repertoire (and in priorities) at Mermaid. Like

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[17] To quote Darlene A. Ricker from her study of a Mi'kmaw community, "[t]he spelling of *Mi'kmaw* [adjective] and *Mi'kmaq* [noun] are used throughout" this discussion "because it is the way the People wish to be known. *Micmac* is an older spelling and is only used when quoting another source" (viii).

Lewis, Walsh points to the Canada Council as the chief influence in this regard: "In the early 1970s, the dramatization of Native literature had been considered a way of fostering diversity, but a decade later, changing mores caused Canada Council peer juries to question the use of indigenous material by non-aboriginal artists" (62). As has already been noted, according to a source at the Canada Council itself, there was "no official policy" related to this kind of adaptation, nor, in fact, is there one now. In the end, Walsh wisely—even if it results in a vague generalization—chooses to cast a wider net when attempting to ascribe responsibility, asserting that "[t]he general feeling amongst people in the arts was that only aboriginal people had a right to portray aboriginal culture" (62). Unfortunately, no specific source is cited here, and with the supposed role of Canada Council already cast into doubt, this line of reasoning cannot be developed further with much surety.

Even if discovering a specific outside source for the charges of cultural appropriation that appear to have been brought against Mermaid Theatre proves impracticable, Walsh also indicates that there may be firmer ground on which to stand in relation to this issue, for the company's shift "away from the [Mi'kmaw] legends was caused not only by external factors, but by artistic pressure from within the theatre" (62-63). "Long before this time," she declares, Tom Miller, the artistic director and principal designer at Mermaid at the time of its formation and another of its cofounders, "had expressed his wish to move beyond plays based on Mi'kmaq legends," his rationale being that he believed that "the legends had run their course, that the Mi'kmaq needed to 'take back some feeling of control'" (63), as Miller himself told her during an interview.

These concerns related to cultural appropriation were, moreover, compounded by ones related to more aesthetic matters. Walsh demonstrates that there was a perceptible change in how the productions based on Mi'kmaw myths and legends were being received by theatre critics: some of them, at least, were beginning to think that these productions were "wearing a little thin" (72). Thus, most likely in response to the confluence of these factors, Mermaid chose to abandon Aboriginal cultural material as a source of inspiration for its productions until 1999. When the artists at Mermaid did decide to return to this material, they did so in an even greater spirit of collaboration with the Aboriginal communities involved.[18] More uncontroversially, Mermaid has also staged a number of productions based on folk tales,

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[18] In 1999, Mermaid staged *Noah and the Woolly Mammoth* and *The Shaman and the Bagpipe*, the first Mermaid productions to feature Aboriginal cultural material since *The Stolen Child*, which premièred in 1980. Both of these productions were based on "post-contact Inuit stories collected by American author Howard Norman," as Lewis notes. They can be found in Norman's collection *The Girl Who Dreamed Only Geese and Other Tales of the Far North*. They were presented together as a double bill in celebration of the establishment of Nunavut. The artists at Mermaid were now collaborating more directly with Aboriginal artists and other members of the Aboriginal community, according to Lewis:

> In order to accurately reflect this dynamic culture, we engaged Siobhan Arnatsiaq-Murphy, a young Inuk choreographer from Iqaluit, to advise us on all aspects of the production, including costuming and music. She even taught our performers throat-singing. The production[s] . . . [were] launched at the National Arts Centre with about 100 Inuit in our audience (all connected with various agencies). They were highly supportive, and the NAC hosted a traditional feast

histories, and legends associated with European settlers and their descendants, as well as plays written by or adapted from works by local authors.

Mermaid has managed to navigate some dangerous waters in what could be described as a theatricalization of Hoffman's attempt to discuss the winter ceremony of the Kwakwaka'wakw as a part of "the complete theatre history of British Columbia" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 231). The setting, of course, had been changed, for the Mi'kmaq, as Ruth Holmes Whitehead explains in *Elitekey: Micmac Material Culture from 1600 A.D. to the Present*, "at the time of first European contact in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, inhabited what are now the Maritime provinces and the Gaspé peninsula of Québec . . .[,] [although] [l]ater they were also to settle in Newfoundland and parts of New England" (8). In *Between Theater and Anthropology*, Schechner asks if "there [is] a difference between criticism and interpretation," and Hoffman and Mermaid reveal just how permeable this boundary can be as they provide both rationales for focusing on this or that aspect of Aboriginal cultural material and their own interpretations of this material. As Schechner further points out, the question therefore arises of "[w]ho has the 'right' to make evaluations: only people in a culture, only professionals who practice the art in question, [or] only professional critics." He suggests that "four sets [of criteria]" may exist: those employed "inside the culture by the professionals who also make performances; inside by ordinary audiences; outside the culture by visiting professionals; [and] outside by ordinary audiences" (25). Clearly, Hoffman and most of the artists who have been associated with Mermaid would all fall under the category of "visiting professionals," albeit of different kinds. Thus, their "right" to analyze or theatricalize Aboriginal cultural material can be called into question. Hoffman is most likely going too far when he lumps the Hamat'sa ceremony in with the "theatre history of British Columbia" ("Towards an Early British Columbia Theatre" 231), and Lewis similarly oversimplifies a complex relationship when she implies that Mi'kmaw cultural material is "Nova Scotian" ("Conversation" 25). Still, the most extreme alternatives to these approaches, namely marginalizing or even ignoring altogether these Aboriginal traditions, are hardly preferable, so a more nuanced perspective is needed. Mermaid has in fact pointed the way to a potential solution, namely close collaboration with members of the First Nation whose

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following the opening. In the Spring of 2003 we took the same show[s] to six Inuit communities in Northern Quebec (district of Kativik, in the Nunavik region). Again, we were warmly welcomed. Lewis adds that the artists at Mermaid are also willing to share their knowledge with the Aboriginal community when asked to do so, as in June 2004, "two Mer-people (Tanis Delaney and Graham Percy) conducted a found-object puppetry workshop at the Mi'kmaq reserve of Eskasoni in Cape Breton," their invitation coming "from Dr. Cheryl Bartlett, who oversees a fascinating integrative science program at the University College of Cape Breton [now known as Cape Breton University] which combines traditional wisdom with western science." The objective of the workshop "was to encourage the use of puppetry to teach science," so university students, teachers, and other participants "spent time in the woods, and made wonderful puppets from the natural materials they found there" ("Re: Misc[.] Questions").

cultural material is being interpreted. Both scholarship and theatre could benefit from this kind of cooperative approach.[19]

Thus far, all that has been examined here is how Aboriginal cultural material has served as a source of inspiration for dramatic narratives—that is, as content—in the context of Canadian puppet theatre. As was outlined earlier in this chapter, several of the First Nations also developed their own ingenious forms of puppetry. These elements of Aboriginal cultural material, however, have yet to be adequately explored by more contemporary puppet artists in this country. McKay champions Aboriginal puppetry as "a resource to which Canadian puppeteers may someday return" (*Puppetry* 9), and any puppet artist would certainly benefit from studying such sophisticated creations. McKay, like Hoffman and Lewis, slips into an appropriationist stance, however, when he calls upon "ambitious Canadian puppeteers . . . [to] explore the heritage that is uniquely their own" (22). Although Canadian puppet artists would become equally appropriationist if they decided to claim traditional Aboriginal forms of puppetry as "uniquely their own," they would also potentially be attempting to establish difference through form, which, like content, can be a site of resistance.

Regardless of whether a non-Aboriginal puppet artist is inspired by content or form related to Aboriginal cultural material, caution is always warranted when elements of either—or perhaps even of both—are being abstracted from their original context. Whatever one's intentions might be, if these elements are to be somehow fused with others from a very different cultural context, one could easily be perceived as implying that the Aboriginal cultural material in itself "is not enough," as Bryant-Bertail observes. Even when practicing a marginalized art like puppetry, one could be construed as attempting to demonstrate that, while valuable, this cultural material "needs to be 'framed by and for European conventions and taste'" in order to have its full potential realized. Bryant-Bertail is quoting from the particularly brazen "publicity of Tillicum Village" (56)—"an ethnic theme restaurant" (53) located near Seattle—in which it is further revealed "that the Native dances and myths" (56) staged there as dinner-theatre entertainment "are combined with the theatrics of the stage to enhance the ethnic and cultural heritage of an exceptional people" (qtd. in Bryant-Bertail 56). Although the attitude towards Aboriginal

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[19] Almost a quarter of century after his article on the Hamat'sa ceremony was published, Hoffman could reflect upon his original intention. Initially, there seems to be a note of regret, given that a chance for intercultural communication had been passed by: "Now of course I would be more interested in looking at actual performances (they do an abbreviated dance at Alert Bay) and conducting interviews, but in the mid-eighties it seemed that the anthropologists and the documenters listed in the Notes were sufficient, especially as I was focussing [sic] on the more historical record, rather than contemporary hybrids." He admits to knowing that "the ceremony was being practised at the time, although probably not in the lengthy version of the full Winter Ceremony of old." Still, he "wonder[s] to what extent the marvellous use of puppets and other stagecraft were/are still being used." Moreover, the context of the ceremony has changed, according to Hoffman, for, "as often is the case, these [dances] are performed in [a] more open, public forum for tourists and others, rather than for private, tribal purposes" ("Re: Hamatsa Ceremony"). He certainly provides some convincing justifications for his approach, but his research process, centred as it was on published sources written by non-Aboriginal authors, most likely would have only been enriched by the kinds of direct contact that he lists only to dismiss. At the very least, Hoffman could have consulted published Kwakw<u>a</u>ka'wakw sources, two of which were mentioned in an earlier note.

cultural material that is expressed in this promotional material seems to be, at least in part, one of respect and admiration, the condescending tone is not difficult to detect. Moreover, the urge to compartmentalize, appropriate, and commodify elements of Aboriginal cultural material is also readily apparent, as is the sense of confidence that this is all ultimately in the best interests of all parties involved.

While the audience apparently benefits in a way that is presented as primarily aesthetic, the Aboriginal performers themselves benefit in a way that is primarily economic, at least according to the late founder of Tillicum Village, Bill Hewitt, "a white man and caterer by trade" who opened the tourist village "in the 1960s era of the pan-Indian cultural revival" (53), Bryant-Bertail explains. She cites an interview with Hewitt during which he stressed that "the method of preparing the salmon" that is served to the audience, along with "the dances and masks used in the production, was created and legally owned by Native Americans and approved by tribal elders." Furthermore, "Native artists take all the profits from the sale of their works exhibited in the art gallery, in addition to being paid for serving as live exhibits of authentic Native artists at work" (57), as Bryant-Bertail summarizes in her own words.

The fact that Hewitt framed his justification in legal and economic terms is significant, and while, on the surface, it might resemble Lewis's defence of Mermaid's adaptations of Mi'kmaw legends and myths, as it too centred on seeking approval from representatives of a specific community, Tillicum Village is a considerably more complicated and indeed politically and economically questionable context with respect to the issue of cultural appropriation. There is the important but relatively obvious difference in objectives that is indicated by the equally different statuses of the organizations, Mermaid being a registered charity, Tillicum Village being "a financially lucrative business," even if it is also "a showcase for Northwest Coast Native culture" (Bryant-Bertail 53). The inclusive definition of *West Coast Aboriginal culture* inherent in how both the productions staged at Tillicum Village and the body of individuals responsible for them—including those responsible for the accompanying dinner and all of the other aspects of the Tillicum experience—are structured is, in fact, part of the problem. Bryant-Bertail reports that the composite performance that she witnessed was constructed out of elements from several different Aboriginal traditions, which, having been abstracted from their respective original contexts, "were crowded into a space and time too small for them, a spectacle that echoed the 'Indian Holocaust,' the forced roundups and marches across the continent and away from their homelands" (56). Although the hiring procedures at Tillicum Village certainly do not entail actual "forced roundups and marches," the personnel there have similarly been drawn "from several clans and tribes, not all from the Pacific Northwest" (53); indeed, Hewitt once disclosed "that over the years he had hired not only Native Americans, but the occasional Vietnamese, Latino, and African American as dancers, salmon tenders, or greeters" (57).

While the members of Mermaid, in the early years of the company, may have maintained a tighter focus with regard to the Aboriginal cultural material upon which they were drawing, clearly they did not,

for the most part, have a greater claim to "authenticity" than the performers and other employees at Tillicum Village have. That said, McKay points out that Mermaid did attempt "to promote more native involvement in the art of puppetry": in 1974, Canada Council funding allowed the company "to employ two Micmac Indians as apprentice puppeteers" (31). To learn more about the nature of the apprenticeships offered to the two Mi'kmaw individuals (who were with the company for the 1974-75 season), one must turn to Lewis and Miller. According to Lewis, Bernard Sylliboy and Anthony Morris, the two apprentices in question, were quickly made full members of the company: "We trained them as puppeteer/performers. They toured with us in the Western Provinces, and participated in a visit to a reserve in Montreal Lake (La Ronge area) in Northern Saskatchewan. That was a big success, in terms of a warm welcome. Anthony and Bernard have gone on to other things – but not theatre" (Re: Misc. Questions"). As Lewis implies, Sylliboy and Morris left the company of their own accord. Miller adds that they found the "unstable" but "structured environment" of a touring company to be quite taxing, as they "weren't experienced with such a structure" (Telephone interview).

Whatever the reason for their departure, they were gone after only a year, leaving one to wonder how perceptions of the relationship between Mermaid and the Mi'kmaq—from both within and without the company—might have changed had Sylliboy and Morris stayed on as company members for longer. Perhaps they could have begun to participate in the development of new productions, which could have justifiably been understood as representatives of the Mi'kmaq—if only in a localized and limited sense— "tak[ing] back some feeling of control" (qtd. in Walsh 63) over their own stories, as Miller had become convinced that they should more generally. He voiced a similar sentiment in an interview with myself when he asserted that Mermaid's relationship with Aboriginal audiences began to sour somewhat, not because they were offended in any way by Mermaid's productions, but because they began to say, "We wish we had done that ourselves" (Telephone interview). Of course, a puppet theatre company composed mostly of individuals of European descent with just two Mi'kmaw members cannot possibly be equated with a company composed entirely of Mi'kmaw practitioners determined to reappropriate their myths and legends in order to "do that themselves," to rephrase Miller's statement slightly. Indeed, the former situation could be described as a case of tokenism. Still, past and present members of Mermaid have demonstrated an interest in broader collaborative cultural connections with both the Mi'kmaq and First Nations communities in general, and it is intriguing to imagine how the relationship between that company and both Sylliboy and Morris might have evolved.

Even if Sylliboy and Morris had eventually taken on more integral roles in the company, any consultation or collaboration with them with regard to puppet design for the Mermaid productions based on the legends and myths of the Mi'kmaq would have been of limited usefulness, had the members of the company become fixated on creating puppets that were somehow "authentically" Mi'kmaw. This is not intended as an evaluation of Sylliboy's and Morris's qualifications; rather, it is important to call attention

to the fact that the Mi'kmaq themselves did not produce any representations of their mythical heroes and supernatural beings, aside from a few petroglyphs[20] and some brief descriptions in their stories. Moreover, there is no traditional form of Mi'kmaw puppetry, nor is there one of mask work, as both Ruth Holmes Whitehead, a now-retired ethnologist formerly employed by the Nova Scotia Museum, and Diane Chisholm, the coordinator for the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre, which is affiliated with Unama'ki College at Cape Breton University, have independently confirmed ("Re: Mi'kmaq Masks"; "Mi'kmaq Masks").

Consequently, Miller did have to turn elsewhere for potential models to consider when he was designing the puppets for the Mermaid productions based on the cultural material of the Mi'kmaq. One might assume that the puppetry traditions of other Aboriginal peoples would have been the first recourse, which would have resulted in an equivalent (in terms of form) of the "mash-up" of content in performances at Tillicum Village. However, as was noted above, Canadian puppet theatre artists and companies still have not experimented sufficiently with these forms, which is actually rather surprising, given that the content of Aboriginal myths and legends has acted as a catalyst for various types of theatrical performances. With respect to Mermaid specifically, it should also be borne in mind that Miller had begun developing a design approach before the mandate of the company was adjusted to include an emphasis on productions derived from Mi'kmaw cultural material. Thus, in these early days, Miller—as well as his contemporaries working in Canadian puppet theatre—had to look outside the borders that define (geographically, at least) the region now known as Canada for models and ideas. When listing some examples of "more established puppetry cultures" from which Canadian puppet artists "were forced to borrow concepts and techniques" (13), Morrow includes the USA, for example. He argues that there, at the time of Mermaid's founding in 1972, "with the emerging popularity of television, a new form of puppetry was evolving, led by Jim Henson and his 'muppets'" (14). Miller employed this style of puppetry in the company's first production, an adaptation of Gogol's short story *The Nose*, which Morrow describes rather dismissively as "[a] fairly conventional piece by today's standards" (15). Miller soon moved beyond the confines of this style, however. When he began to design productions drawing upon the cultural material of the Mi'kmaq, for example, he found inspiration in the Bunraku tradition of Japan: black clothed and hooded yet visible puppet operators onstage controlling the puppets.[21]

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[20] Petroglyphs are images that the Mi'kmaq—using stone or "piece[s] of quartz, bone, or antler" ("Storytelling")— "cut, scratched, or pecked" into rocks near lakes, rivers, and the ocean. Although determining when this tradition started is almost impossible, judging from the content of more recent petroglyphs, including images of "soldiers, Christian altars and churches, . . . small items like coins and jack-knives . . ., sailing ships, hunters with guns and European-style dwellings" ("Carved in Stone") and the dates that are carved into the rock next to the images, this practice continued well into the post-contact period. While this tradition has died out, Alan Syliboy, a modern Mi'kmaw artist, continues to be inspired by these ancient images, often incorporating them into his own works (Gray and O'Neill 48-49).

[21] This is admittedly a generalization concerning the venerable Bunraku tradition but one that is necessary for the moment. This tradition will be examined in greater depth in the third chapter. For now, only a few main qualifications will be made. Barbara C. Adachi, in *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan's Traditional Puppet Theatre*, notes that the puppets in this tradition "are operated by three puppeteers (*ningyo-zukai*)

The fact that neither of these acts of appropriation was criticized is significant. The first act, borrowing design and construction strategies and techniques from Henson and his creative associates, was representative of a tendency among Canadian (and American) puppet artists to appropriate, quite openly, particular forms of puppetry or mechanical designs that they have seen their contemporaries employ successfully. This widely acknowledged—and, in many cases, accepted—tendency will be scrutinized more closely in the fifth chapter. As will become clearer there, this additional layer of "experimenting with proven techniques and adapting them to the processes which define our own theatre" complicates the "approach" to puppetry that Morrow "identifie[s] as truly Canadian" (14), in that the "borrow[ed] concepts and techniques" (13) have often already been borrowed from another artist or puppet tradition. Indeed, it is likely that the second act of appropriation carried out by Miller, namely that which targeted the Bunraku tradition, proved influential in its own right. What is certain is that the Bunraku tradition—which itself will be considered further in the third chapter—influenced a number of puppet artists active in Canada in the 1970s, including Mirbt, the Powells, and, of course, Miller himself. As has already been mentioned, Miller was not accused of appropriation (cultural or otherwise) for either of these acts of borrowing, nor were the other artists just listed for their own appropriations, at least as far as this author is aware. This was most likely due to the fact that these borrowings were largely disconnected from any particular cultural context, let alone one related to a historically marginalized community. This is true even in the case of the elements borrowed from the Bunraku tradition, which were generally formal in nature.

In the filmed version of *Medoonak the Stormmaker*, one can in fact see these two styles of puppetry collide. "Medoonak the Stormmaker" was originally one of the playlets based on Mi'kmaw cultural material that composed *Glooscap's People*, first staged in 1974, and then one of the constituent parts of *The Wabenaki*, a slightly different collection of adaptations that premièred in 1976. The film was

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for all but minor roles" (34). These "minor roles" (34), including "servants and soldiers," are normally represented by *tsume*, less complicated puppets that are controlled "by a single hooded operator" (51). "[A]n apprentice usually makes his stage debut" (9) manipulating this kind of puppet. The issue of hoods and clothing with regard to the operators in the Bunraku tradition is far more complex than was suggested above in connection with Miller at Mermaid, however. Adachi explains:

> Puppeteers traditionally appeared on stage hooded and dressed completely in black, but as individual performers bec[a]me known for their skill, audiences demanded that chief puppeteers appear with their faces exposed so that they could be recognized from the start. Since the beginning of the [twentieth] century, head puppeteers have appeared barefaced and attired in elaborate stage garments for climactic and joyous scenes. Preliminary acts or important scenes depicting solemn or sordid events are still usually presented with all puppeteers hooded and dressed in black. (10)

Donald Keene concurs, adding that "in plays of a particularly tragic nature, they [head manipulators] may wear black, and in new or recently revived work they may also wear a hood" (51). These hoods are "made of coarsely woven linen or cotton material" (Adachi 34) and cover the neck and head entirely. Miller reveals that the hoods used by the Mermaid performers in the productions based on Mi'kmaw cultural material were constructed in a similar fashion ("Questions"; "More Answers"). Mermaid did not follow the three-performers-to-one-puppet formula, however, as each puppet was usually controlled by one operator. Moreover, all of the onstage performers wore hoods.

released in 1975, right in between the premières of these two productions. The main action concerns the Mi'kmaw hero Mikchik outwitting Medonnak, a supernatural being that, in design, was patterned after the figure of the Thunderbird (Miller, Telephone interview), which is usually associated with other First Nations, particularly those of the West Coast. Miller has in fact credited the traditional arts of the First Nations of the West Coast with being a source of inspiration for the "look" (Telephone interview) of the productions based on the myths and legends of the Mi'kmaq. Miller emphasizes that he did not copy slavishly from the artwork of any particular First Nation, however. On the contrary, he wanted to take advantage of the "freedom to design as . . . [he] saw fit," as there was no obligation to be "historically correct" (Telephone interview). Nonetheless, he admits that he drew upon some of the "motifs" found in the artwork of other First Nations, the Thunderbird being one example. Donna E. Smyth, a professor and playwright who wrote the scripts for two Mermaid productions, asserts that, for the Mermaid productions inspired by Mi'kmaw cultural material, the "[d]etails of costume and stage props . . . [were] carefully researched" (29), Miller's comments would seem to qualify this statement, particularly when he confesses that "there was no chance of being truly authentic because of budget and touring constraints" (Telephone interview). The puppets had to be durable enough to survive the rigours of touring, despite being constructed out of materials that were cheap enough for the then fledgling company to afford—"truly authentic" materials such as buckskin and fur were therefore obviously out of the question. Furthermore, there was the reality of deadlines to consider, which would have limited the time that could have been devoted to research. Still, Smyth had at least one specific example in mind: If Glooscap, the God whose power centre was Cape Blomidon, wears an amulet, then that amulet is as authentically Micmac as possible" (29).[22] In the end, the best that could be hoped for was apparently a "generic 'Indian' look" (Telephone interview)—Miller did verbally enclose the dated and even offensive term *Indian* in "scare" quotation marks—with a few "carefully researched" (Lynde 29) particulars.

This "generic 'Indian' look" can certainly be found in *Medoonak the Stormmaker*, but we are concerned with design at a more fundamental level here. The central story, as was noted earlier, involves

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[22] Glooscap—or Glooskap, Kluskap, or any one of several transliterations—was the first human and a giant, hero, and even deity to the Mi'kmaq and the other nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy. Whitehead traces how this character evolved following contact with Europeans:

> The character Kluskap is first recorded about 1850. He goes from being one of many Persons in the traditional Micmac world, to a central position as *the* Micmac spirit-helper, always victorious in encounters with Europeans. His story-cycle annexes other tales, placing him in the starring role. By 1930, he has taken on some of the attributes of Christ: he will raise the People from the dead when the world has ended. (*Stories* 220)

The Wabanaki Confederacy, which formed in the mid-eighteenth century ("Oral History"), according to Aboriginal oral history, comprised five eastern—*Wabanaki* translates as "people of the dawn" or "dawnland people," "meaning easterners" ("Wabanaki Confederacy")—Algonquian tribes: the Abenaki, the Penobscot, the Maliseet, the Passamaquoddy, and the Mi'kmaq. The Confederacy was formed in response to the aggression of the Iroquois, another group of allied tribes, and although "each [tribe] retained their own political leadership," the member tribes "collaborated on broader issues such as diplomacy, war, and trade." While the Confederacy "officially disbanded in 1862, . . . the five tribes remain close allies, and the Wabanaki Confederacy lives on in the form of a political alliance between these historically friendly nations" ("Wabanaki Confederacy").

Medoonak and Mikchik, but the frame narrative is what concerns us here: Mikchik, as an old man, sharing the main (and embedded) story with his nephew Ulnoo, despite the interruptions of Loon, a raucous, mocking presence. It is in the staging of this framing narrative that one can see elements from Miller's two strongest early influences, "Muppet-style" puppetry and the Bunraku tradition, commingle to form a novel whole.

Our analysis of this opening episode in *Medoonak the Stormmaker* will begin with Loon, as it is the most basic of the three puppets. It is a fairly conventional "Muppetesque" hand-and-rod puppet, also referred to as a mouth-and-rod puppet, given that another form of hand-and-rod puppet, "a development of the hand-puppet" of the Punch type with "the arms . . . jointed and controlled by rods" (Batchelder, *Puppet Theatre* 45), also exists. Indeed, it was clearly built with one of the "classic" Muppet control methods in mind: "The puppeteer places one hand inside the character's head, controlling head movements by pivoting that hand from the wrist and operating the mouth with fingers and thumb" (Finch 21). The other hand, in this case, is used to control the flapping of Loon's wings by means of the arm—or rather wing—rods. That said, the hooded manipulator responsible for Loon is visible onstage, a performance technique not generally employed in televised or filmed puppetry performances led or influenced by the late Jim Henson, such as *The Muppet Show*. This was certainly an innovative, Bunraku-inspired variation on the established method of controlling a mouth-and-rod puppet, and one should keep in mind that Mermaid was employing this open manipulation of "Muppet-style" puppets nearly two decades before *Avenue Q* would make it famous. Admittedly, the puppets are manipulated even more openly in this more recent production, since the hoods have been removed and the full black costumes replaced with more contemporary, although still dark, outfits that can even leave the operators' hands and forearms visible.

The Bunraku and Muppet traditions also meet in the puppets in *Medoonak* that represent Ulnoo and Mikchik as an old man, respectively. The operators for these figures are also visible, albeit obscured by their black costumes and hoods, as well as the "long, low screens" (Miller, "Ancient History") that hide both the legs of the human performers and the puppets' lack of them (Miller, "More Memories"). Their mouths still open and close in a Muppet-like fashion, however, although they are not nearly as wide or as deep as the majority of their Muppet counterparts. The result, as one can see in the film, is "a realistic use of the muppet mouth" ("Ancient History"). The mouth movements that are produced using this modified design are much less pronounced and indeed more "realistic" than those of the typical Muppet-style puppet, which is made all the more obvious when Loon appears alongside the human characters, its mouth opening wide with each sound uttered by its operator. The arm of the manipulator performing the role of Loon slid through the body of the puppet in order to operate the neck, head, and mouth, a common control method for puppets designed using a Muppet template. Due to the larger size of

the human figures, a hand was inserted into each through an opening just below the neck, which allowed the operators to control the neck, head, and mouth of each of the puppets more directly.

The gestural vocabulary of these puppets was further expanded by concealing within each of their robes "a rod to the floor which helped to carry the weight of the puppet" ("Ancient History"). The manipulators could therefore focus on creating nuanced gestures through their control of the arms—by means of arm rods similar to those incorporated into the design of more conventional mouth-and-rod puppets—and heads of their respective puppets, particularly when the figures did not need to move and could rest upon their rods. According to a 1973 diagram by Miller, each of these rods was strapped to the leg of the appropriate performer, which must have facilitated not only the operator's task of moving the puppet around the stage but also the shifts from movement to gestural sequences at a fixed location and back again. This diagram was presumably part of Miller's planning for Mermaid's first adaptation of Mi'kmaw cultural material, *Micmac Legends*, which premièred in 1973, rather than one of the later productions. Thus, one cannot be sure that an identical design plan was used for the film version of *Medoonak the Stormmaker*, especially since Miller was so open to experimentation and revision. Moreover, Miller admits that he is not convinced that the strap securing the rod to the leg of the performer in the diagram "was actually used in performance" at all, although he does stress that "it would have made the long rod more secure . . . [and] would not have been visible to the audience because of the low screen" ("More Answers").

The same diagram reveals that the stiffness of movement that might have resulted from such a design was mitigated by the foam joint that was built into each of these rods approximately where the waist should be, which created an articulation point that allowed the puppet to bend over. Miller confirms that this design element was included in the human puppets for *Medoonak the Stormmaker* ("More Answers"). This feature proves to be especially useful when the operators controlling the now old Mikchik establish his age and weakness as he enters the performance space in the film, before even a word has been spoken. Loon, on the other hand, was only capable of grosser gestures, as its flexibility was limited to that of a human arm below the elbow (which allows for only one articulation point other than at the mouth of the puppet, namely at the operator's wrist), and the wings were designed to do little more than flap. Furthermore, Loon was invariably controlled by only one manipulator, while the size and design of the human puppets allowed for a second operator to step in when "both arms were needed for gestures" ("More Answers"), as Miller emphasizes. Although Miller expresses doubt as to whether this particularly Bunraku-like manipulation technique was ever actually employed, if one looks very carefully at Mikchik as he moves obliquely towards the camera at the beginning of the film, one can make out a second operator stage right of the principal one, assumedly controlling Mikchik's right arm. This doubling of manipulators even further augmented the movement possibilities of these puppets, even if only temporarily.

Loon was accorded greater freedom of movement in a different way, for its operator "was given free movement about the stage," as Miller recalls. The human puppets and their operators, however, had to stay behind the previously mentioned screens, as Miller apparently believed that the absence of puppet legs needed to be masked. When "Medoonak the Stormmaker" was reworked for a new collection of adaptations of Mi'kmaw myths and legends, *The Wabenaki*, first staged in 1976, however, Miller "redesigned the Mi'kmag [*sic*] people puppets so they could move about the stage just like the Loon." One of the two strongest influences on his evolving style of puppetry was now beginning to prevail over the other. Miller explains, "These three puppets were more realistic. . . . They had moving legs, and of course moving arms and heads. But I think their mouths did not move" ("Ancient History").

Miller does not appear to have ever openly renounced the losing side in this battle, that is, Muppet-style puppetry; instead, he modified it before gradually leaving it behind after the early productions based on Mi'kmaw cultural material and other productions from this period, such as *The Nose*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Nova Scotia Folktales*. Burkett, who also found early success thanks to this form of puppetry, indeed in its original context of televised puppetry, was much more explicit in his repudiation of it. He had other puppet theatre-related aspirations and felt that he had to leave the USA, where he was doing quite well for himself, in order to realize them: "[T]here was a very specific idea about what puppetry—at least in the commercial world—was all about. Marionettes were considered passé and old-fashioned. . . . Had I stayed in New York, I would never have done my own work" (qtd. in Nunns 89). He has repeatedly emphasized the importance of his return to Alberta and the role of place in the creation of not only good puppetry but good theatre, extolling "the freedom" (qtd. in Nicholls, "Puppet State" 39) that he associates with Calgary, as was discussed earlier. As was also argued earlier, Burkett's assertion resonates with the mythos of the West, of the "frontier," but in a broader sense, it also connects back to Morrow's declarations regarding the adaptive Canadian approach to puppet theatre. As we shall soon see, this supposedly Canadian approach is actually part of a wider North American tendency. Still, there seems to be a certain Canadian "flavour" to how this tendency materializes here: a compulsion to tell stories rooted in this land and a resistance to dominant, facile solutions to the question of how to tell these stories have shaped how puppetry has been used as an expressive tool by the most original Canadian companies and artists.

"Perpetual Rebirth": Puppetry Revivals in Canada and the USA

As was only just suggested, however, this adaptive Canadian approach to puppet theatre is merely one manifestation of a pan-North American trend, even as our most progressive artists and companies continue to struggle to ensure that their work is not simply subsumed entirely into "the general North American culture" (McKay, *Puppetry* 23). Indeed, in *The Puppet Theatre in America: A History 1524-1948*, Paul McPharlin characterizes what he refers to as "the [p]uppetry [r]evival" (320) as a period of

creative borrowing that held sway over the entire continent. A few Canadian puppet theatre artists, however, did play leading roles in this "revival."

Paul McPharlin notes that Rosalynde Osborne Stearn[23] "organized the first Canadian puppet conference at Hamilton in May 1939" (349).[24] Although this brief passage hardly supplies much detail, a clearer picture begins to emerge, as is often the case, after one digs a little deeper and examines contemporary articles concerning the event. The first important point is that "puppeteers, amateur and professional" ("Canadian Puppeteers" 2) were the target audience. Although it only lasted for a day, the schedule was ambitious. It featured both events that one would normally associate with a conference in the scholarly sense of the term and ones that one would expect to find at a theatre festival. The day began with a reception at the Players' Guild and Attic Club ("Canadian Puppeteers" 2), with the "programme . . . [being] opened by the hostess company, the King Cob Puppeteers" (Osborne, "International News"), Osborne Stearn's own company. Then a puppet theatre piece was presented by the Earlscourt Branch—known since 1973 as the Dufferin/St. Clair Branch (Toronto Public Library, "Dufferin/St. Clair Branch")—of the Toronto Public Library that starred "children under fourteen years of age" (Osborne, "International News"). A presentation concerning "the methods and use of puppets in library work" was then given by Frances Trotter of the Toronto Central Public Library. Following a brief intermission, there were two further puppet theatre performances before McMaster classics professor—and Osborne Stearn's husband-to-be—Clement Hodgson Stearn "introduced and explained a film of *The Clouds* by Aristophanes, the Greek classic produced by the King Cob Puppeteers the previous winter" (Osborne, "International News").

During the conference dinner, McPharlin himself, having "recently returned from a tour of more than seventy puppet theatres in Europe" ("Canadian Puppet Conference" 17), delivered the keynote address.[25] His credentials could hardly be called into question, as he was the author of several books, a

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[23] As Loretta Flegel notes in her recent MA thesis "Parts in Play: The Rosalynde Osborne Stearn Collection at McGill University," "Rosalynde Osborne Stearn was born Rosalynde Fuller McAdams" (1). Osborne was the surname of her mother's second husband (3), while she took her own surname from her husband, classics professor Clement Hodgson Stearn (6). He directed a chorus composed of his own students for Osborne Stearn's 1938 production of *The Clouds* (Flegel, "Parts" 6; McKay, *Figuratively Speaking* 6). In order to distinguish between Rosalynde Osborne Stearn and her husband, the surname Stearn when used alone shall refer to the latter, while Osborne Stearn will be used to refer to the former, except in parenthetical references to works published under her maiden name. This follows the precedent established by Flegel, who had "had personal communication with her [Osborne Stearn's] stepson Colin in early 2000, and he [had] mentioned she had ceased to be active in producing shows and puppets shortly after her marriage to his father, Prof. Clement Hodgson Stearn." Thus, Flegel "felt it would be unfair to her career to list her name solely as Stearn since she had spent years as a professional under the name Osborne" ("Re: Puppetry"). Flegel herself now goes by her married name, Loretta Beacham.

[24] As a point of comparison, it is worth remembering that the first American national puppetry festival took place only three years before the conference that Osborne Stearn organized (McPharlin, *Puppet Theatre* 387).

[25] McPharlin was to return to Hamilton in July 1939 in order to teach "a three weeks' course in Practical Puppetry at the Summer School of McMaster University." This course was "open to the general public" ("Canadian Puppeteers" 2) and addressed "the designing and making of one string-puppet and one hand-puppet and the rudiments of

puppet artist,[26] the first president of Puppeteers of America, and the first editor of its original newsletter, the *Grapevine Telegraph*.[27] In addition, he was the editor of *Puppetry: A Yearbook of Puppets and Marionettes*.[28] First published by McPharlin in 1930, this annual periodical[29] served as the official journal of Puppeteers of America from when the organization was founded in 1937 until 1947, the year before McPharlin "died of an inoperable brain tumor" (Howard, "Re: Yearbook"), after which it was replaced by the *Puppetry Journal*,[30] first published in 1949. The other particularly distinguished guest was Walter Wilkinson, "who gave new life to the glove puppet with subtle mimes, simple ballads, and a pleasant revival of the old morality *Thersites*, [and] who tramped all over Britain with his show and wrote a series of popular books about his travels" (Speaight, *History* 266). Wilkinson, having travelled all the way from

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manipulating them," as well as the "[p]resent[-]day uses of the puppet in schools, libraries, and the home, both in Europe and America" ("McMaster Includes Puppetry" 8).

[26] Ryan Howard, author of *Paul McPharlin and the Puppet Theater*, states that McPharlin was most active as a puppet artist between 1929 and 1937, as after that, he "gave up trying to make a living as a puppeteer in 1937," becoming "the Michigan supervisor for the Arts and Crafts project of the WPA" or the Works Progress Administration, known as the Work Projects Administration after 1939. After being drafted, he served in the US Army from 1942 to 1943, after which "he moved to New York to work in various aspects of commercial design" ("Re: McPharlin's Puppeteering Years") while continuing to pursue his historical and theoretical study of puppetry.

[27] Printed "at irregular intervals" but "usually five or six times a year" (Howard, "*Grapevinej* [*sic*]"), the *Grapevine Telegraph* was published from 1937 to 1949, when it was expanded considerably and renamed the *Puppetry Journal*. Puppeteers of America began to publish a new newsletter called *Playboard* every two months in 1989.

[28] The year or years that a given issue of *Puppetry* covered were inserted after the first part of the title; thus, the first issue was entitled *Puppetry 1930: A Yearbook of Puppets and Marionettes*. In 1934, the title was changed to *Puppetry: An International Yearbook of Puppets and Marionettes*, although McPharlin wrote inside that it was in fact "the fifth international yearbook of puppets and marionettes." Howard believes that McPharlin wanted to emphasize "the international character" of the journal, "even though some of the American puppeteers said there was too much international coverage." Howard stresses that, since *Puppetry* consistently contained "a lot of international puppetry news" after the 1930 issue, with contributions being submitted "by authors from all over the world," it "was an important contribution during the war, when all the European puppetry magazines ceased publication" ("*Yearbook*"). In 2004, Coad's Charlemagne Press, in conjunction with Puppeteers of America, published a CD-ROM compilation of every issue of *Puppetry*, entitled *Puppetry: An International Yearbook of Marionettes and Puppets* [sic] *1930-1947*.

[29] Each of the sixteen published volumes of *Puppetry* covers a single given year, with one exception: the final volume. Although published in 1947 and dated 1946-47, it actually "covers the period from the last volume in December, 1945, to the end of June, 1947, to cover the gap between the calendar year and the membership year of the Puppeteers of America, which runs from July to June" (88), as McPharlin himself noted in that particular issue. In addition, the thirteenth and fourteenth volumes were combined into one issue covering 1942 to 1943, for McPharlin "was in the army from Sept[ember] 1942 to Jun[e] 1943" and therefore could not "work on the Yearbook until he got out" (Howard, "Re: *Yearbook*"); consequently, only fifteen separate issues were actually published (Howard, "*Yearbook*"). Although McPharlin had collected some material for a seventeenth issue, he was unable to complete this project before he died. Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin, *née* Marjorie H. Batchelder, a puppet theatre artist and scholar in her own right, married McPharlin just over five months before he died. Although Batchelder told Howard that "she was in no shape to deal with" finishing the seventeenth issue of *Puppetry*, which resulted in "everything . . . [being] piled into boxes" ("Re: *Yearbook*"), she did manage to complete McPharlin's seminal book *The Puppet Theatre in America: A History 1524-1948* and take it to the publisher before it was published for the first time in 1949. By the time the second edition was published in 1969, she had added her own supplement.

[30] From 1949 to 1982, the *Puppetry Journal* was a bimonthly publication; since the fall of 1982, however, a larger version has been published on a quarterly basis.

his native England, presented his hand-puppet piece *The Peep Show*, also the title of the first of his travelogues, in a performance that was "open to the public" ("Canadian Puppeteers" 2).[31]

Organizing such an inspiring conference must have been a daunting task indeed, but Osborne Stearn was far more than just a coordinator, as important as such a role can be. She was, in fact, one of "the outstanding artistic pioneers" (McKay, *Puppetry* 61) of twentieth-century Canadian puppetry. In 1923, she and her company, King Cob Puppeteers, "staged *Punch and Judy of Long Ago* with hand-puppets" in Hamilton. They were "hoping to bridge the gap between the Punch shows familiar to most British Canadians and the newer puppetry in this play by Mary Stewart" (*Puppet Theatre* 348), according to McPharlin. Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on what he thought made this puppetry "newer."

He does emphasize the broader importance of this production, however, writing that *Punch and Judy of Long Ago* was "the first production of the new era" (*Puppet Theatre* 348) of puppetry in Canada, part of what he refers to as "the [p]uppetry [r]evival": "[B]y 1915 American amateurs were thinking seriously of the aesthetic and educative possibilities of puppetry. By 1920 they had brought about a revival of puppetry as an artistic medium and explored new applications for it" (320), spurred in part by "the appearance of a dozen stimulating books" (348) published in America and Europe. Despite the fact that "[w]hatever inspiration Americans had for puppet art was derived from Europe[,] . . . they discovered the possibilities and applications of the medium for themselves" (320), McPharlin argues.[32] A number of puppet theatre artists in various North and South American countries, including Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Peru, also contributed to this revival (348-51). "Thenceforward professional puppeteers, recruited from the ranks of amateurs, took on a new character," McPharlin continues, and "the existence of an older order"—one characterized by puppetry performances that were "manifestations of folk art . . . transmitted by example from showman to showman, from generation to generation"—"was almost completely forgotten" (320). Thus, McPharlin's "revival" should be considered a kind of

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[31] A. R. Philpott, in his eminently useful *Dictionary of Puppetry*, defines *peep-show* as "[a] simple form of portable entertainment, eighteenth—nineteenth centuries, which could be set up in the market square or fairground, consisting of a box mounted to a convenient height for viewing the interior through a peep-hole (or 'small orifice'), usually fitted with a magnifying lens, containing a small exhibition of pictures, cut-out figures, scenery, etc." ("Peep-Show" 180). For an illustration of this device, the reader is referred to the lower right corner of William Hogarth's lively 1733 engraving *The Humours and Diversions of Southwark Fair*. The erotic overtone that now tends to colour the meaning of this word is a more recent development—the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the first time the term was used with this connotation to 1914 ("Peep Show"). Wilkinson, struggling "to invent a name" for his itinerant puppet theatre, "invented a thousand and rejected them all, until at last by a painful evolutionary process," he decided upon The Peep Show. "The real peep-shows, those black cabinets into which you peer through little holes at an illuminated scene," he continues, "are now defunct, and I hope that their departed spirits would never rise up against me as I blazoned in gold letters over the proscenium [of the portable and collapsible puppet booth]—THE PEEP SHOW" (19). Judging from the evidence provided by *Curtain Call*, he also used the term for the title of at least one of his productions. He most certainly was not, however, giving a demonstration of an actual peep show, erotic or otherwise.

[32] McPharlin cites, among other examples, the "private and semiprivate performances in France in the nineteenth century" (*Puppet Theatre* 320) by such artists as George and Maurice Sand and Louis Émile Duranty (321) and the "public shows in Germany in the twentieth century" (320) by such artists as "Papa" Joseph Schmid and Paul Brann as two of the sources of inspiration upon which American practitioners drew (321-22).

vitalization of the art, rather than a return to some idealized past era of puppetry. The days of the Québec City puppet theatre[33] and of the "wandering puppeteers in French Canada" (259) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were certainly over by this time. It is nonetheless worth mentioning that a specific manifestation of "folk art" (320), namely the English tradition of the Punch and Judy show, inspired the first Canadian puppet artist "of the new era," Osborne Stearn, just as much as, if not more than, the European artists listed by McPharlin—many of whom had been inspired by such popular forms themselves (Bell 54-57; McPharlin 320-27). Moreover, one should recall David Powell's claim that the Vellemans (who were part of a later but no less important "puppetry revival"), along with some of their contemporaries, may have looked to the popular puppet theatre traditions of Indonesia, among other forms of puppetry, when they were developing their own style of puppetry, replacing banana tree logs with "wheeled stands" (D. Powell, "Re: Canadian Control").

Like McPharlin, Osborne Stearn also aided the "puppetry revival" in her capacity as a puppet theatre scholar. She "gave many lectures on puppet history and technique, wrote a puppet page in *Curtain Call*" (McPharlin, *Puppet Theatre* 349), "Canada's first magazine in English devoted to theatre and the arts" (Gardner, "*Curtain Call*" 126), which was published from 1929 to 1941. She therefore may have been the author of one or more of the anonymous articles concerning puppetry-related events in Hamilton that have been cited. Lastly, she donated a collection "of Canadian and international puppets and puppetry books" (McKay, *Puppetry* 61) to the McGill University Libraries in 1953. It now forms the basis of the impressive Rosalynde Stearn Puppet Collection.[34]

McPharlin's analysis of the "puppetry revival" in America may remind one of Morrow's article on Mermaid Theatre and the later "revival" of puppetry in Canada in the early 1970s, although the inspiration for this revival came from a variety of regions, including but not limited to Europe, as we have already seen. This may seem surprising, since these two periods were separated by over fifty years. As has already been mentioned, the early twentieth-century "puppetry revival" discussed by McPharlin was not contained within the borders of the United States, just as the period of resurgence to which Morrow refers was not actually confined to Canada. Just as interestingly, the heartening current sense of vigour in the Canadian puppetry community is shared by its counterpart to the south, as American puppet theatre scholar and practitioner John Bell reveals:

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[33] McPharlin, differing from McKay, locates the theatre "in the Faubourg St. Jean" (79) and thus within Québec City proper. It was originally operated by Jean Natte, better known as Daddy Marseille, with the assistance of his first wife, Marguerite Duchesneau, and then with that of his second wife, Marie Louise Fluet, after Duchesneau's death, all of whom were succeeded by Fluet's son from an earlier marriage (she was a widow), who was himself succeeded by "Sasseville, who may have been a relative, for the enterprise was a family one" (85).

[34] This collection currently includes "some 2714 books and periodicals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the puppet theatre in various European languages as well as scripts for puppet plays." It also boasts a thoroughly catalogued collection of 171 puppets "from Europe, Asia (including shadow puppets), and the Americas, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries," and a number of "toy theatres, theatrical portraits, paintings, prints and posters" ("Rosalynde Stearn").

> At the turn of the twenty-first century, a renaissance of puppet theater appears to be underway. In the United States during the 1990s, a theatrical production of Disney's *The Lion King* showed that a mask and puppet spectacle could become a runaway hit on Broadway, and the Jim Henson Foundation's series of bi-annual International Festivals of Puppet Theater[35] began to expose new audiences to the richness and variety of innovative theater based on puppetry. (*Strings* 7-8)

Bell clarifies that these developments, while significant, had only been possible because of the groundwork laid earlier by several highly influential artists, including Henson himself: "Generations of children had grown up watching and learning from Jim Henson's Muppets on television, and a new appreciation of puppetry as a theater capable of conveying profound artistic, social, and political ideas, stories, and emotions had developed from the influence of Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater" (8).

Bell in fact goes on to assert that "the appearance of a puppet renaissance" in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries "is somewhat deceptive, for puppetry is an art that sees fit to renew itself continually, as new generations of performers, sculptors, painters, writers, and audiences discover the possibilities of playing with material objects in performance." That puppets need be wholly "material objects" with which one plays, which would seem to imply that they must be wholly inanimate, is an assumption that will be challenged in the next chapter. There is no doubt, however, that, just as McPharlin and Morrow respectively discuss the first few decades of the twentieth century and the early 1970s using remarkably comparable language, "[t]here is an uncanny similarity . . . between sentiments expressed in the 1920s and the current sense of a puppet revival" (*Strings* 8), as Bell observes with explicit reference only to the United States, although clearly his argument could be expanded to include Canada. Still, published expressions of such "sentiments," from the early twentieth century, the 1970s, or the present era, are more difficult to find in this country.

As is undoubtedly already clear, Canadian puppetry has in fact experienced several such revivals, each of them also taking place in the United States at approximately the same time. The first of these, to which Bell refers as "the first wave of puppet modernism," began in America "in 1915 at the Chicago Little Theater" (*Strings* 81) with cofounder Ellen Van Volkenburg's adaptation of traditional European marionette techniques, which were used to stage "her own plays (such as *The Deluded Dragon*) as well as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (*Strings* 59), and "reached a certain culmination with Paul McPharlin's American Puppetry Conference of 1936" (*Strings* 81). In Canada, the arrival of this "first wave" was signalled by Osborne Stearn's 1923 production of *Punch and Judy of Long Ago*, with the May 1939 puppetry conference organized by Osborne Stearn marking its end.

The "second wave of puppet modernism," which grew in America "with the Depression-era boost given [to] puppetry by the Federal Theater Project, part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA),

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[35] This festival was held every other year from 1992 to 2000 (Jim Henson Foundation).

from 1935 to 1939" (*Strings* 81), would not pick up steam in Canada until after the Second World War with George Merten's workshops in Ontario in the 1950s (McKay, *Puppetry* 65) and Micheline Legendre's work in Québec, which began in the late 1940s (44). Merten, "a professional puppeteer and cultural impresario from Great Britain," arrived in Canada, McKay writes, "in 1950 and was employed by the Ontario Department of Education's Community Programmes Branch to present a series of puppetry demonstrations through the province" and to conduct "leadership courses for puppetry instructors." His work resulted in "a tremendous surge of interest in puppetry . . . throughout Ontario and the establishment of local and regional guilds." Indeed, "[i]n 1955 it was estimated that Ontario had some 3,000 adult puppeteers[36] in over 160 communities" (*Puppetry* 65), many of which "held area festivals" (Smith, "Professional Puppeteers" 5). Merten was in fact one of the founders of the OPA, which was formed in 1956 as "[a]n umbrella organization" to unite the various "local and regional Guilds . . . in Hamilton, southwestern Ontario, eastern Ontario and northern Ontario" that had been founded in the early 1950s (although all of them have since disbanded).[37] This was therefore an important period of organization for Ontarian puppet theatre, and the most significant outcome of this process, the founding of the OPA, resulted in a force that continues to advance the art of puppetry in Ontario to this day. Merten's "work drew large numbers of amateurs into the art, thus building audiences, raising the general standard of performance, and, inevitably, attracting some young people who would eventually turn professional" (McKay, *Puppetry* 65). The OPA continues the tradition established by Merten and carried on by the guilds, welcoming puppet artists both professional and amateur into its ranks.

Legendre, having worked for "a German immigrant, Albert Wolff," as an assistant puppet operator for his "marionette version of *Bastien and Bastienne*[38] for the Mozart Festival in Montreal" in 1945, left the country "to study puppetry in the United States and Europe." She eventually founded her own company, Les Marionnettes de Montréal*,* in 1949 and began to earn an "international reputation" for her productions, which were staged "almost exclusively" using marionettes that were "quite naturalistic in design," and for "her participation in various national and international organizations, both for puppetry and for the arts in general" (McKay, *Puppetry* 44). McKay stresses that Legendre's "most significant

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[36] McKay now concedes that this number, which he obtained from a contemporary newspaper article, is potentially misleading, as it is "hard to tell" how many of the approximately 3,000 individuals that Merten had taught by 1955 continued to pursue the art after their respective courses were finished, as for many of them, puppetry was undoubtedly only "a short-term interest" (Telephone interview, 2 May 2006).

[37] A few local and regional puppetry organizations have since been founded, however, two of which, the Puppetry Guild of Peel, founded in 1995, and the Ottawa Puppetry Club, founded in 1997, are member organizations affiliated with the OPA.

[38] *Bastien und Bastienne* is a one-act opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, with the "text by F. W. Weiskern, J. Müller, and J. A. Schachtner, after M. J. B. and C. S. Favart and H. de Guerville's comedy *Les amours de Bastien et Bastienne* (1753), a parody of Rousseau's *Le devin du village* (1752)." It was most likely first performed in Vienna in 1768 in the "garden theatre" (Warrack and West 52) of Franz Anton Mesmer, the rather infamous German-born physician who developed the concept of "'animal magnetism,' . . . the ability of a person to produce in another person the same [healing] effects as those [supposedly] produced by a magnet" (R. B. Craig).

contribution to puppetry, in the province and in the country at large, however, may have been her organization of a week-long festival held in Montreal during Expo 67." This event attracted "[a] number of internationally renowned companies, including several from Europe," and some of these companies also "appeared on French-language television" (*Puppetry* 46). Several other Canadian puppet artists performed at Expo 67, including the Vellemans, although they did not appear at Legendre's International Puppet Festival at the Youth Pavilion but in "a tent show in the Children's World" (McPharlin, *Puppet Theatre* 550), where they "employed a complete theatre-in-the-round with three complete sets of puppets for each play, so that the audience encircling the stage could see the performance from all sides" (McKay, *Puppetry* 38-41).

The length of Legendre's career reveals that drawing distinct boundaries between these periods of rejuvenation in the puppet theatre is in reality quite impossible, as one could clearly argue that she was also part of the third revival identified by Bell, the 1960s "[p]uppet [r]enaissance" (*Strings* 97),[39] led in the United States by Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater and Henson and in Canada by the second generation of puppet artists in the Keogh family, who "inaugurated Ontario's first 'permanent' puppet theatre, in a summer-season tent at Brooklin" in 1961 before moving "two years later . . . [to] a concrete-and-wooden theatre on one of the Toronto Islands, then first being developed as a recreational centre."[40] There "they performed for three summers until deciding that frequent vandalism and a poorly chosen site made the operation impractical." The Vellemans then took over this theatre for three summer seasons "until they, too, gave up on the project." Again like the Vellemans, the Keoghs (John and his wife Linda) performed at Expo 67, where their "career came to a suitably spectacular climax . . . with a production based on *Everyman* which was presented nearly 3,400 times in a twenty-week season (twenty-four shows a day, seven days a week) at the Brewers' Pavilion" (McKay, *Puppetry* 63).[41]

Thus, although the innovativeness of Mermaid's work cannot be denied, the revival of which that company was but a part actually began several years before it was founded, contrary to what one might believe having read only Morrow's article. The third revival proved to be a promising counterpoint to the

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[39] This term is taken from the subtitle to the sixth chapter of Bell's text, "From the 60s Onward: Another Puppet Renaissance," and thus the capitalization has been removed.

[40] Dave and Violet Keogh, who founded this remarkable—and, as far as I know, unique, at least in the Canadian context—"dynasty of puppeteers that continues into the present" (McKay, *Puppetry* 61), were contemporaries of Osborne Stearn and thus also part of the first puppetry revival in Canada. John, their son, and Linda Keogh later became "[p]erhaps the busiest puppeteers on Canadian television" (140) during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as respected live artists. Their daughter Nina Keogh, who represented the third generation of puppet artists in this family, would come to work with them in both of these contexts, although it is for her work in television that this now-semi-retired puppet artist is primarily known. Indeed, in 1991, the Alliance for Children and Television conferred on her the Outstanding Contribution Award for her career in television programming for young people (Keogh, "Family" 24), as Shelley Scott notes in the introduction to her interview with Keogh.

[41] Although these figures may strike one as incredible, such an exhausting schedule becomes more plausible as soon as one learns that John and Linda Keogh were not the only puppet artists presenting this performance. One of the other performers, John Rapsey, confirms that he is "pretty sure it was 24 shows a day," for the performance "was 15 minutes long," with one being staged "on the hour, [another] one on the half hour." The performances were divided amongst "three crews, maybe four" ("Re: Expo 67 Shows"), each working two shifts a day.

second, as while amateur puppet theatre and puppetry organizations flowered during the earlier revival, artists such as the Vellemans and the second generation Keoghs helped to further the professionalization of the art during the later one. As has already been noted, however, determining the precise beginning and end points for each period of revival proves to be a fruitless endeavour. Given all of these revivals, each of which genuinely allowed the art of puppetry to develop further, resulting in a "perpetual rebirth" (Bell, *Strings* 8) of the art, one should not be particularly surprised to read these words written by Nicholls as recently as 2003:

> There was a time in this country, and not so long ago either, when "puppet" was a dirty word. Sure, there was the kiddie entertainment ghetto, where slack-mouthed, rubber-headed Muppet descendants called the shots, in funny voices, and live puppets were the poor hick relations of their flashy on-screen American cousins. But the marionette strings had gone limp. . . .
>
> Gradually, in the course of the eighties and nineties, something started to change. Puppets began to darken stage doors, hanging around green rooms in real theatres, getting gigs as actors in real plays on real stages. Kids had always been suckers for puppets; now adults started feeling the vibe. ("Puppet State" 37)

Of course, as has already been demonstrated, puppet theatre for adults was not a new development in the Canada of the 1980s and 1990s, nor was puppet theatre in actual theatre spaces. Another unfortunate omission is Nicholl's failure to mention at least some of the live puppet theatre artists who have adopted the style of puppetry originated by Henson and his collaborators but put their own creative spin on it. Miller's early work was characterized by this kind of artistic citation, as has already been discussed in detail. This is most likely not the kind of puppet theatre Nicholls has in mind, however, when she admonishes "the string-pullers" for "wagging latex finger puppets in the malls of the land" ("Puppet State" 37). That said, Miller and the other performers associated with Mermaid did tour to "schools, community centres and churches" (qtd. in Lynde 82), as was noted in an early company press release, and they therefore could conceivably have been considered denizens of "the kiddie entertainment ghetto" (Nicholls, "Puppet State" 37). Smaller companies better known for performing in commercial venues, such as malls and chain stores, are probably Nicholls's intended targets, however. As will soon be shown, such companies can still develop original and engaging productions, even when relying heavily upon "Muppet descendants." In fact, one can only speculate as to why she uses "string-pullers" as an apparent synonym for *puppet artists* when only one of the companies that she examines is particularly known for marionette work, namely Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes. Still, her tone implies that puppet artists should in fact be pulling strings. Dismissing an entire form of any art is rarely if ever justified, however, especially when another form is lionized in comparison with little explanation as to why. Nicholls even seems to grow confused over which type of puppet she wants to belittle, as she begins by mocking "rubber-headed Muppet descendants," which she appears to equate with "latex finger puppets" (37). As anyone even moderately familiar with *The Muppet Show* and similar television programmes and films already knows, a variety of puppet types were employed, although Nicholls

assumedly has "one of the classic Muppet types of puppet" in mind: "the combined hand and rod puppet" (Finch 21). Puppets of this type would seem to have little in common with finger puppets, of which A. R. Philpott, in his *Dictionary of Puppetry*, identifies two categories, with one subcategory: "(1) small creatures, such as birds, snails, fitting over the index finger; (b) group of baby chicks, etc., each fitting one on finger of a net glove . . . ; (2) small figure with index and middle fingers in the legs *downwards*, knuckles forming knees, head and body stuffed, short string control for arms" ("Finger Puppets" 87).

As was implied when it was introduced, this quotation from Nicholls's article also relates back to the topic of the pattern of puppetry revivals, for Nicholls further reveals her historical ignorance when she claims that "an exciting new chapter in the history of live theatre" (37) was beginning without noting that it was only one in a series of similar "chapters" related to puppet theatre. The history of puppet theatre in the USA is also characterized by such a sequence of "chapters," which is just one of the previously discussed ways in which Canadian puppet theatre is related to the wider context of North American puppetry. Little has been said, however, with regard to international connections, aside from stylistic and formalistic influences.

Canadian Puppet Theatre and Puppetry Organizations: A Mutual Influence

I speak from nearly ten years of experience serving on the board of trustees of the OPA when I state that keeping such an organization alive and relevant is no easy task. Various puppetry organizations in Canada have been established, reshaped, dissolved, and resurrected over the years, and the labour involved in all of this institutional activity has largely been of a volunteer nature. All of the volunteers who have worked to further the aims of these organizations have presumably, like myself, had to balance these efforts and responsibilities in other domains of their lives. These organizations have nonetheless had a significant impact on the development of puppet theatre in this country at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. At the same time, these organizations have in turn been shaped by the artists who compose them, as well as by historical trends in puppetry.

The Canadian manifestation of the "second wave of puppet modernism" (Bell, *Strings* 81), given its connection with both Merten and the OPA and other similar organizations, was a period strongly characterized by this type of cross-influence. Although, as was noted above in the section on puppetry revivals, Merten himself, as an individual, was initially very much at the centre of this system of exchange, it soon began to gather momentum of its own. Consequently, as a result of Merten's emphasis on marionettes in his outreach work, "the construction and use of marionettes was long the basis of the amateur puppetry scene in Ontario and remains an important element today" (*Puppetry* 67), McKay explains. Soon, however, puppet artists in this province were "experiment[ing] with new and different techniques and materials" (67-68), some of which were first encountered "at festivals in the United States and even Europe," which were, for the most part, put on by still other puppetry organizations. Meanwhile,

"the ranks of puppeteers" in Ontario "were enlarged by immigrants who had had experience with hand puppets and rod puppets." All of these "new trends" in puppet theatre were brought before spectators who had been "accustomed . . . to still other forms," thanks to the intervention of an entirely different medium: television. Thus, puppetry organizations, both here and abroad, made this fertile ground for the diversification of puppetry in Ontario possible, so that by the time McKay's book was published, practitioners at all levels of experience could "be found working with all forms" (68) of puppetry.

The relationship between the Canadian puppet theatre community and the much larger international body of which it is a part will most likely be strengthened all the more, thanks to the recent resurrection of the Ontario section of the Canadian National Centre for UNIMA, l'Union internationale de la marionnette. Born in 1929 out "of the Fifth Convention of Czech Puppeteers, an event to which guests had been invited from Bulgaria, France, Yugoslavia, Germany, Austria, Romania and the Soviet Union" (Union international de la marionnette, "History of UNIMA"), UNIMA soon welcomed all puppet artists, regardless of nationality. In 1959, it became a member of the International Theatre Institute, a nongovernmental organization that had been established in 1948 in Prague as an affiliate of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Cayz, Levenson, Kurten, Periale, Periale, and Rye; Biancone). Consequently, UNIMA also became an affiliate of UNESCO (Cayz, Levenson, Kurten, Periale, Periale, and Rye). It remains dedicated to "bringing together people from around the world who contribute to the development of the art of puppetry with the objective of using this art in the pursuit of human values such as peace and mutual understanding between peoples regardless of race, political or religious convictions and differences in culture" (Union international de la marionnette, "What is UNIMA?"). It also holds the special honour of having been established as "the first international body in the world of theatre" (Union international de la marionnette, "History of UNIMA").

Thus, becoming affiliated with this sort of international organization—at the level of the individual artist, to be sure, but at the more general level of the provincial or national puppetry community as well—provides not only access to the aforementioned larger forum for the exchange of ideas related to puppetry forms, design techniques, materials for construction, and so on, but also a sense of continuity that can complement this sense of community. Moreover, the legitimacy and authoritative weight that a widely recognized institution like UNESCO (and, by extension, UNIMA) carries with it can aid in the expansion and education of audiences—processes that, in Canada, began to accelerate decades ago, owing to the work of Merten and more local puppetry organizations, not to mention the advent of television—by raising the profile of the art. That would be the ideal state of affairs, at any rate, but the course of affiliation does not always run so smooth, as the troubled historical relationship between Canada and UNIMA illustrates.

Canada officially has its own National Centre, but locating it with certainty has always proven a challenge. The original UNIMA-Canada "was founded in 1969 when it was formally accepted by the

1969 Congress of UNIMA in Prague" (Smith, "Re: Original UNIMA-Can"). Luman Coad, who cofounded Coad Canada Puppets in 1966 with the "designer and hand puppeteer" (McKay, *Puppetry* 129) who would become his wife, the late Arlyn Patricia Hill Coad, served as the first national secretary. At the time, Coad was living in North Vancouver, but the chairman, the late Nancy Anne Cole, was living it was then still referred to as Weston, an area that is now part of Toronto (Coad, "Re: Interview"). There were other board members to consider as well, of course, so coordination and communication proved challenging, for "[e]ven collecting items for a newsletter was a very difficult task because it was pre-Internet" ("Re: UNIMA-Canada [Vancouver Office]"), as Coad elaborates. Still, the organization managed to survive for nearly two decades, and in fact, as this period was drawing to a close, the chairman at the time, Johan Vandergun of Lampoon Puppettheatre, was from Toronto, while the secretary, the late Diana Hay, was, coincidentally, again from North Vancouver (Vandergun; Hay). Since "the organization was so small and had no funding" ("Re: UNIMA-Canada [Vancouver Office]"), the National Centre, although officially based out of the home of the current chairman, relied on contributions from the other board members, also working out of their own homes, as Coad reveals. Unfortunately, the organization was hampered by a "lack of communication between the regions of Canada" ("Re: UNIMA-Canada"), he also notes.

In the end, the original UNIMA-Canada office foundered several years after Vandergun became chairman, and there have been several theories as to why. Lewis of Mermaid Theatre blankly states that "[t]here were too few Anglophone puppetry groups in Canada to sustain an organization" like UNIMA-Canada, especially since those that were actively performing were such "[a] strange mix of community and professional companies." Lewis's opposition of the qualifiers *community* and *professional* is troubling, as she seems to be valorizing the latter at the expense of the former, which becomes more obvious when she similarly describes Puppeteers of America as a "mixed bag of great work and birthday party artists" ("Re: Vellemans"). This added comparison confuses as much as it clarifies the situation, however. The line separating "community" or "amateur" theatre in general from its "professional" counterpart can be rather fuzzy to begin with, but it can become well-nigh indiscernible in the context of Canadian puppet theatre. Keeping track of the few long-standing, fully established Canadian puppet theatre companies with international reputations is not a particularly difficult task. Even estimating the number of part-time regionally and locally based puppet theatre companies operating throughout the country at any one time is, however, nearly impossible, as companies of this kind appear and disappear with little notice, and their activities rarely attract attention from the mainstream media. Although the puppet artists running these companies can be just as capable of producing "great work" as those who are associated with the more established companies, they generally must supplement whatever income they receive from their puppetry-related endeavours—assuming they receive any income at all—by seeking additional forms of employment.

To complicate matters further, there are also "birthday party artists" producing interesting work who are most definitely "professionals" in every sense of the word. Mike Harding of Applefun Puppetry, a Brampton-based company, leaps immediately to mind, as he is a successful, full-time puppet artist who performs almost exclusively for young and family audiences, mainly at venues such as birthday parties, libraries, and day camps. Indeed, he estimates that "60 to 70 percent of . . . [his] income is from birthday parties" (Harding). Moreover, Applefun productions are characterized by the very kind of puppetry that Nicholls, in language similar to that employed by Lewis, associates with "the kiddie entertainment ghetto," as "Muppet descendants" are used. Harding's puppets are definitely not of the "rubber-headed" ("Puppet State" 37) variety, however. His approach to innovative recycling can be both conceptual, in that his mouth-and-rod puppets are based on those developed by Henson and his associates, and quite literal. For *Robin Hood and the Dragon*, first presented in 2004, for example, he eschewed the latex foam rubber and other similar puppet-building materials used in *The Muppet Show* and its ilk and created the heads and bodies for the puppets by inserting "bowls, containers, cups," and so forth, into socks. "[F]ound items as well as dollar[-]store items" (Harding) were therefore his building materials of choice. Any appendages are made from fabric on hand that matches or complements the colour of the sock used for the body, and these are indeed stuffed with foam. Harding's puppets are gradually parting company with "one of the classic Muppet types of puppet" (Finch 21), however, in that he is using arm rods less frequently than he did in his earlier productions, *The Monkey Show* (1998) and *Chicken Little* (2003). Since he is the sole performer, if two characters are going to be in a scene together, he has to play them both, manipulating a puppet with each hand. Thus, he "can rarely make use of" arm rods, so he strives to "build the arms so that they hang naturally and have movement of their own" (Harding).

Harding is unquestionably a talented and innovative puppet artist. Still, despite the fact that he has performed at a great many birthday parties, libraries, stores, day camps, and festivals, one has to doubt that the mainstream media would give any indication that his company had become defunct, should that ever happen for any reason. One must keep in mind that he is a full-time, if regionally based, professional puppet artist, so the chances of the disappearance of a part-time regional or local company, whether amateur or professional, receiving media attention are even slimmer. Nonetheless, even though they work in relative anonymity (or rather, because of this), the puppet artists affiliated with companies at these levels are often the ones responsible for keeping puppetry organizations afloat, contrary to what Lewis suggests. Harding himself, for example, was the president of the OPA from 2010 to 2014. Artists involved with companies with demanding national and international touring schedules, however, such as those that were listed at the beginning of this chapter, understandably may simply not have the available time necessary to help run these organizations. According to David Smith, "[p]uppetry still has a presence at the part-time and amateur level in Canada but perhaps not to the samr [sic] extent as between the 1950's to the 1970's [sic]" ("Regional Professional Companies" 3), as the influence of Merten and the guilds has

waned. That said, there are still enough locally and regionally based artists, amateur and professional, to support organizations such as the OPA.

Smith himself, most definitely a professional, is the artistic director of the regional company David Smith Marionettes, which is based in Kingston. Although the company has performed in other parts of the country and at several international festivals abroad, it usually stages its productions at locations within the borders of its home province. He has, like Harding, served as the president of the OPA, and he has in fact been involved with several other puppetry organizations as well, even at the international level. In an argument more nuanced that Lewis's, he claims that the collapse of the original UNIMA-Canada had less to do with the number of member companies or their respective statuses as professional or amateur than it did with factors more organizational and contextual in nature:

> The Toronto-based office closed in the early 80's [sic] primarily because of 1) decline in interest in English-speaking members across Canada in continuing, 2) a lack in focus on the raison d'etre [sic] of its purpose, 3) fewer Canadians participating in overseas festivals, 4) many of the UNIMA-Canada members were already members of UNIMA-USA and the Puppeteers of America which were becoming very active. ("Re: UNIMA-CAN")

AQM (Association québécoise des marionnettistes), a provincial organization that is the approximate counterpart to the OPA in Québec, was founded in 1981. Shortly after that, Smith recollects, it started "becoming very strong and interacting with international puppeteers"; member companies were also "receiving very strong support from the Quebec government." Thus, the organization, based in Montréal, was poised to fill in the "vacuum" (Smith, "Re: UNIMA-CAN") left by the demise of the Toronto UNIMA-Canada office.

According to UNIMA regulations, "[o]nly one National Centre can exist per [c]ountry," this "Centre may consist of regional sections" (Union international de la marionnette, "The Unima in the World"). However, once AQM took on the additional administrative responsibility of functioning as the Québec section of UNIMA-Canada in 1986, it was put in the rather strange position of being the National Centre by default, given that it was the only active regional section. Predictably (but perhaps understandably), this "National" Centre generally only concerned itself with Québécois puppet theatre artists, companies, and organizations, given that the vast majority of its member companies were based in Québec. Moreover, AQM usually published material—newsletters, web pages, and so forth—in French only, so one was forced to wonder how such an organization could be considered representative of a pluralist nation like Canada.[42]

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[42] The *2007 Membership Directory: Special 25th Anniversary Edition* was a promising exception to this linguistic trend: the entire document was published simultaneously in English and in French in the same edition, with the English text appearing below or beside the French. Publishing in every language used in Québec, let alone Canada, is clearly beyond the realm of possibility for a provincial puppetry organization, even when funding is secured at both the federal and provincial levels, as it was for the publication of this directory. Still, all of the text within it is available in both official languages at the same time, and AQM went so far as to include entries for nineteen

Smith recalls, however, that approximately two decades after the Toronto UNIMA-Canada office closed, he began to sense "some slight interest in reviving the English[-]speaking section" ("Re: UNIMA-CAN") of UNIMA-Canada. This was at least partly because the Board of Directors of UNIMA-USA, implementing a ruling made by UNIMA International, announced in June 2002 that the organization "could only accept USA residents as voting members and Board members" ("Re: UNIMA-USA Citizenship Requirement"), as Vincent Anthony—the current general secretary of UNIMA-USA and a former vice president of UNIMA International—states. UNIMA-USA still has several Canadian member companies, as it is an efficient, well-run organization with impressive media exposure, particularly on the World Wide Web, and generous patrons. Moreover, Canadians remain eligible to receive the UNIMA-USA Citation of Excellence, one of the most widely recognized puppetry awards in North America. Indeed, over the years, a great number of Canadian artists and companies have been given this prestigious award for the ability to "engage, enchant, and enthrall" (Union international de la marionnette-USA) audiences, including both the Vellemans and the Powells. Until 2004, when the UNIMA-USA Board of Directors decided that this should be the responsibility of AQM, scholarships for studying puppetry abroad could also be awarded to Canadian members. As Smith states, Puppeteers of America has also attracted a number of Canadian members, as it is another strong organization that organizes festivals, publishes a journal and a newsletter, sponsors several awards, and so forth.

Similarly, AQM has managed to gain a few Canadian members located outside of Québec, including Smith for a number of years, since it became the Québec section for UNIMA-Canada; after all, for over twenty years, it was the only Canadian organization offering puppet artists a connection to the international puppetry community. Smith, as recently as 2004, remarked that, as the OPA president at the time, he had been "receiving the odd inquiry" about whether a UNIMA regional section for English-speaking Canada might actually be resurrected. Although this has since been achieved, thanks largely to the efforts of Smith himself, at the time, he had his doubts, as he believed that had "there . . . [had] not [yet] been sufficient will from Canadian puppeteers do [sic] breath new life into this section of the organization," since "[t]he present international situation and the cost of travel . . . [had] discouraged some puppeteers from travelling or even showing any interest in what is happening in the rest of the world" ("Re: UNIMA-CAN"). Although these concerns are certainly valid (and little has changed to mitigate them), "[m]ore of us might profit by the opportunity to know what the rest of the world is doing" (246), as Baird declares. Membership in an established international organization like UNIMA allows for many opportunities to share everything from ideas about puppetry's place in the contemporary world to new building and manipulation techniques with other puppet artists from around the world. A global network is established that can be maintained through major social events—such as congresses,

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Canadian puppet theatre companies based outside of Québec, only three of which were actually member companies at the time.

conferences, and festivals—and more quotidian arenas for discussion, such as newsletters, online bulletin boards, and electronic mailing lists. Artists can only benefit from this kind of international cross-pollination.

The Ontario section of UNIMA-Canada was in fact reactivated in 2007, although it was at first operating only on an informal basis, since its statutes and rules of procedure had to be approved by the Statutes Commission for the international UNIMA organization. Initially, neither Smith nor the first few members of the newly revived section expressed any desire to compete with the Québec section for the honour of administering the National Centre. This began to change, however, once the revised sectional structure was officially approved in 2010. Indeed, as of 2013, the president and vice president must be from different regional sections (UNIMA-Canada, Statutes art. 6.1.d). As a result, one could argue that the idea of the "National Centre" is still tied to the top executive position and consequently migrates along with it after each subsequent election. Presumably for the sake of continuity, however, as far as the institutional address and related contact details are concerned, "[t]he principal office of the organization" (UNIMA-Canada, Statutes art. 1) is to remain in Montréal. Although the practicality of this decision is obvious, since confusion regarding how to contact the organization could easily arise if its address were to change with each new election, this persistent remnant of a more centralized past, symbolic as it may be, could conceivably spark controversy in the future, particularly if the Ontario section continues to grow in strength. Furthermore, as the number of regional sections continues to grow—a trend that will be discussed in greater detail below—and, perhaps more importantly, as these sections are established in regions further and further away from the perceived (at least by some) centre of the organization in Québec, a sense of frustration could begin to pervade the organization outside of its ostensible home province, triggered by the inflexibility of this fixed address, or rather by the gravitational model that it could be said to imply.

Even so, apart from this issue of its "principal office" (UNIMA-Canada, Statutes art. 1), there is much to indicate that, in principle and in practice, the National "Centre" has effectively been reorganized as a more diffuse and collaborative body, which makes for an intriguing parallel with the devised approach to new work development that will come to be a major focus of this study. One hopes that this new collaborative spirit and structure—epitomized in the blog for the organization, which has been published in both official languages since January 2011—will help to convince a greater number of puppet artists that, as Smith proclaims enthusiastically, "the world still is a place to experience and explore" ("Re: UNIMA-CAN"). Now that UNIMA-Canada comprises two fully active regional sections, it is in a much better position to facilitate such experiences and explorations. To modify slightly the statement made by Baird that was quoted above, Canadian puppet artists would certainly "profit by the opportunity to know what the rest of the" country is doing, as well as "the rest of the world" (246). Puppetry organizations did not, of course, erect the linguistic and cultural barrier that has hitherto caused

puppet theatre in Ontario and that in Québec to develop independently of one another for the most part. They can, however, help to make this barrier more permeable. The official activities of such organizations—such as maintaining bilingual websites and blogs and supporting festivals and other events to which both English- and French-speaking artists and companies are invited—can certainly be effectual in this regard, so their significance should not be downplayed. The UNIMA-Canada blog has already been mentioned, and the organization, either as a combined whole or by means of the efforts of one of its regional sections, has put its weight behind—in one way or another—a number of puppetry festivals, conferences, performance series, and so on. Out of the festivals listed near the beginning of this chapter, for example, Le Festival de Casteliers has several "partenaires culturels" (Casteliers) or "cultural partners," including AQM, which, as we know, also serves as the Québec section of UNIMA-Canada. The OPA may not have an equally direct relationship with the Ontario section—that said, there is still considerable overlap with regard to the composition of their respective memberships and administrative boards—but it has nonetheless played an important role in many festivals and other events, such as when its board of trustees agreed to sponsor, set up, and supervise a lounge for the puppet artists performing at the 2011 Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival, so that they would have somewhere to rest and socialize away from the crowds during breaks in their schedules.

There are also forums for this kind of intercultural exchange that are more unofficial and informal in nature. For instance, in 2009, I had the opportunity to interview two of the leading lights in contemporary puppetry in Québec: Jacques Trudeau and Isabelle Payant. Trudeau was (and still is) the general secretary of UNIMA—and the first citizen of a North American country to be elected to this position—while Payant was serving as the interim secretary-treasurer for UNIMA-Canada, although she has since been elected to the more formalized position of president. The specific questions and topics that were addressed matter little, in a way, in the present context, for the fact that the interview was taking place at all was noteworthy in itself. As I have already explained in this chapter, the paucity of published sources on Canadian puppetry—particularly since a number of the sources that are available have not been circulated widely or translated, so that they are available in the two official languages, at least, or, as is the case with many AQM and UNIMA-Canada (Québec section) documents published before UNIMA-Canada was reorganized, both—necessitates undertaking such primary research if one is to analyze any one aspect of it with due rigour. Arranging and conducting interviews always requires a considerable investment of time (and often other resources, especially if travel is involved), but one may encounter additional challenges when attempting to interview individuals whose primary language is different from one's own, challenges that can be magnified when dealing with issues related to the politics of regional representation, power-sharing, language, and so on.

With respect to my interview specifically, however, the process was made easier by the fact that both Payant and Trudeau speak English fluently and thus far better than I speak French; still, their

institutional affiliations would have no doubt allowed them to draw upon the personnel or funds needed to secure a translator, should one have proven necessary. Just as importantly, the potentially controversial character of the topics that were discussed was, I believe, mitigated by the context of the interview: I was not only a graduate student specializing in Canadian puppet theatre but also a member of the board of trustees of the OPA and a charter member of the resuscitated Ontario section of UNIMA-Canada.

Since the elements of the reorganization of UNIMA-Canada were still being explored and negotiated at the time, I inquired as to how the two regional sections now in existence *de facto* might go about sharing the leadership of the organization. The microcosmic aspect of this larger, more complex challenge on which I placed the most emphasis was the question of where the National Centre would be; that is, would it now be fixed in Québec *de jure*? Trudeau gave a measured and diplomatic response, as one might expect of someone in his position, noting that, while AQM was "well established, well organized," and thus more than capable of continuing in its role as the administrative centre of UNIMA-Canada, the OPA was also "well organized" (Personal interview). In the end, the decision would be made by a committee elected from among the members of both provincial organizations, he stressed; even though the puppetry community in Québec had greater representation on this committee, which was in proportion to AQM's larger membership, it was still resolved that the National Centre would not be anchored permanently in one location. Aside from the obvious political sense that this makes, it also allows for some administrative flexibility, which complements appropriately the flexibility that inheres in the ways in which many of our more innovative practitioners approach creating puppet theatre by means of the kinds of innovative recycling that were examined earlier in this chapter and to which we will return throughout the rest of this dissertation.

As was underscored in the introduction to this study, flexibility is a thread that we will indeed revisit in various contexts. Payant used a different descriptive metaphor, however, to express what she saw as the ideal structure and purpose for a national puppetry organization, one related to weight, or rather lightness. As was observed earlier in this section, full-time professional puppet artists, particularly those with extensive touring schedules, may find it difficult to make the time to participate in the administration of puppetry organizations. Payant herself is just such an artist, and yet she clearly believes that providing an organizational framework with which her fellow artists can engage is as much of a priority as actually "doing" puppetry; in fact, these two activities can be synergistic. She recognized the need to balance such responsibilities, emphasizing that the goal should not be "to have a really heavy organization to support, because everyone is already very occupied, and . . . everyone only has the time that they have to deal with." Rather, what is needed "is a communication tool, just to get to know [one another] and to work together" (Personal interview).

The potential for a puppetry organization—civic, regional, national, or international—to serve as "a communication tool" (Payant, Personal interview) has already highlighted several times in this chapter.

It is true that UNIMA-Canada's current, unique—in the history of Canadian puppetry, at least—structure does much to facilitate the coordination of activity at all of the aforementioned levels, but one should not therefore presume that opening up new channels for such communication necessarily leads to an immediate reduction in conflict. On the contrary, as was implied above in my distinction between the conception of a Canadian puppetry community and that of an assemblage of such communities, an interconnected plurality composed of member parties that are willing to cooperate with one another but unwilling to surrender their independence completely can in fact fan the flames of conflict. As we will see in the fifth chapter, this can hold true at the level of an individual company as well, and discord is all the more likely to be encountered in the context of a devised theatre company. Further, a given company's collaborative framework may not merely accommodate conflict; it may actually hinge upon it (Barton, "Introduction" xv).

Conflict, therefore, can be constructive. There has been some debate, for example, surrounding the feasibility of establishing a third regional section for UNIMA-Canada. Considering the size of and the history of regionalism in Canada, one cannot expect puppet artists based outside of Ontario and Québec to feel a sense of allegiance to either of the two existing sections automatically or to believe that their interests are necessarily being represented by it. Still, given the population density of the rest of the country as compared to that of those two provinces, determining what the configuration of an additional section—or of a chain of sections—might be has proven a challenge.

Despite the strained history of the first incarnation of UNIMA-Canada and the regional mandates of the new sections, puppet artists based outside of Ontario could certainly turn to it in search of a means through which they can interact with and learn more about other artists living outside of the country and those based within Canada but outside of their respective provinces. In the absence of a truly national puppetry organization, puppet artists have occasionally joined regional organizations outside of their respective provinces because they "wanted to hear what people were doing in the rest of Canada" ("Re: Canadian Puppetry Organizations"), as Wendy Passmore-Godfrey—the founder and artistic director of W. P. Puppet Theatre Society in Calgary, as well as the designer and principal performer for the company—observes. Passmore-Godfrey herself, in fact, decided to join the Ontario Puppetry Association in 1996, although she has since let her membership lapse (Smith, "Fw: OPA Membership"). Puppet artists have not only looked to Ontario for such opportunities for dialogue, of course: AQM's role as a contact point in this regard has already been noted.

Both the Ontario and Québec regional sections of UNIMA-Canada could keep their doors open to members outside of their respective provinces, at least for the time being. That said, maintaining a predominantly regional focus while still keeping the larger picture in mind could be the best approach to finding an organizational solution that takes into consideration the geographical and cultural realities of this country. In addition to the problems outlined by Smith above, efforts to maintain a UNIMA-Canada

branch in a single location, even in a locus of considerable puppet theatre activity such as Toronto, have been crippled by a "lack of communication between the regions of Canada" ("Re: UNIMA-Canada"), as Coad stresses. Coad himself admits to "know[ing] far more about the puppetry scene in California" than he does about the "scene" in "Alberta – much less [that in] Ontario" ("Re: UNIMA-Canada [Vancouver Office]"). This should not be particularly surprising, given that he currently resides at Daniel Point ("Re: Interview"), having moved to British Columbia from California in 1966, although he is originally from Idaho (Coad Canada Puppets, "Arlyn"). Having two active sections that communicate regularly with one another—through both electronic means and live events, such as the festivals and other special occasions that were mentioned earlier, but also through annual general meetings, which now involve the participation of members from both sections—is an encouraging start, but there is still much to be done if "the lack of communication between the regions of Canada" that Coad bemoans is to be addressed.

Shortly after the Ontario section of UNIMA-Canada was reactivated, I became convinced that establishing a chain of such regional centres was the answer, so that the Ontario section would not have to—and would not presume to—speak for the rest of English-speaking Canada. Founding this chain did not seem to me to be an especially arduous task, as those involved would not necessarily have to start from scratch. Existing Canadian puppetry organizations, such as the Calgary Animated Objects Society (which produces the International Festival of Animated Objects), if their respective members were willing, could, like AQM, assume the responsibilities of regional sections or at least play leading roles in the initial organization and support of new sections. The OPA, for example, has proven to be a promising initial source of members and support for the Ontario section.

The realities of how the population of this country is distributed, however, complicate matters, as was touched upon above. A counterintuitive but nonetheless encouraging potential next step had been proposed, initially by Tim Gosley—a puppet artist originally from Victoria, where he is now based again after several years of "splitting . . . [his] time between Victoria, Quebec and Ontario . . . seeking employment" (Gosley, "Re: Location")—and Mermaid Theatre. Theirs would seem to have been a distinctively, even poetically, Canadian solution: uniting artists and companies from two of this country's coasts in order to ensure that their collective interests are represented along with those of artists and companies located in more densely populated regions. Calgary-based artist Passmore-Godfrey came to support the formal establishment of this section as well, which would seem to indicate a renewed interest on her part in "hear[ing] what people were doing in the rest of Canada" (Passmore-Godfrey, "Re: Canadian Puppetry Organizations"). Consequently, its mandate appeared to be expanding still further. The increasing breadth of support for the gestating section was reflected in its designation at that time: the section for Atlantic and Western Canada.

There are no obvious or easy options when attempting to harmonize the regional, national, and international levels of such an organization, especially when ensuring that every community has a voice

becomes a priority. UNIMA-International, the umbrella organization to which all national centres (and thus, perforce, and any regional sections that may compose them) report, stipulates that every regional "section must have a minimum of 10 members" (UNIMA-Canada, Statutes art. 3.1.a) and, furthermore, must be "be represented by its corresponding association" (art. 3.1.b) at a more local level, such as the OPA in the case of the Ontario section. Such requirements are comparatively easy to satisfy in regions with both densely populated areas and at least some pockets of considerable contemporary puppetry activity. Both Ontario and Québec meet these conditions, of course, but more outlying regions might not, and the resulting hindrances to effective communication and organization among practitioners could therefore be difficult if not impossible to overcome. Had puppet artists from Western and Atlantic Canada banded together with the intention of prevailing over any such perceived obstacles through collective action, it undoubtedly would have been the most innovative and indeed audacious organizational structure that had ever been produced by members of the Canadian puppetry community.

This odd but inspiring bicoastal structure ultimately proved unnecessary, however. In September 2014, the Atlantic Canada Puppetry Association (ACPA) was founded, with Mermaid Theatre serving as its base of operations. The ACPA, in turn, sponsored the formation of the Atlantic section of UNIMA-Canada (UNIMA-Canada, "Atlantic Section"). Although the significantly broadened regional representation that this addition of a new section entails is unquestionably welcome news, Western Canada has been left to shift for itself as a result. Despite the fact that there have been no public announcements to date regarding any revised plans on the part of Western Canadian artists or organizations, the establishment of yet another section in the near future seems likely, given the concentration of related activity in Calgary and Gosley's active interest in seeing his region represented at the national and international level, to cite two potential factors already mentioned in this chapter.

The three existing, admittedly expansive regional blocks could certainly be subdivided further in the future—as could the section for Western Canada, assuming that it is in fact successfully founded at some point—should there be constituent puppet theatre communities of sufficient magnitude committed to representing themselves independently. In the meantime, however, this tripartite structure is proving quite feasible; indeed, it is the most auspicious such model that has yet been proposed in this country.

At the time of writing this, the responsibility for hosting the annual general meeting of UNIMA-Canada alternates between the two currently fully functioning regional sections. Now that a third section has been added, there is another branch that could share this burden. A fourth could well be on the horizon. Still, as each new regional section is added to the organization, the sheer size of this country becomes ever more apparent, and the cost of travelling to all of the general meetings could start to become prohibitive, especially for small companies and independent artists. At the 2010 general meeting at l'Université du Québec à Montréal, the first at which both the Québec section and the reactivated Ontario section were officially represented, when Gosley first proposed what would come to be known as

the regional section for Atlantic and Western Canada, Payant initially even balked at the idea of adding just one more section if it was to be so dispersed. Considering how centralized UNIMA-Canada has been historically, with AQM operating as the centre for most of the history of the organization, one may speculate that Payant's objection to the founding of a bicoastal section might have at least in part been rooted in a fear of the locus of power becoming so dissipated that the ability of the organization to decide upon and carry out various courses of action effectively would be compromised. Although a more diffuse and collaborative structure may well make reaching a decision take longer, it can definitely accommodate conflict, as the very meeting that we have been examining demonstrated. In fact, an organization structured in this way may even require conflict, for, as was emphasized above, conflict can be constructive.

This is not to say that Payant could not simply have had in mind practical concerns related to an increasingly expansive and decentralized organization. Even if that were the case, it should be pointed out that the ease of communication offered by the Internet means that regional sections can effectively exist mainly in virtual space, eliminating the need to search for grants or sponsors in order to fund the construction or renovation of a series of offices or buildings. The OPA already exists as a largely virtual entity, proving that this is a viable means by which such an organization can operate. One could definitely argue that the OPA lost a "focal point" (Smith, "Report on Puppetry" 2) when its Puppet Centre, first established in North York in 1980, closed in 1994. The Puppet Centre once housed the most comprehensive puppetry collection in Canada, which, at its largest, consisted of approximately 1,400 items, including a large number of "traditional puppets of various cultures and 20th century Canadian puppets" (Abrams 290), as well as some props and costumes that were used in puppet performances and even some commercially produced "toy-puppets" (Nebel, "Re: Re: Size of OPA Collection"),[43] and an extensive library of puppetry-related resources. The Puppet Centre also presented "festivals, weekend series for young audiences, [and] workshops" ("Ontario Puppetry Association Profile") and "promoted the development of new works in puppetry arts." Still, the collection and resource library are now housed at the better funded and more centrally located facilities at the Canadian Museum of History, and the OPA has greatly reduced its overhead. Tom Vandenberg (an experienced manipulator of and speaker for puppets for television, as well as the founder and artistic director of and sole performer for the puppet theatre company TV Puppetree), who was elected president of the OPA shortly after the original

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[43] Back in 2006, when I was discussing the puppetry collection that the OPA had donated to the Canadian Museum of History (then known as the Canadian Museum of Civilization) with Constance Nebel, she was Assistant Curator (Cultural Studies), responsible for the Puppetry Arts Collection. She is currently a programme officer working with the Virtual Museum of Canada, which was officially transferred to the Canadian Museum of History in June 2014 (Virtual Museum).

Puppet Centre[44] closed, reveals that, by the time the Puppet Centre closed, the OPA had accumulated over eighteen-thousand dollars in debt (Telephone interview).

The OPA now holds its live events and meetings in rented or donated spaces, relying largely upon its website and e-mail to keep its membership informed about them. Although the Board of Trustees still has a few live meetings each year, primarily to discuss broader issues, such as policy changes and publication and event scheduling for the months to come, these are supplemented with virtual meetings conducted by means of *Skype*, *MSN Messenger* (before it was discontinued), and so forth. Indeed, even the official newsletter of the organization, the *Ontario Puppetry Association Letter* (or the *OPAL*), has, since the Spring 2008 issue, been available in a format that makes it much easier to circulate electronically, namely the PDF format. The OPA Board of Trustees decided at the annual general meeting for the organization on 18 November 2007 that printed copies of the *OPAL* would still be sent to members who had not registered e-mail addresses with the OPA or who had requested paper copies. Paper copies would also be printed for archival purposes and for delivery to libraries and other similar institutions.

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[44] The North York Board of Education had provided the physical space for the first Puppet Centre, which had been located on the lower floor of the Glen Avon Public School. The Board did offer the OPA a new space, the Cornelius Public School, but the location was rather remote, and the OPA was unable to acquire the funding necessary to install the air-conditioning system—the Glen Avon School was already air conditioned when the OPA moved in— required to preserve its puppetry collection. McKay claims that neither the Ontario Arts Council nor the provincial Ministry of Culture and Recreation was interested in helping to maintain the puppetry collection and support the educational programmes offered by the Puppet Centre, a situation that was exacerbated by cuts to the funding available to schools for arts-related activities, which had limited their ability to arrange bus trips to the Centre for guided tours of the puppetry collection and workshops for some time (Telephone interview, 2 May 2006). Although the funding bodies were still willing to sponsor performances at the new Puppet Centre by visiting puppet artists, the loss of revenue that the Puppet Centre was suffering due to the inability of the institution to store and exhibit its collection permanently at the new facility meant that keeping the Centre open was no longer "financially . . . viable" (Telephone interview), as Vandenberg reveals. Consequently, although the collection was stored at the Cornelius Public School for approximately six months (McKay, Telephone interview, 9 May 2006), it was never publicly exhibited in full, and the Board of Governors of the Puppet Centre, having consulted with representatives of the funding bodies that had been assisting them, recommended to the Board of Trustees of the OPA that the puppetry collection be donated to the Canadian Museum of History, then known as the Canadian Museum of Civilization, along with a significant portion of the OPA archives and resource library. McKay asserts that there were in fact no exhibitions presented at the second location whatsoever (Telephone interview, 9 May 2006), while Vandenberg recalls that "there were some displays," but these were "likely only the 'travelling' cases[,] which Ken [McKay] probally [sic] doesn't consider an 'exhibit' . . .[,] certainly not on the Glen Avon scale" ("Re: Puppet Centre Funding"). Vandenberg also claims that "a programme of . . . performances" was presented at the Cornelius Public School, although it was "an unmitigated disaster financially" (Telephone interview), due to poor attendance. This was unfortunate, but according to Julia von Flotow, who began working at the Puppet Centre in 1986 as an administrative assistant, eventually becoming the administrative head of the Centre as executive director, "it takes five years to build . . . [public] awareness" of a new facility, and the OPA simply did not "have the money to . . . refurbish" the new location. Moreover, Flotow and the Board of Governors of the Puppet Centre did not "have enough time or resources to . . . develop a programme . . . and a whole operating plan for this . . . new situation," as all they "could cope with was . . . relocating" (Flotow).

Reintroducing the Puppet: Moving towards a Semiotics of Puppet Theatre

This author hopes that, by now, the reader has a better understanding of the context of Canadian puppet theatre. The subject of the puppet itself, however, has yet to be addressed in a systematic manner, which must be rectified before a particular type of puppet theatre as it has developed in a particular place, namely devised puppet theatre in Toronto, can be analyzed. In other words, to draw upon the terminology of semiotics, the synchronic, rather than the diachronic, must be temporarily privileged. As American playwright, performer, director, and puppet-theatre theorist Steve Tillis argues in *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art*, "no satisfactory theory, and no satisfactory vocabulary, have yet been created for the puppet" (8). These must be established, however, "through painstaking observation and analysis, isolating and exploring the fundamental constants and variables of the puppet as it exists in all of its theatrical manifestations," before we can proceed to the central focus of this study. Thankfully, Tillis's work can be drawn upon "as prologue, extended as it may be" (9), as he brings a semiotic and phenomenological apparatus to bear on the puppet. This kind of analysis has been successfully applied to other related subjects, such as the theatre of human actors and film. His synchronic approach, however, will be complemented by my continued desire to place everything in a Canadian context by referring to the history of puppet theatre as it has been practiced in this country and to the peculiarities of Canadian theatre history and praxis more generally. Thus, it is to the deceptively simple figure of the puppet and the forms of theatre in which it has performed that we now must turn.

Chapter 2:
Seeing Double: The Puppet as Object and Life

Difficulties with Definition(s): Approaching the Puppet

As was implied at the end of the preceding chapter, we must now undertake a complementary context-establishing endeavour, but instead of turning outwards in order to explore the historical and geographical context of puppet theatre in Canada, we must turn inwards, as it were, to examine the puppet itself physically and conceptually in an attempt to understand what is meant when its name is invoked in various contexts. This turning inwards will inevitably take on the more philosophical dimension that may indeed seem to inhere in the expression itself, for by raising the question of what makes a puppet a puppet, one necessarily raises the parallel question of what makes a human (or at least a human performer) a human. While this trajectory could lead to some intriguing but ultimately tangential existential territory, the focus will have to remain on how recognizing the differences and similarities between these two types of performers—and bodies—can grant insight into the nature of the puppet and the complexities of contemporary puppet theatre practice, particularly with respect to performance styles and developmental processes, which can have a mutual influence on one another. This thread will be pursued further in the third chapter, but before that more nuanced and extended analysis can take place, a general literature review (albeit one clearly centred on particular objectives) should be furnished, so as to illustrate where puppetry theory currently stands and, just as importantly, where this study stands in relation to it. The crux of all this preparatory theoretical work will be to develop a vocabulary for discussing puppetry—principally contemporary Canadian puppetry—in a more focused and rigorous way than has been previously possible.

A Question of Perspective: Synchronic or Diachronic Analysis of Puppetry

Before we can proceed much further, a precise but flexible definition of *puppet*—one that will allow us not only to differentiate it from related but discrete stage phenomena but also to accommodate each of the potentially bewildering, and ever increasing, number of historical and contemporary forms of puppetry, all of which must be subsumed under a single term—should be formulated. In order to do so, it would seem that, at least until the aforementioned definition, along with several other fundamental concepts, has been hammered out, synchronic analysis should be foregrounded. Tillis's insistence that such a "study of the underlying principles of a subject" should precede "any rigorous diachronic study" is certainly compelling, for "develop[ing] the necessary theory and vocabulary through painstaking observation and analysis, isolating and exploring the fundamental constants and variables of the puppet as it exists in all of its theatrical manifestations" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 9) is surely a defensible objective.

Even so, one eminent scholar of puppet theatre seems to have anticipated Tillis's argument and attempted to forestall it, at least in terms of its application to puppetry: Henryk Jurkowski. "[O]ne of the few scholars in the world to have made puppetry his primary concern" (vii), as Penny Francis writes in her preface to his book *Aspects of Puppet Theatre: A Collection of Essays*, Jurkowski has served as the president of l'Union internationale de la marionnette (UNIMA) and as its secretary-general and vice-president, and thus admirably combines both theoretical knowledge and practical experience in his outlook on puppetry. He asserts that, by applying a synchronic approach to the study of puppetry and treating "puppetry as a totality" in the hope of finding "materials of semiotic value," one inevitably becomes hopelessly reductive:

> [This] approach . . . happens to be applied rather often by contemporary scholars who discuss the characteristics of the puppet theatre. Puppetry for them seems to be a synchronically unified monolith, although the contemporary puppet theatre is a rich and differentiated totality, taking in cultural elements of different provenance and from different epochs. ("Sign Systems" 62)

Jurkowski goes even further in his criticism of the synchronic analysis of puppetry, declaring that it is not only reductive but also ineffectual:

> If one takes this entire range of puppet theatre as a field of scientific investigation, a preliminary task is to make a register or index of its various elements. . . . This register may be of some use as a demonstration of the puppet theatre's means of expression, but . . . it will not tell us much more about puppetry than we know already. ("Sign Systems" 62)

Certainly, as Tillis observes, one can believe that the kind of "register or index" that Jurkowski dismisses so flippantly would indeed "tell Jurkowski little more than he knew already" about puppetry, "since Jurkowski knows as much about puppets as any person alive" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 10). At the same time, however, this type of "register or index" would still be of use to anyone whose knowledge of puppet theatre is any less comprehensive than Jurkowski's is. Furthermore, while Pëtr Bogatyrëv does appear to be "the first semiotician to consider the puppet theatre as a system of signs" ("Sign Systems" 57), just as Jurkowski affirms is the case, he was not responsible for developing "a register or index of . . . [the] various elements" ("Sign Systems" 62) of puppet theatre, despite Jurkowski's assertion that he was, at least not one that was anything more than a relatively vague sketch. This is not to say that Bogatyrëv did not make some important contributions to the study of puppet theatre; indeed, his groundbreaking work, some of which will be discussed later in this chapter and elsewhere in this work, paved the way for later theorists, including, of course, Jurkowski and Tillis themselves. What is of greatest concern here, however, is that, as contemptuous as Jurkowski seems to be of the synchronic approach to the study of puppet theatre (and if Bogatyrëv's brief outline of such an approach, which could hardly be described as systematic, is his primary reference point, his attitude is at least somewhat understandable), it is, as has already been shown, where this study must begin.

Given his judgement on synchronic analysis of puppet theatre, Jurkowski therefore seems to imply that a "diachronic approach" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 8) is more appropriate, as it takes into account "its historic and geographic development with due consideration to the details of its technical practices" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 8); Jurkowski himself opts for this approach in his authoritative two-volume work *A History of European Puppetry*. Tillis, however, argues that a synchronic study need not reduce puppetry to "a synchronically unified monolith" ("Sign Systems" 62), as Jurkowski claims that it must, provided one "proceed[s] with a full awareness of the diachronic, multicultural diversity of the puppet and still seek[s] some understanding of the constants and variables to be found throughout that diversity" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 10). One must not, for example, take the particular for the general, "hypostatizing some form of puppetry as a model, or ideal form" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 10), as a number of scholars of the puppet theatre have done in the past, including George Speaight, the leading authority on English puppet theatre, and the aforementioned Bogatyrëv, both of whom, but particularly the latter, hypostatized folk puppetry to some extent.

Tillis therefore undertakes his synchronic approach with the "awareness of the diachronic, multicultural diversity of the puppet" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 10) that he himself recommends, an awareness he repeatedly demonstrates through his illustrative examples drawn from geographically and temporally disparate puppet theatre traditions and production. One of the few North American scholars to address the subject of puppetry with any degree of conceptual rigour, he strives to avoid the subjective and anecdotal language that has plagued so many past studies. He offers his theory of the "double-vision created by the puppet" as the foundation for a new definition and explanation of the puppet: "[T]he audience sees the puppet, through perception and through imagination, as an object and as a life"; in other words, the audience "sees the puppet in two ways at once" (64), as the puppet "is imagined to be alive" while it is simultaneously "perceived to be an object" (82). Indeed, "[t]he puppet, properly speaking, exists only as a particular process of performance" (64), and therefore a "puppet" on display in a museum or gallery is not actually a puppet, according to this strict definition of the term.

Tillis's concept of the "double-vision" inherent in puppet theatre leads him to propose "a synchronic explanation of the puppet: the puppet is a theatrical figure, perceived by an audience to be an object, that is given design, movement, and frequently, speech, so that it fulfills the audience's desire to imagine it as having life." The audience's "double-vision," which "is a constant in all puppet performance, whether intentionally or not," Tillis argues, therefore becomes "a synchronic explanation of the puppet's widespread and enduring appeal, for it creates in every audience the pleasure of a profound and illuminating paradox provoked by an 'object' with 'life.'" Through this paradox, "the puppet pleasurably challenges the audience's understanding of the relationship between objects and life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 65). This double-vision comes with its own risks, however. Arnott, in fact, describes "puppetry . . . [as] fatally easy": "There is an irresistible attraction about these little moving

figures. Even the poorest Punch and Judy show will attract a crowd; even marionettes mechanically controlled and jigging aimlessly in a store window will fill the sidewalk" by fascinating people of all ages. Unfortunately, the appeal of the puppet often "engenders a certain laziness in" puppet artists, as if "the puppet in itself is so attractive, does it matter much what it does?" Consequently, Arnott concludes, "a vicious circle is created," as "[t]he percipient adult comes to realize that he can expect only a superficial entertainment," one that will arouse his curiosity but not force him "to exercise his mind" (40). He therefore presumes that his children would be the appropriate audience for the performance in question and brings them with him, "and troupes who make their living from puppetry are forced to give the public what it wants" (40-41). As a result, "the entertainment offered cannot rise above a certain level" (41). Although the warning and challenge implied in Arnott's remarks, which are directed at "puppeteers and public alike" (40), should be acknowledged, they also will themselves be challenged on several counts over the remainder of this dissertation.

"Double-Vision" Applied (Part I): Puppets and Performing Objects

Tillis's definition of *puppet*, a much abused term, is needed, as one of the most influential existing definitions, namely that which has been offered by Frank Proschan (an American scholar concerned chiefly with puppetry and folklore), is far too broad to be of much assistance in any serious discussion of performance involving objects. As a matter of fact, Prochan's understanding of the puppet is rather protean. He writes that performing objects are "*material images of humans, animals, or spirits that are created, displayed, or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance.*"[45] He asserts that, although "puppetry is at the center of this definition, it is not alone" ("Semiotic Study" 4). In an earlier article, however, he claims that "[p]uppets are but the extreme example of performing objects," rather than a central one. His conception of the puppet as encapsulated by these two articles is so subsuming as to include everything from "dolls of children's play, through narrated scrolls and images, to peep-shows and magic objects, and to the costumes and props of theatre performance" ("Puppet Voices" 554), not to mention "masks, . . . icons in a religious celebration, and . . . images [drawn] in snow or sand" as storytelling aids. He concludes that all those who somehow utilize any of the objects listed above "manifest the urge to give life to nonliving things, as they animate objects in dramatic performance and use material images as surrogates for human actors" ("Semiotic Study" 3).

Baird, however, argues that the puppet "is definitely not a doll," as "[w]hen somebody plays with a doll, it involves an intimate action which never extends past the two of them," and "[i]n no sense is that show business" (13). A show requires an audience, even if it consists of only one person (such as a parent watching a child bringing his doll, now arguably a puppet, to life), and thus the doll, when involved in "an intimate action," cannot even qualify as a performing object. According to Proschan's own definition, the

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[45] Unless otherwise noted, all italicized text in quoted material is also italicized in the original.

performing object, like the puppet, must appear "*in* [a] *narrative or dramatic performance*" ("Semiotic Study" 4). On the other hand, although "worshippers who bear icons in a religious procession" are clearly not doing so in private, the icons are not necessarily being "invest[ed] with the powers to speak or move" ("Semiotic Study" 3), another of Proschan's requirements of the performing object. Moreover, the ritualistic setting of such an event complicates matters, as the example of the Kwakwaka'wakw winter ceremony described in the previous chapter indicated, as the initiated and the uninitiated, for example, would probably receive these icons in very different ways. They would assumedly never become anything more than what they actually are, that is, objects, for those orchestrating the event; conversely, they could even become much more than things merely imagined to be alive for particularly fervent or gullible "worshippers."

Still, if the icons are simply being carried, it is difficult to conceive of anyone imagining or perceiving them to be anything other than objects, since, unlike many of the ritualistic objects in the Hamat'sa ceremony, they do not appear to have been "invest[ed] with the powers to speak or move" (Proschan, "Semiotic Study" 3), as was noted above. Indeed, Tillis argues that in fact many of the "performing objects" enumerated by Proschan are sometimes not invested with speech, at other times not with movement, and not infrequently with neither. Tillis immediately dismisses both the doll and the icon, since "neither is concerned with theatrical representation in itself." His attitude is understandable, although he is too quick to disregard the latter type of object. Although Proschan's vague example itself must surely be called into question, the boundary between performance and ritual becomes much less clear when one is faced with a ceremony as complex as that of the Kwakwaka'wakw in the winter season, as we have already seen. Restricting himself to "theatrical representation" in a more conventional Western sense, Tillis divides the balance of Proschan's list into three distinct categories: "objects of narration, objects of mask/costume, and objects of staging" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 78).

The narrative objects, such as the "narrated scrolls and images" and drawings on the ground mentioned by Proschan (and the effigy, an example offered by Tillis), "can be given speech," Tillis argues, but "they are not, and cannot be, given movement . . . [, as] they are nothing more or less than pictorial illustrations" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 78). Consequently, they cannot be considered in a discussion of puppetry in its most limited sense.

Objects of mask or costume, on the other hand, their distanciation from the performer not usually to the same degree as that of the narrative object, cannot be invested with speech, according to Tillis, as "any speech associated with them is simply the speech of the actor or dancer who wears them." Moreover, while they can be given movement, it is generally "but the performance movement of the actor or dancer who wears them, and is accorded to the performer, and not the object" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 78). Peter D. Arnott, a classics professor as well as a puppet theatre artist and scholar, argues, however, that "whenever an actor dons a mask—either literally, as in Greek and Roman plays, or figuratively, as

when he plays a strongly typed part—he is abnegating his individuality and making of himself a puppet" (77). Arnott's view seems extreme, as he transfers much of what has normally been considered live (that is, performed by human actors) theatre into the usually more restricted category of puppet theatre proper. After all, as Bell emphasizes, "dialogic drama in which realistic actors speak prose in the realistic setting of an ordinary room is an exceptional case, a northern European invention only 300 years old" ("Tales" 168). Indeed, if Bell has in mind the naturalistic works of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, as he seems to, given his specification that the form of drama to which he is alluding was "a northern European invention," then this form was only just over 100 years old at the time his article was published. Tillis offers a revision of Arnott's assertion: "[I]f the audience perceives the mask or costume to be nothing more than an object of dress worn by a living actor, then that is all it is; but if the audience perceives the actor in the mask or costume to be but a part of the object, then it must be recognized as a puppet" (20-1), for "the actor [becomes] subsumed in the puppet" (20). Interestingly, Tillis is therefore more flexible with regard to what is to be considered a puppet earlier in his text than he is later on.

Baird, with particular reference to the cultural history of Aboriginal North Americans, discusses the supposed "progression from masks to puppet masks to marionettes" (34):

> When a single masked dancer began to appear as a performer before the rest of his group, it was the beginning of theatrical performance and a stepping-off place for the mask to become a puppet. Gradually, in the course of centuries, the hinged and jointed mask moved upward, off the head, and was held in the hands in front of the body. Later it moved farther away and was made to live by the manipulation of strings. (30)

This colourful but largely speculative history should not be accepted as definitively borne out by existing evidence. Mask and puppet traditions can indeed be found throughout the world and throughout much of human history, but they differ in type, concentration, and developmental pattern. Furthermore, as Baird admits, "establishing the sequence of events in puppet history" is made all the more challenging by the limited number of masks and puppets that have survived, a situation that becomes still more distressing when one attempts to find examples "that are more than two hundred years old" (35). Still, with regard to the First Nations of the West Coast, examples of objects at each of Baird's stages of development can be adduced. Baird includes a photograph of a mask from the Hamat'sa ceremony so often mentioned in this study as an example of "the hinged and jointed mask." He claims that this Kwakwaka'wakw mask represents "the Cannibal of the Mountains" himself[46] and has an "articulated jaw worked by hand, and [a] forehead that is raised and lowered by strings" (34). A close examination of this photograph, along with several related illustrations and photographs included in Boas's *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians* (447-51, pl. 30-31), however, reveals that this mask does not in fact represent Baxbakwalanuksiwe' or "Cannibal-at-the-North-End-of-the-World" (Boas, *Kwakiutl* 173) but rather "one of the attendants of the man-eating being, . . . Gwaxgwakwlalanuksiwe', the Raven at the

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[46] See 17-18nn7-8.

North End of the World" ("MOA Questions"), as Karen Duffek, contemporary visual arts and Pacific Northwest curator at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, confirms. Further along in Baird's posited evolutionary sequence is the jointed Haida "wooden figure . . . worn on [the] head of . . . [the] operator" (32) of which he also includes an illustration. This is the kind of mask that is "in the process of leaving the face and becoming a puppet," for it is "jointed like a marionette, worn on the head and operated from below" (31). Presumably, it is also one of the "puppet masks" that Baird mentions. The final stage in Baird's "progression" (34) is exemplified by a "Nishka marionette [that] has doors in [its] chest that open to reveal [a] painting of its soul, or spirit" (30).

Perhaps the aforementioned Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida masks caused the performer to be "subsumed in the puppet" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 20), to use Tillis's phrase again. Consequently, contrary to his claim regarding masks generally, any speech or movement given to these masks would be associated with them, rather than with the performers wearing them, in the imagination of the spectators, resulting in the masks taking on lives of their own. The efficacious—in the Schechnerian sense—aspects of such performances would in fact seem to encourage such an interpretation. The reader will recall from the previous chapter that Taussig's "new definition of mimesis" (Bryant-Bertail 46-47) hinges upon "what was once called sympathetic magic, granting [to] the representation the power of the represented" (qtd. in Bryant-Bertail 47). Such an understanding of mimesis lays stress on "embodiment, not just the replication of surface," for it is through the embodiment of "powerful spirits" that "one is both empowered by and protected from them" (47), as Bryant-Bertail explains. More expressly secular objects of mask or costume can be interpreted in a similar—albeit markedly less spiritual—way, for, as was also noted in the first chapter, there is a parallel to be drawn between the "dual life" that Bryant-Bertail regards as characteristic of the West Coast First Nations mask "as [both] object and performer" (45) and the "double-vision" that Tillis contends is "created by the puppet" as a result of the "tension" inherent in its dual nature "as an object and as a life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 64). This parallel would only obtain "if the audience perceives the actor in the mask or costume to be but a part of the object," because the mask or costume would "then . . . [have to] be recognized as a puppet" (21)—or rather, the mask or costume, when considered in combination with the actor, would have to be recognized as such, for the latter would have been "subsumed in the puppet," at least in "the perception of the audience" (20). We will revisit this distinction with regard to the reception of the mask or costume in the next section, when the relationship between puppetry and various styles of acting, including what Tillis refers to as "mask or costume acting" (81), will be discussed.

Tillis's final division of Proschan's so-called performing objects, that of the objects of staging, is the one whose members are least likely to be accorded characters of their own. This is perhaps the broadest category, encompassing a potentially infinite number of props and set pieces, such as canes, swords, tables, doors, and so forth. Proschan does not actually provide any specific examples, as he

simply includes "props of theatre performance" ("Puppet Voices" 554) in one of his lists. Czech semiotician—and member of the Prague Linguistic Circle—Jiří Veltruský, however, writes that such objects are "animated by acting when the characters are represented treating them as live beings or when they conceal live characters." He offers two examples from Molière's *Tartuffe*. In act three, scene seven, "after a brief exchange with Tartuffe, Orgon runs to the door through which he drove out his son at the end of the preceding scene and addresses to the door an angry speech intended for his son." In act four, scene two, "Elmire and Orgon move a table to a prominent place and the man hides under it and listens to Elmire's conversation with Tartuffe in the next scene; during that conversation the actress repeatedly directs the spectators' attention to the table and the character hiding under it by producing sounds addressed to him" (86).

Tillis argues that objects of staging cannot possibly be classified as puppets, as in performance, the door and table in the aforementioned examples from *Tartuffe* remain the "objects they purport to be" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 79), that is, a door and a table, or rather, an icon of a door and an icon of a table, respectively. Thus, neither object is "animated" in the sense of having been given life. Veltruský, too, acknowledges the danger of accepting a definition of *performing object* as inclusive as that offered by Proschan, for he warns that a "broadened concept of personification may blur the distinction between puppets on the one hand and objects perceived on the stage as agents on the other" (88). Citing fellow Prague School member Jan Mukařovský, Veltruský notes that, when he first began to consider the idea of objects "being perceived as agents" (87), he indeed "resorted to the concept of personification in its broadest sense, defined . . . in connection with surrealist poetry as 'a force, indefinite but powerful, which strengthens the impression of the spontaneity of the process by emphasizing the participation of the acting subject'" (qtd. in Veltruský 88)—or, more accurately, what appears to be an "acting subject." This kind of personification "does not necessarily imply that things have to be 'made into persons' (as they are by personification in the narrow sense)." These "things which in reality are passive objects of a process" need only "appear as active subjects" participating in a given process by virtue of their own wills. Such a process, Veltruský expatiates, can, "in terms of spontaneity," be assigned to one of "three categories: mechanical natural processes; such activities of live beings as are governed by habit; and actions properly so called, deriving from the unlimited initiative of the subject." Regardless of the type of process in which they seem to be partaking, all thus personified objects still resemble the objects that they actually are. Veltruský eventually found this conception of personification to be "potentially misleading" (88) for several reasons, the most pertinent here being the fact that it can easily be misunderstood, leading to, as was noted above, a blurring of the line between puppets proper and stage objects as "agents."

Still, this broader conception of personification is useful, even if a different name would have been helpful, as it lies somewhere in between Tillis's theory of double-vision and the comparatively mundane "*semiotization of the object*," another Prague School concept. As Keir Elam explains, "[t]he

very fact of their [appear]ance on stage suppresses the practical function of phenomena in favour of a symbolic or signifying role" (6), and thus, according to this theory, a table placed onstage "becomes . . . a semiotic unit standing not directly for another (imaginary) table but for the intermediary signified 'table', i.e. for the class of objects of which it is a member" (7). Although he includes only a brief quotation concerning "the broadened concept of personification" (Veltruský 88) as conceived by Mukařovský (whom he fails to mention at all) and elaborated by Veltruský, the relevance of which he does not sufficiently explain, Tillis is still willing to accept—if rather grudgingly—the object of staging as a performing object. He asserts, however, that it is the most constrained of the three main types of performing objects, as while it "might be moved or spoken to" and therefore perceived as a kind of "agent," to use Veltruský's term, "it is not and cannot be accorded the pretense of moving or speaking for itself, and it is animated only by the action that takes place around it" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 79).

Thus, contrary to Proschan's claims, the puppet is neither a central nor an "extreme" example of a performing object, as "it differs enough to justify separate categorization" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 77), as Tillis posits. Although the three performing object categories differ in terms of their potential for attributed movement and speech, they are all unified by the fact that the audience never ceases to perceive or imagine any performing object to be anything other than what it actually is: an object. While the puppet, on the other hand, also "is perceived to be an object, . . . unlike the performing object, it is imagined to have life" (80), as Tillis concludes. The greatest conceptual gulf is between the puppet and the last type of performing object to be analyzed herein, the object of staging, for the latter, Tillis demonstrates, is situated "at one end of the range of performing object activity, an end marked by a barely existent and highly attenuated sense of animation." The most briefly examined of the three general types, the object of narration, is located "toward the center of the range" (79), since it is a performing object "whose animation is somewhat existent, through the occasional imputation of speech, but is still rather tenuous" (79-80). The object of mask or costume, as we have seen, comes closest to approaching the category of the puppet, as it is positioned "at the other end of the range"—furthest from the object of staging—"an end marked by a more substantial sense of animation that arises from the movement . . . [it is] given" (80). As has also been observed, the object of mask or costume can in fact penetrate the conceptual domain of the puppet proper, a fact that even Tillis reluctantly acknowledges. He underscores the central importance of "the perception of the audience" (20) to any investigation of whether a given object of mask or costume should, in conjunction with the human performer or performers wearing it, be deemed a performing object or a puppet, but clearly the perception of the audience is the ultimate deciding factor when such a question is posed with regard to any onstage object. The primary point of issue is always whether or not the object is imagined by the audience to be alive.

By contrast, when the focus shifts to human performers themselves, augmented with objects of mask or costume or not, and one attempts to ascertain what role the perception of the audience has to play

in determining whether a given onstage figure should be considered a human or puppet actor, the primary point of issue becomes whether or not it is perceived to be alive. Although this might initially seem to be less contentious theoretical territory, the questions that inevitably arise prove as thorny as those that must be faced when comparing performing objects with puppets are, as shall be revealed in the following section.

"Double-Vision" Applied (Part II): Puppets and Human Actors

"Just as the puppet has been located within the range of the performing object, so has it also been located in what may be called the range of the actor" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 80), Tillis declares, but of course, it falls outside of that as well. Developing a classification system parallel to that for the performing object, Tillis places "three points along the range of acting technique: at one extreme, naturalistic acting; toward the center of the range, presentational acting; and at the other extreme, mask or costume acting" (81). All three of these acting styles will therefore be addressed below as well, albeit in a different order: each of the "extreme" ends of the continuum proposed by Tillis will be examined in turn before the middle ground of presentational acting is reached. As will be explained in greater detail later, this reordered sequence will allow for an expedient transition back to matters more directly and fundamentally related to puppet theatre, since alienation, the concept that is the foundation of presentational acting, is also a core principle of all puppet performances, regardless of the intentions of the artists involved.

It should also be noted that one of the "extreme" ends of Tillis's continuum, mask or costume acting, will receive more cursory treatment in this chapter than the other two "points along the range of acting technique" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 81) will, but this is only because this performance style will continue to be analyzed in the next chapter. Given that the line between mask or costume acting and puppetry can be so blurred, just like the line between the object of mask or costume and the puppet itself can be, as has just been discussed above, the criteria for each would most effectively be substantiated by a case study, which is precisely what will be undertaken in the third chapter (with Mermaid Theatre as the subject).

Naturalistic Performance

"The [human] actor has been the subject of vast scholarship, much of it contentious," Tillis reminds us. Although the present study will go beyond "the briefest discussion of acting" that Tillis claims is the most he can offer, it will inevitably fall short of doing it justice, given the breadth of the subject. Nowhere is the immensity of the body of theoretical work to which Tillis refers more apparent than in the scholarship surrounding the acting style that marks the first point on his continuum: "naturalistic acting," which requires, according to Tillis himself, that "the actor's own personality and status as actor . . . [be] submerged beneath the character he or she represents" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 81).

That so much has been written about this particular style may come as a surprise to someone unfamiliar with dramatic and performance theory, given Bell's remark, quoted above, that the form of theatre most closely associated with it is in fact "an exceptional case" and a recent, at least relative to the history of theatre in the world as a whole, "northern European invention" ("Tales" 168). As Tillis remarks, the central figure connected to this performance style, "the dominant style . . . in the twentieth century" (81), is Konstantin Stanislavsky.

Generalizing about Stanislavsky's acting theories and techniques is a daunting task, given the amount of literature on these subjects that has been produced by both Stanislavsky himself and the legion of other authors interested in his work. One such admirer of Stanislavsky, despite his own radically different approach to actor training, production development, and performance style, was Jerzy Grotowski. Grotowski asserted that "his first master" (Kumiega 109) was a practitioner and a theorist who was characterized—or rather, should have been characterized—by a condition of "permanent self-reform" (qtd. in Kumiega 110). Jennifer Kumiega provides her own explanation of Grotowski's claim in *The Theatre of Grotowski*:

> In other words his [Stanislavsky's] attitude was one of unceasing research and readiness to question earlier achievements and stages of work. Stanislavsky's research was only brought to a stop by his death, which is why there cannot truly be a Stanislavsky Method. But this did not stop the process of what Grotowski calls Stanislavski's 'assassination after death' by the vast number of those seeking to crystallize the stages of his research into the perfect 'prescription' for achieving results. (110)

A trajectory in the development of Stanislavskian theory can still be traced, however, beginning with his emphasis on working from the inside of the actor out. Many have no doubt already read about his concept of emotion or affective memory, for example, which he explains most clearly in "The Art of the Actor and the Art of the Director," originally written for *Encyclopedia Britannica* but since republished in *Stanislavski's Legacy: A Collection of Comments on a Variety of Aspects of an Actor's Art and Life*:

> We cannot directly act on our emotions, but we can prod our creative fantasy in a necessary path, and fantasy . . . stirs up our *affective memory*, calling up from its secret depths, beyond the reach of consciousness, elements of already experienced emotions, and re-groups them to correspond with the images which arise in us. These images of our fantasy, which flare up without the slightest effort on our part, find a response in our affective (emotion) memory and the echo of appropriate feelings. (187)

Stanislavsky would eventually move away from this intensely psychological perspective on acting, which called for the channelling of recalled emotions in order to represent the emotions putatively experienced by a character more "truly" (Stanislavski, *Actor* 14).[47] Indeed, his new "system" appeared to be the inverse of the first, in that he was now advocating working from the outside in. As Timothy J. Wiles elucidates in *The Theater Event: Modern Theories of Performance*, during this phase in Stanislavsky's

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[47] Stanislavsky initially uses this word when quoting the nineteenth-century Russian actor Mikhail Semyonovich Shchepkin: "'You may play well or you may play badly; the important thing is that you should play truly,' wrote Shchepkin to his pupil [Sergei Valentinovich] Shumski [or Shumsky]" (*Actor* 14).

practice and research, when he "evolved what he called a 'system of physical action,'" he developed
"physical activities which would stimulate the desired feelings reflexively" (34). Stanislavsky evidently
had high hopes for this new system, for he proclaimed that it "automatically analyzes a play; . . . induces
organic nature to put its important creative forces to work to prompt us to physical action; . . . [and]
evokes from inside us live human material with which to work" (*Creating* 249). It is presented as being
particularly useful to an actor who is feeling out a new part, as by grounding one's understanding of a role
in "physical actions analogous to . . . [the] part, in given circumstances analogous to those set up by the
playwright," one can comprehend and even experience "the pulsing life of . . . [the] character" (247).

Stanislavsky had his predecessors, of course, perhaps most famously Georg II, duke of Saxe-
Meiningen. His dedication—as well as that of his (third) wife, the actor Ellen Franz, also known by her
title, baroness von Heldburg—to the training of the actors in his court theatre company, the Meininger, as
it would come to be known as, has been well documented. His company toured every year from 1874 to
1890, and Stanislavsky, who became familiar with the Meininger style as a result of the company's
appearances in Moscow, "admired [Saxe-]Meiningen's surface realism," as well as his "autocratic control
of his ensemble," as his "was one of the first 'director's theaters' in which productions had no stars and
all the details were planned by one mind" (15), as Wiles states. Being devoid "of extraordinary stage
talents" (*My Life* 198), the company, according to Stanislavsky, was forced to rely upon the skills of
Ludwig Chronegk, who joined the Meininger in 1866, initially "to play humorous character parts." Ellen
Franz, however, "recognized that a highly intelligent man lay behind the façade of the short, fat comic,"
and consequently Georg soon nominated him to the position of regisseur on Franz's advice. "A practical
theater man" (Koller 76) with years of experience in the theatre, although lacking the depth and breadth of
knowledge possessed by both Franz and the duke, Chronegk became a hands-on stage director who
"carried on rehearsals once the play was set in broad lines" (Koller 77).[48]

Stanislavsky observes that, lacking a large body of accomplished performers, Chronegk "was
obliged to create without the help of the actor, and the actor without the help of the director." As a
consequence, the "most attention was paid not to the acting but to the production" (*My Life* 199) in terms
of its staging. Early in his career, Stanislavsky believed himself to be in a situation comparable to
Chronegk's with regard to a perceived dearth of talented actors. Thus, he sought to pattern his own
directorial style after what he understood Chronegk's to be, despite—or rather because of—"[t]he
restraint and the cold-bloodedness" that he associated with the Meininger's "despotic stage director." Of
particular interest in the context of the present study is Stanislavsky's claim that, just as he had striven to
emulate Chronegk, most of his Russian contemporaries attempted to emulate his own derivative style,
resulting in "a whole generation of despotic stage directors, who . . . did not have the talents of Kronek or

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[48] The duke himself was more of a designer and artistic director, although he was still an important presence at
rehearsals, while Franz acted as an instructor, as was mentioned earlier, and as a production dramaturg.

the Duke of Meiningen." The connection to puppetry is that the attitude towards the actor that Stanislavsky attributes to these directors is remarkably similar to the vision of the puppet theatre (or, at the very least, of the "puppetized" human theatre) that Modernist and avant-garde theatre practitioners such as Edward Gordon Craig had in mind. Stanislavsky, however, wishing to distance himself from his younger self and the other "despotic" Russian directors, portrays the desire for control over the production—as is encapsulated in Craig's theory of the *Über-marionette*, to which we will return later in this chapter—in a negative light, denouncing the directors of that period as "mere producers who made of the actor a stage property on the same level with stage furniture, a pawn that was moved about in their *mises en scène*" (201).

However "despotic" a given director might be, Stanislavsky was, of course, writing metaphorically: although a director with a very specific vision for a production might indeed equate a human actor with a piece of "stage furniture"—or with a puppet, one might self-indulgently say, given the subject to which we will soon return in earnest—that actor never ceases to be what she actually is, that is, a human being.[49] No director, despotic or otherwise, throughout the history of naturalistic theatre has ever managed to change that fact. So, too, does the human performer remain human when engaged in mask or costume acting, at least in reality. When one considers what the audience might perceive or imagine that performer to be, however, the situation can become significantly more complicated.

Mask or Costume Performance

Tillis's opening description of mask or costume acting may initially strike one as rather straightforward: "In mask/costume acting, the actor neither makes a pretense of being a naturalistic dramatic character"—as, of course, the actor does do in naturalistic performance, as has just been covered—"nor desires to be acknowledged as a person or as an actor" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 82), an objective associated with presentational performance, to which we will shortly turn. He then cites Michael R. Malkin, who, to quote from his article more liberally, argues that, in mask or costume performance, "the actor attains a certain level of aesthetic abstraction" because "[s]omething is interposed between him and the audience . . . [that] partakes of mystery, ritual, symbol, and the intellect" (7). This still leaves us with an essential question, however: Can the actor attain a high enough level of abstraction to be seen by spectators, "through perception and through imagination, as an object and as a life" (Tillis 64), both at the same time?

The examples that Tillis offers, however, do little to clear these already very muddy waters. He argues that, on the one hand, "the Mickey Mouse who greets visitors at Disneyland" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 20), because of "his patently human structural physiognomy," cannot possibly be "perceived as an object, and so is not a puppet, but simply an actor in costume" (21). "Big Bird, in which the operator is

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[49] I have followed Joseph M. Williams's advice in *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace* and used *she* or one of its related forms when a generic singular pronoun was desired (195).

entirely inside the theatrical figure, giving direct motivation to the figure in its entirety" (108), on the other hand, is in fact "perceived as an object" (21) and must therefore "be recognized as a puppet, because its physiognomy is distinct from that of its operator" (108). The chief criterion implicit in Tillis's comparison—distinctiveness of physiognomy—may leave his reader feeling unprepared to make any judgements whatsoever with regard to performance sequences that might be construed as either puppetry or mask or costume acting, given that it ultimately must be recognized as highly subjective and, more importantly, reductive (because of its solitariness). That notwithstanding, his comparison and the primary criterion associated with it remain important, for there are very few other sources to which one can turn for alternative criteria that even meet the same degree of rigour, let alone exceed it. Consequently, Tillis's comparison will be teased out further in the third chapter.

In general, however, Tillis seems to be more inclined to interpret "the actor in the mask or costume" as just that and not as a puppet, since this actor is, according to him, usually "perceived and imagined to have real life, while the mask or costume is obviously an object under his or her direct control" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 82). That is, the human performer is only rarely "subsumed in the puppet" (20) as a result of the process that was described in the previous section concerning puppets and performing objects, because "[t]he object nature of the mask/costume is," for the most part, "not perceived to inhere in the living being who wears it, but in the mask/costume itself" (82). Tillis's hesitation with respect to conferring the designation of *puppet* upon a given actor performing in a mask or costume is no doubt at least in part due to his suspicion regarding "the desire of many people involved with the puppet to annex the mask into the field of puppetry" (20), another position to which we will return in the next chapter.

Malkin also draws a clear line between the performer with a mask and the performer with a puppet. In language that clearly informed Tillis's understanding of mask or costume performance, Malkin stresses that, even though "[t]he mask is hard, sculptured and immutable[,] . . . the audience is always aware of the life behind it," namely that of the performer wearing it. The performer's "stage role is welded to the mask," in fact. He adamantly rejects Baird's theory—which was mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the section comparing puppets with performing objects—that "[t]he puppet is . . . an extension of the mask." Still, he does believe that "[t]he puppet is both perceived and presented at a more abstract level than the mask" and is therefore "literally and figuratively further from the actor." Thus, Malkin, like so many other puppetry theorists, makes the assumption that the puppet must be an inanimate object, an assumption that will be questioned later in this chapter, as was promised in the first chapter. Unfortunately, this leads directly to another assumption: the "additional distance" between the puppet and the actor "depersonalizes the" latter, with the end result that "the audience no longer perceives" the human performer. Indeed, "[t]he audience unconsciously severs its perceptions of the actor and responds to the puppet as pure theatrical abstraction," and this holds true, Malkin insists, even when the performer

"is not visible to the eyes of" (7) the spectators. This second assumption, particularly in the context of manipulators who are visible onstage, will be interrogated in the fourth chapter, as Tillis's counter-proposition that the "on-stage presence" of such manipulators "must be recognized as a vital aspect of their performances in general" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 132) is especially germane to an analysis of tandem puppetry.

Although, for Malkin, the puppet must be wholly inanimate, he does allow for the "certain level of aesthetic abstraction" that can be realized through the use of masks to be achieved by performers by means of "tremendous control over the muscles of their faces and bodies" alone. In doing so, he draws a distinction between the "thing mask" and "the concept mask because they can exist quite independently of one another." "The thing mask," or the constructed object referred to as a mask, "disguises and conceals," whereas "the concept mask implies or expresses something that was not there before": "a particular kind of indirect or abstract relationship between the actor and the audience." His own example of performers who demonstrated that they could "achieve this kind of effect without thing masks" is "Grotowski's actors of the Polish Laboratory Theater," but as will be shown over the third and fourth chapters, this kind of "control over the muscles of . . . faces and bodies" (7) has also been exercised to convincing effect in puppet theatre performances. Operators who share the stage with their puppets can contribute their own facial expressions to the characters being created by their puppets in semiotic collaboration with themselves, a technique that is particularly noticeable in tandem puppetry performances.

Malkin therefore makes a significant theoretical distinction between the "thing mask" and the "concept mask," but he establishes a boundary between puppet theatre and mask or costume performance that is even more rigid than the one that Tillis proposes. This is, indeed, rather slippery terrain that warrants closer analysis and more detailed contextualization, both of which will be pursued in the next chapter. What Tillis refers to as "presentational acting" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 81) is much less slippery in this respect and thus has this, at least, in common with naturalistic acting, even though the two are antithetical to one another in many other aspects. Nevertheless, an examination of presentational acting and the alienation- or estrangement-effect associated with it will grant us insight into puppet theatre in rather different ways, as we will now begin to see.

Presentational Performance

At approximately the midpoint of "the range of acting technique" that Tillis posits, as was noted above, is "presentational acting," which addresses the relationship between character and actor in a markedly different way than naturalistic acting does. This style requires that "the actor's own personality and status as actor are not fully submerged"; rather, "the actor desires to be acknowledged not only as the character he or she represents, but also as an individual and/or as an actor," as Tillis explains, although this can be "to a greater or lesser degree" in practice. Much like naturalistic acting, however,

presentational acting is most often associated with one particular person, Bertolt Brecht in this case, because of "his famous V-Effect ["*Verfremdungseffekt*"], termed in English either alienation or estrangement" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 81), as Tillis points out. The term *V-effect* is more frequently further anglicized to *A-effect* or *alienation-effect*.

In "A Short Organum for the Theatre," a concise but thoroughly revised recapitulation of his most essential theories, Brecht declares that "[a] representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar" (192). This passage is no doubt familiar to most theatre scholars. He continues, shedding further light on the alienated actor, "In order to produce A-effects the actor has to discard whatever means he has learnt of getting the audience to identify itself with the characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into a trance, he must not go into a trance himself." Instead of attempting to transform themselves into the characters they are to play, actors should only demonstrate them. That said, when "playing passionate parts," they need not "remain cold" (193); rather, what is essential is that their "feelings must not at bottom be those of the character[s], so that the audience's may not at bottom be those of the character[s] either" (193-94), as the actor must "leave the spectator's intellect free and highly mobile" (191). Thus, the Brechtian "actor appears on the stage in a double role" (194), as herself and as the character that she is presenting, thereby leaving the audience with "no illusions that the player is identical with the character . . . [or] the performance with the actual event" (195) being portrayed.

Brecht's choice of words is intriguing, as the actor's "double role" in this performance style would seem to be analogous to the puppet's double-vision in all performance styles. There is still an important difference here, however, as although a human performer must make a conscious decision to adhere to the Brechtian principle of alienation, the puppet has no such luxury. This is in part due to the fact that it is so often (although not always) an inanimate figure with no will of its own. Of greater theoretical significance is the fact that, wherever a given puppet theatre performance might be located in time and space, its reception will be characterized by double-vision, "a constant in all puppet performance" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 65), as Tillis emphasizes. "A constant tension" is therefore created, as "each of the puppet's aspects is inescapable, and yet each contradicts the other"; in summary, the conflicted "puppet is and is not that which it seems to be" (64), that is, an object. Despite the ubiquity of this effect of puppetry on audiences, Tillis cautions that not "all puppetry consciously strives to create double-vision; in fact, such a striving has not been central to the phenomenon of the puppet." The members of the Hamat'sa society of the Kwakwaka'wakw, for example, would probably have preferred that "the audience's desire to imagine it [the puppet] as having life," rather than their perception of it as "an object" (65), to quote Tillis once more, be encouraged. Irrespective of the intentions of the artists involved, however, puppet theatre invariably both stimulates the audience's double-vision and alienates

the spectators. These two "by-products" of puppetry, double-vision and alienation, are not unrelated: indeed, the latter is an important part of the former.

All puppetry is inherently alienating. The audience must recognize that what is occurring before them during a puppet theatre performance is in fact a performance, for many or even all of the onstage performers are perceived as objects given motion and sometimes speech by human performers who are visible, hidden, or sometimes even absent, like those who have had their performances of the voices of the characters in a given show recorded ahead of time. Bell goes so far as to proclaim that *Verfremdungseffekt* "is a difficult word for a simple and essential element of all performing object theater" ("Tales" 171), although given the conclusion reached at the end of the preceding section, we might desire a more precise term than "performing object theater."[50]

Brecht himself, of course, did not incorporate puppetry as a significant element of either his theory or his practice. What is perhaps more surprising and, in the present context, consequential is that what could be designated an alienated or presentational style of puppet manipulation was being championed long before even Brecht began to formulate his own particular take on alienation in the context of the human theatre. Craig was an early proponent of this school: "But once you have made a Puppet and taught yourself *to allow it* to move ([. . .] *you* don't move it; you let it move itself; that's the art) . . . once you have done these two things I promise you, if you are a born artist, the world is in for a very great treat" (*Puppets* 18). This apparently passive stance with regard to the puppet can be traced back to the early nineteenth century at least, as Heinrich von Kleist, in his essay "On the Marionette Theatre," implies that it is in fact the norm.

Although Craig was undoubtedly the most famous disputant, Kleist was an earlier participant in the ongoing discussion to which Olga Taxidou refers as the "*man or marionette* debate." Taxidou emphasizes that, even though this supposed binary opposition became "one [of] the main concerns of later Modernist stagecraft," the concept "of the human actor . . . [was] problematised from Romanticism onwards." The human performer is emotional, corruptible, and mortal. On the other hand, the marionette—or rather, the puppet more broadly—is none of these, making it, for those following in the spirit of Kleist, "the perfect artifice, the perfect expression of the almighty *aesthetic will*" (142), as Taxidou observes. A conception of this kind is bound to involve at least some idealization, and Kleist clearly establishes this tendency in puppetry theory: the power of the puppet in itself is foregrounded, while the role of the manipulator is glossed over to a considerable degree. According to Herr C., a dancer,

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[50] Bell accepts without question Proschan's definition—the latter of the two discussed earlier—of *performing objects* as "*material images of humans, animals, or spirits that are created, displayed, or manipulated in narrative or dramatic performance.*" As was noted earlier, in this article, Proschan argues that "puppetry is at the center of this definition" ("Semiotic Study" 4). This understanding of the puppet was criticized earlier for being too inclusive, but in another way, this definition is too exclusive, in that neither a performing object nor a puppet proper need represent a human, an animal, or a spirit, although the last category is so vague that one could potentially argue that anything that did not fit into either of the first two classes could be made to fit into the third.

an admiring spectator at the popular "marionette theatre that had been set up in the local market place," and the primary speaker in Kleist's story, the puppet operator was in fact only partially responsible for the actions of each puppet, for "often when simply shaken in an arbitrary manner, the whole figure assumed a kind of rhythmic movement that was identical to dance." Herr C. admits that, although the operator's task of controlling a troupe of these marionette dancers "might be simple from a purely mechanical viewpoint," it does "not necessarily follow that it could be managed entirely without some feeling." Even though Herr C. is still ostensibly discussing the work of a particular puppet operator at this point, Kleist soon reveals that he has a more macroscopic vision of puppetry in mind, so macroscopic, in fact, that it leads him to writing a decidedly eschatological conclusion for this short piece, which shall be examined more closely below. Signs of this larger project begin to emerge as Herr C. relates the work of the puppet manipulator back to that of his own profession, claiming that "[t]he line that the center of gravity [of a puppet] must describe" as the figure is moved "is nothing other than the path to the soul of the dancer, . . . [for] through this line the puppeteer place[s] himself in the center of gravity of the marionette; that is to say, in other words, that the puppeteer dance[s]." The narrator in the essay clearly had never heard puppet manipulation described in such a way before, for he responds that it had been portrayed in the past "as something rather dull: somewhat like grinding the handle of a hurdy-gurdy." Kleist is not yet willing to disparage the art to this degree, as Herr C. rather cryptically likens the correlation between the movements made by the manipulators fingers and the puppet's own movements to "the relationship of numbers to logarithms or the asymptote to the hyperbola." The first comparison would seem to be related to the puppet's amplification of the puppet operator's gestures. The second could be interpreted as evoking the intimate link shared by the operator and the puppet. Regardless of how close their relationship might be, however, there is always a certain distance between them, just as there is between the asymptotes of a hyperbola and the hyperbola itself, even though it gets shorter and shorter as they progress toward infinity.

Herr C.—and presumably Kleist as well—nonetheless believes it is just a matter of time before the narrator's simile involving a hurdy-gurdy becomes completely accurate. Already the marionette requires merely a limited amount of input from its operator, for only the aforementioned "center of gravity" needs to be under the manipulator's control. Once the operator holds sway over this essential locus for the puppet's power of movement, each of the puppet's "limbs . . . [will] function as nothing more than a pendulum, swinging freely, will follow the movement in . . . [its] own fashion without anyone's aid." Presumably, this includes both the legs and the arms, which would result in a puppet not unlike the rod marionette of the Liège tradition, which is controlled by means of "a single rod attached to the top of the head." This kind of puppet is not generally known for its graceful dancing, however; indeed, it has "a bouncing swinging gait and always remain[s] upright" (McCormick and Pratasik 133). That said, the marionette Kleist is describing, however vaguely, certainly has more articulation points

than the rather stiff Liège rod marionette, even if not "every single limb, during the various movements of the dance, . . . [is] placed and controlled by the puppeteer." As a result of the admirable construction of the puppet and the fact that the "natural" movements required by the dance are equally well suited to both the human body and an artificial one patterned after it "because of the joints," the dance "require[s] no great skill on the part of the puppeteer to approximate it." The operator's responsibility for the performance could conceivably be further reduced if the movements of the puppets "could pass entirely over into the world of the mechanical and be operated by means of a handle," as the narrator had figuratively proposed was already the case.

There is a significant difference between the narrator's simile and Herr C.'s speculated future, however. As was noted above, the narrator tentatively compares manipulating a puppet to "grinding the handle of a hurdy-gurdy." Playing a hurdy-gurdy does, of course, involve turning a handle, but it also requires the player to press a given combination of keys in order to produce a certain sound. Consequently, this instrument is quite unlike the barrel organ, even though both can be operated through the use of a handle, for the barrel organ will consistently play the same song over and over again unless the barrel or cylinder on which the music has been encoded is exchanged for another one. The narrator's description of puppet manipulation, as demeaning as it is in tone, therefore allows for at least some creative input from the operator, while Herr C.'s vision of manipulation having "pass[ed] entirely over into the world of the mechanical" would seem to imply the debasement of the puppet into a mere automaton.

One should perhaps not make too much of a slight variation in wording, but the implications of this change are not inconsequential. Although the automaton is related to the puppet, it is a discrete phenomenon. Just as with the distinction between puppet and performing object, the difference between the puppet and the automaton can be brought into sharp relief through the application of Tillis's theory of the double-vision of puppet theatre. Tillis in fact addresses this problem directly, declaring "that the automaton cannot sustain the audience's imagination of life, owing to its relative poverty of movement possibilities, while the puppet can" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 110-11). While a human "operator," to use that term rather loosely, could certainly alter the automaton's coded movement pattern, doing so would be much like the barrel organ player selecting a new barrel for his instrument: a new pattern would have been set, but it still would be a fixed pattern. The use of the word *coded* in the previous sentence may have evoked thoughts of animatronic figures, which can indeed be automata, although they do not necessarily have to be, as they, like more traditional types of puppets, can be directly controlled by human operators, as Tillis observes in his article "The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production" (192-93). *Coded* needs to be understood here not in its semiotic sense—which would apply not only to both puppets and automata but also to anything at all that the audience could see moving onstage, including human actors and potentially even set pieces—but in a broad enough sense to encompass everything from

modern computerized methods of programming movement routines to mechanical means that have been used for much longer. Obviously, Herr C.'s hypothetical dancing figures would be governed by the latter type of "coding." Regardless of the way in which an automaton is programmed, however, it should always be "considered a kind of kinetic sculpture" (193), as Tillis advises.

Although he appears to be hoping that the puppet will one day be replaced by a more advanced automaton, Kleist still believes that, even in its current form, it is superior to the human performer, an idea upon which Craig would famously—indeed, infamously—elaborate. Kleist acknowledges that the puppet operator is the one who actually has to exploit the puppet's advantages, as it cannot do so on its own. Still, when, speaking through Herr C., he sets forth these advantages that he sees the puppet as possessing, he downplays the complexity of the work of the manipulator, as he does throughout this essay. He claims that there are two benefits to having a dance performed by puppets rather than humans. This first is that no puppet will ever "be affected," for self-consciousness cannot develop without consciousness. Herr C. explains that "affectation appears . . . when the soul (*vis motrix*) locates itself at any point other than the center of gravity of the movement." He goes on to describe the "frightful" results of two dancers misplacing their *vis motrix* or "motive force" during their respective performances. The human dancer must attempt to maintain control over her entire body, which can lead to such mistakes being made. In the opinion of Herr C., the situation is far more simplified in puppetry, for the manipulator "absolutely controls the wire or string . . . [but] has power over no other point than this one: therefore all the other limbs are what they should be dead, pure pendulums following the simple law of gravity, an outstanding quality that we look for in vain in most dancers." Although Jurkowski asserts that, in this essay, "Kleist gives a precise description of the functioning of a string puppet and its mechanism" (*History* 1: 264), as was suggested earlier, the picture he paints is not at all clear, given that an elementary control mechanism can produce a wide range of possible movements that can be strung together—forgive the convenient pun—but only indirectly under the direction of the manipulator. Eileen Blumenthal, in *Puppetry: A World History*, reveals that this unlikely combination of characteristics is possible to a degree, but one generally has to look further east than Germany to find examples. She writes, "Marionettes can be as simple as those traditionally used in some Rajasthani and Sri Lankan examples, which have only one or two strings." She identifies two factors that help to make up for this limited control system, the first being "the balance and jointing of the puppet" itself, a determination with which Kleist would surely agree. She also attributes the potential for the creation of "expressive gestures" in these types of puppet theatre to "the artistry of the puppeteer" (47), however, an evaluation of the role of the puppet operator that differs markedly from Kleist's.

The manipulator is even further effaced by Kleist in his explanation of the second advantage that the puppet dancer has over its human counterpart; indeed, the presence of any human participant at all in Herr C.'s romanticized—indeed, Romanticized—vision of puppet theatre is at best only implied.

"[P]uppets possess the virtue of being immune to gravity's force," Herr C. proclaims as he begins to outline the aforementioned second advantage. He continues, "They know nothing of the inertia of matter, that quality which above all is diametrically opposed to the dance, because the force that lifts them into the air is greater than the one that binds them to the earth." There is no doubt, of course, at least if we restrict ourselves to considering traditional puppetry controlled directly by human agency, as to the source of this power to overcome gravity: a living human manipulator or team of manipulators. Even if one wished to introduce more technologically advanced forms of puppetry, such as virtual puppetry restricted to a computer screen or animatronic puppetry (which requires input from a computer or some form of motion-capture technology), into the discussion, one would have to recognize that there would still be human intervention at some point in the production process. If this element were absent, the automaton question would again have to be addressed. Whatever the form of puppetry, the artist or artists involved would be much more than a "force that lifts them [the puppets] into the air," although they might well be that as well: puppet artists, if they are to be effective performers, must bring their onstage figures to life in the imaginations of the audience. This is no easy task, and it leaves them with an immense responsibility, as Craig clearly realizes: "The wood is much, the wires, the stage, the whole technique very much—but far more important is who it is that is holding the puppet." Despite his evident admiration for puppet artists, Craig's stance on controlling puppets—which also applied to how they should be made to speak— should be recalled here. As was noted above, it is a passive approach that he is advocating but one that takes—at least by the time he published *Puppets and Poets*, a special issue of *The Chapbook: A Monthly Miscellany*, in 1921—the puppet artist as its starting point, "[f]or it is [s]he who knows how to let it [the puppet] move and how to let it speak—and so [s]he it is who counts most" (4). Craig, a much more prolific writer than Kleist, at least on the subject of puppetry, thereby distances himself from his predecessor to a certain degree, as the manipulator of the puppet, not the puppet itself, takes centre stage.

It is the relationship between both of these signifying performers, however, that, along with the puppet's status as a perceived object that is imagined to be alive, is what is truly unique to puppet theatre. A human performer would have to be puppetized to a significant degree in order to be perceived as an object in the same way. Although, as we are already aware, this can certainly be realized onstage, it is far more common in the human theatre for the performer to be "perceived by the audience to be nothing other than alive." This holds true across the "range of acting technique" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 82) advanced by Tillis, including "presentational acting" (81), in spite of any "metatheatrical conventions" that might be deployed. The human performer "is also imagined to be alive, although the imaginary life is not usually that of the actor, but of the character he or she is representing" (82). Notwithstanding that the "double role" (Brecht, "Short Organum" 194) of the Brechtian actor complicates this sense of an "imaginary life," in that two imaginary lives (that of the performer and that of the character being represented) appear to inhere in the body of the performer, this in itself is not sufficiently transformative as regards to how the

performer is being received by spectator to give rise to the kind of "constant tension" that Tillis identifies as characteristic of puppet theatre. In other words, the essential nature of the human performer does not seem to change: the alienation-effect generated cannot become so intense that the performer impinges on the territory of the puppet, that which, according to Tillis, "is and is not that which it seems to be" (64). Thus, while there undoubtedly is a compelling and revealing parallel between Brecht's concept of the "double role" and Tillis's theory of "double-vision," the two terms are far from synonymous. Consequently, we must continue to adjudge the puppet as falling outside of "may be called the range of the actor" (80), as Tillis affirms.

Further Connections Branching Out from Alienation

As the reader has assuredly already noticed, more space has been devoted herein to analyzing the presentational or alienated performance style as it relates to both the puppet theatre and the theatre of human actors. This has been by design, but not because this style is to be framed within this study as the most effective option for puppet artists or as intrinsically the most historically significant style in either the Canadian or the global context. Indeed, an entirely different style, one that is associated with some priorities that are quite distinct from those related to presentational puppetry, will be introduced in the fourth chapter and emphasized from then on: tandem puppetry. The tandem style may be a more obvious choice of emphasis in the context of this study, since, as will be explained in greater detail later, it can be demonstrated to have a synergistic relationship with the complementary developmental approach that combines with it to form the core subject matter of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the presentational performance style—or, to be more precise, the theory underpinning it—provides an appropriate branching-off point to examine related and surrounding concerns, such as the concept of *character* in puppet theatre as it relates to manipulation style. These in their turn will establish the theoretical trajectory that will not only carry us through the rest of this chapter but also supply the momentum to transition into the next one, wherein these concepts and theories will undergo the contextualization needed to render them more directly relevant to the principal objectives of this study.

In order to begin spinning this web of connections radiating from the topic of presentational or alienated performance, we must return to our comparison of Craig and Kleist. Now, however, a similarity, rather than a difference, should be highlighted: they both shared the belief that, in the metaphorical (and sometimes literal) dance between the manipulator and the puppet, the puppet should lead. If this still seems too vague and overly romantic, one should note that at least two more contemporary and rigorous theorists of puppet theatre admit that it is in fact based in reality, although it has to be understood as a metaphor. A given puppet can only do what it was designed to do, and the manipulator must take "its technique of animation" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) into consideration, as Jurkowski states. Tillis elaborates, accepting that "the puppet does, in a sense, control the manner in which it is controlled."

Although this has very "practical" consequences, the manipulator, not the puppet itself, is the one who actively has to resolve the situation by "learn[ing] the movement potential of the puppet, and . . . allow[ing] for that potential to be realized." That much is difficult to dispute, as every puppet has movement limitations, and these have to be taken into account. Tillis also offers "a more mystical" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162) interpretation of arguments such as Craig's that the operator should "let it [the puppet] move itself" (*Puppets* 18): "[T]he puppet-operator's role is to show humility in the presence of his or her creation" (162).

Although Tillis is not particularly forthcoming about his own opinion with regard to this second interpretation, Jurkowski most definitely is in his article "Towards a Theatre of Objects." He expresses his judgement on the ideal relationship between operator and puppet in a passionate but insightful discussion concerning object theatre, a type of puppet theatre that features objects, often quite quotidian ones, rather than purpose-built puppets. One might think that an analysis of such a discussion would be better suited to the earlier section concerning performing objects. In object theatre, however, each object undergoes "two stages of transformation," according to Jurkowski: "First it has to take on life, and second it must become a character, or vice versa" (41). Consequently, it goes beyond that of which the performing object—which, as was noted above, always remains an object in both the perception and imagination of the audience—is capable. Nevertheless, Jurkowski's assertion needs to be problematized before we can proceed any further.

To begin with, the line he draws between constructed puppets and objects as puppets with regard to "transformation" is troubling. He contends that, unlike the more quotidian object, the purpose-built puppet "passes through one stage of transformation only," for it already has a specific character ingrained in it. Certainly, a constructed puppet might be "a pictorial representation of . . . [a given] character," but it need not be "an iconic sign of a character" ("Towards a Theatre" 41). "[T]here will be occasions when the puppeteer's reflection of reality produces a puppet with no face or no body" (18), as Baird remarks.[51] Even puppets that are "pictorial representation[s]" of more individualized characters, however, potentially to the point of being iconic signs, still have both to be brought to life and to have their assigned characters reinforced through the intervention of manipulators. After all, a puppet could feasibly be used to play more than one role, perhaps after a change of costume, just like a human actor. Alternatively, one puppet artist might inherit or purchase a puppet from another artist (or, in the latter case, from a store or online service) and use it to play another role in a production different from the one for which it was originally

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[51] Baird's own "[g]eometric marionettes" (18), patterned after designs by R. Buckminster Fuller (who is best known for inventing the geodesic dome, although this was just one of his many achievements), are perspicuous examples of puppets that have no clear referents. Thus, if one were to judge them from their appearance alone, any attribution of iconicity or verisimilitude to such objects would be dubious at the very least. Moreover, given their semiotic status, claiming that they had built-in characters would be equally suspect.

intended; indeed, if the artist in question bought the puppet from some kind of retail establishment, its original role, if it ever had one, could very well be unknown to her.

Nonetheless, there can still be cooperative interaction between any character "carved" into a puppet (literally or figuratively) and that which the human performer or performers bring into being, as was briefly noted above. Still, Jurkowski presents a false dichotomy, although not in the usual sense of offering only two possibilities when more exist. Rather, he creates an unconvincing boundary between object theatre and puppet theatre proper based on the argument that a particular character is perforce inherent in a constructed puppet. His line of reasoning also presupposes that a "character" is in fact a prerequisite for any kind of theatre to exist at all. He proclaims that "[t]heatre is transformation . . .[,] a vision created by an artist, transforming . . . himself or a puppet or even an object into an imagined character." In this post-Brechtian era of theatre scholarship, his clinging to this supposedly "well-known fact" and "widely accepted truth" ("Towards a Theatre" 37) is at best surprising: Jurkowski himself declares, "It was Bertolt Brecht who liberated the theatre from illusionism. He allowed the actor to stop presenting a character in favour of speaking to the audience in his own name. This was the famous alienation effect" (42). This itself is, of course, a simplification of Brechtian theory. Brecht himself noted that the actor "need not renounce the means of empathy entirely," as she can use "these means just as any normal person with no particular acting talent would use them if [s]he wanted to portray someone else, i.e. show how [s]he behaves," as in the cases of "witnesses of an accident demonstrating to newcomers how the victim behaved, a facetious person imitating a friend's walk, etc." ("Short Description" 136). Brechtian actors can therefore "feel their way into their characters' skins with a view to acquiring their characteristics" using the tool of empathy, but, like the everyday "actors" that Brecht mentions, they need not—indeed, should not—endeavour to create "an illusion." That said, although "the usual practice in acting" is to use the technique of identification "during the actual performance, in the hope of stimulating the spectator into a similar operation," the Brechtian actor should "achieve it only at an earlier stage, at some point during rehearsals" (137). Still, even during a performance, "the epic actor . . . has to be able to show his character's coherence despite, or rather by means of, interruptions and jumps" ("The Question" 55). Brecht qualifies this idea of the "character's coherence" in his epic theatre by adding that "the epic actor lets his character grow before the spectator's eyes out of the way in which he behaves," and "'[t]his way of joining up,' 'this way of selling an elephant,' 'this way of conducting the case,' do not altogether add up to a single unchangeable character but to one which changes all the time and becomes more and more clearly defined in course of 'this way of changing'" (56).

The protean nature of the Brechtian character would approach what might be its zenith in the postmodern period, when, as Elinor Fuchs famously theorized in *The Death of Character*, character, like "identity," could be construed as a series "of continuously changing personae with no inherent self." Although Fuchs's book was published twelve years after Jurkowski's article was first printed in 1984

(and eight years after the revised version appeared in *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*), the seed for her line of thinking was the 1979 Public Theatre production *Leave It to Beaver is Dead*. Moreover, she muses that the postmodern revelation of "the role-playing subject" could perhaps be "merely the truth that 'always already,' as [Jacques] Derrida likes to say, lay beneath the mask of self-sameness that . . . was destined to be stripped away." If the character of the human theatre, indeed even the supposedly "unitary self" (6) of the "real" human world, has been called into question, the conviction that its integrity is somehow assured in the puppet theatre, especially given the complications endemic to the art that are outlined above, becomes untenable.

From such a troubling beginning, Jurkowski's "arguments and conclusions" in "Towards a Theatre of Objects" become even more problematic. He claims that, "at a conference in Moscow" held several years prior to the publication of this article, he proclaimed "that we had just come to the end of a cycle in the history of puppet theatre" and that "[t]his cycle, started centuries ago by ritual puppetry, included different periods of theatre development and had now come full circle in today's ritual manner of the puppets' handling." His example at that time was "the production of the DRAK theatre 'For its Final Appearance — Circus Unikum'" (37). Blumenthal cites this production by "the Czech state puppet theater Drak" (210) as an example of "a well-developed ruse in Soviet satellite countries," namely "[t]urning classics and other innocent-seeming plays into political allegories." This particular production, first staged in 1978 and thus during the communist era of the former Czechoslovakia, "portrayed the revolt of circus performers against an evil ringmaster" (168), Blumenthal explains. Jurkowski focuses on one character in particular, Nadezhda, "the play's most important character," according to him, who "had no movement" and who "was inanimate — or almost." This puppet character was nonetheless "'alive' because all the other characters, played by live actors[,] treated her as a live person." Jurkowski claims that "[t]his is the ritual way of making a figure live, which can be referred to as the 'animisation' of the figure," in reference to "animism," or the belief "that stones, trees, clouds, animals . . . [are] invested with some spiritual force — *anima*" (37). He in fact locates the beginnings of puppetry in animistic rites, asserting that the animists' "ceremonial figures, as they became participants in their rituals, were also believed to be imbued with life" and therefore "became idols." Following this metamorphosis, "[t]he next stage was the animation (manipulation) of the idols which resulted in their transformation into puppets," and after this, the "functions" of the puppet began to multiply exponentially, although they could be divided into two general categories: those that continued to be associated with "ritual and magic" and those associated with theatrical performance, "functions which have changed from century to century, depending on cultural and social life, and that of the theatre" (38).

Jurkowski immediately dismisses "the ritual and magic functions," or so it would seem, as they are "far beyond our present concern" (38), an assumption that indeed appears to be quite reasonable. He soon reveals, however, that he in fact strongly prefers puppet theatre productions that still retain ritualistic

or magical elements, such as the aforementioned *Cirkus Unikum* (as Blumenthal spells it) by DRAK Theatre, to purely "profane and secular" productions that leave all of this behind. He includes "the puppet as an idol" (40) in his lengthy list of legitimate functions for the puppet, for example, again citing Nadezhda from *Cirkus Unikum* as an exemplar, as she was invested with a sense of life through the human actors sharing the stage with her behaving as if she were alive. In fact, this character, a trapeze artist, "was the only human represented by a puppet" (*History* 2: 320): the remainder of the human circus performers were portrayed by equally human actors, and the other puppets were relegated to representing animals. Although Jurkowski does not include a photograph or even a detailed description of Nadezhda, if one turns to Joseph Brandesky's *Czech Theatre Design in the Twentieth Century: Metaphor & Irony Revisited*, one can see that she was in fact represented by an articulated puppet (11, 49; Brandesky, "Images" MATA08, MATA11). Brandesky's account of Nadezhda's performance also differs markedly from the one that Jurkowski gives. Far from motionless, she "was openly manipulated by actors" and thereby "performed a series of circus acts." The two authors do agree on one point, however: this puppet "became a living presence onstage through her interaction with the [human] performers" (8), to use Brandesky's phrasing. Their shared emphasis on this point is worth noting, as their explanations of how Nadezhda—Brandesky spells the name *Naděžda* in the original Czech manner—was imbued with life, especially Jurkowski's, resemble Veltruský's examination of his own early "broadened concept of personification" (88), which includes the animation of objects "by . . . treating them as live beings" (86). This theory was discussed earlier when puppets and performing objects were being compared. Aside from the fact that Nadezhda was a constructed puppet, this trapeze artist, "the focus and symbol of the others' dreams and their fighting spirit," was assumedly accorded much more of a life than the previously examined door in *Tartuffe*. After all, Nadezhda (or "Hope") "became the ideal of life, bestowed on her by her worshippers: she was a modern idol" (Jurkowski, *History* 2: 320). The door in *Tartuffe*, on the other hand, as an object of staging, goes through no such animisation, to use Jurkowski's term: it continues to be nothing more than a door (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 79).

Jurkowski does refer to Nadezhda as an "'objectified' puppet" (*History* 2: 320), however, presumably because she was immobile—although there is disagreement on this point—and therefore in need of a human performer's gaze in order to be brought to life. He does not raise an objection to this "idolatrous," so to speak, form of puppet theatre, but he is not nearly as open-minded when addressing the topic of object theatre proper, despite the fact that his theory of animisation could also be applied to certain instances of this type of puppetry, as we will see in the next chapter with reference to the Puppetmongers production *The Brick Bros. Circus*. He initially seems to accept object theatre as a form of puppetry, for "the puppet as anything that is material and impersonal and which may serve as a stage character" ("Towards a Theatre" 39) is another of "the puppets' theatrical functions" (38) that he authorizes. He notes that, in this type of puppetry, "[t]he work of the sculptors and manufacturers . . . [is]

replaced by the work of the imagination of the artist." Most likely with the work of twentieth-century French puppet artist Yves Joly in mind, he offers the example of using "an umbrella . . . instead of a carved figure" (39).[52] Somewhat contradictorily, however, he also attacks the function of "the puppet as an object as such, deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public," as "[w]hen the actors as well as the public no longer believe in the life of the puppet the wonder of the transformation into a live character does not occur," and thus, although "the puppet is an object manufactured especially for theatrical use, in this case it is completely dead." He further argues that "[t]his lack of belief results in the degeneration of the puppet and onstage it seems to be useless," which in turn has often led to constructed puppets being "replaced by actual objects taken from everyday life" (40).

The binarism of Jurkowski's polarized criteria for evaluating object theatre limits their usefulness. Moreover, he does not provide sufficient detail to allow one to determine the category into which a given object theatre piece should be placed. One is therefore left to conclude that, with regard to determining whether a given object theatre piece is "deprived of theatrical life" ("Towards a Theatre" 40) or indicative of "the work of the imagination of the artist" (39), the only points of reference are one's own preferences and presumptions. If one were intending to publish an assessment of this kind, rhetorical objectives would also have to be taken into consideration. Jurkowski's insistence on a distinction between these two qualities is nonetheless still significant, as it leads him to revise the conclusion that he put forward at the Moscow conference, as he has become convinced that "we are not at present within one cycle of the puppet's history but in two, . . . [which] touch and even penetrate each other." On the one hand, there "is the cycle which deals with magic, rites, religious and similar sorts of puppets, all based on animism and the supernatural," which has already been addressed. On the other hand, there is the cycle that "deals with profane and secular puppets, wherein all interest lies in the process of creation"; indeed, the "process of creation on the stage has become more important than the puppet by itself," Jurkowski contends, and he is obviously not entirely pleased with this development. The focus in much of contemporary puppetry has shifted from the puppet itself to "the actor . . . onstage who is the 'creator,'" according to Jurkowski, which has reduced the puppet to being "at most a participant of the actor's work" (40).

Even Jurkowski does not appear to be convinced that this degradation of the puppet is inevitable, and he seems to leave the door open for exceptions, as another of the legitimate functions of the puppet that he posits is "the puppet as partner of the actor, who is visibly manipulating the figure onstage" ("Towards a Theatre" 39). This function of the puppet will be analyzed more closely in the fourth chapter, for nowhere does it manifest itself more clearly than in productions staged in the tandem style. For the

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[52] In a caption for a photograph of another Joly production, Blumenthal also briefly describes a show of his in which "a nuclear family of undisguised umbrellas and parasols was invaded by walking-cane intruders" (75).

moment, it is worth noting that, rather than being relegated to the position of "at most a participant of the actor's work" (40), the puppet, when assigned this function, is on equal terms with the human performer, as both "co-operate to create a theatre character" (39). Here again, evidence of Jurkowski's rather conservative perspective on character can be discerned.

As has been demonstrated, this is not the only subject that Jurkowski approaches from a conservative standpoint. Object theatre, for him, is suspect, as is the puppetization of the human body. Although he does concede that some of the "many strange items in the theatre" that are now "often dubbed 'puppets'" can legitimately be accorded this status, his vaguely defined but apparently rigorous and exclusive rubric ensures that, from his perspective, this rarely proves justified. Unfortunately, his judgement on such matters also seems to be clouded by nostalgia, as is revealed in his laments concerning "the degeneration of the puppet": "Not so long ago the puppet was a manufactured figure made to be moved and animated in a theatre context. Now according to modern practice anything may be called a puppet, because 'being a puppet' means for many people 'being transformed'" ("Towards a Theatre" 40).

Jurkowski in fact comes across as disoriented by the emerging world of "contemporary puppet theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43), in which "puppets are any items which can be transformed into characters — even the human body (if treated like a puppet) or some part of it (the hands for example), and all sorts of objects as well as different kinds of materials . . ." (40-41). With more than a hint of regret, he observes that many modern puppet artists, like much of the rest of humanity, "have laid aside magic," choosing to use stage objects that are indeed "no more than objects, the majority of them taken from everyday life," to represent the characters in their productions. These objects "have nothing to do with the sacred or magic, as puppets once had," but rather "have much to do with our profane civilization." His disappointment is clear when he complains, "In spite of this they [objects as puppets] are produced onstage with much more enthusiasm than the puppets, nowadays" (41).

Even though Jurkowski's point of view on object theatre and related matters could scarcely be characterized as a progressive one, this does not mean that his observations should be dismissed out of hand. Indeed, they have done much to frame the discourse that has followed since. Tillis, for example, would no doubt agree with his claim that "'being a puppet' means for many people 'being transformed'" ("Towards a Theatre" 40), although he, for one, would most likely not see this as a cause for concern. As was noted earlier, in order for "profane" object theatre productions to be appropriately received by the audience, each object must both "take on life . . . and . . . become a character," according to Jurkowski. The problems with this claim were examined above, but it nonetheless leads him to formulate his theory of "opalisation" ("Towards a Theatre" 41), an important precursor to Tillis's theory of double-vision. Movement attributed to the puppet is particularly central to Jurkowski's influential theory:

> When movement fully dominates an object we feel that the character is born and present on the stage. When it is the nature of the object which dominates we still see the object. The object is still the object and the character at the same time. Sometimes however this

unity splits for a short while, to be regenerated after a moment. This is what I mean by
'opalisation.' ("Towards a Theatre" 41)

Jurkowski implies that "[t]he opalisation effect when playing with objects" cannot be criticized for any intrinsic reason, for it "is attractive and modern," as he concedes in a surprisingly positive tone. He soon resumes his assault, however, proclaiming that the motive behind so many puppet artists choosing objects over puppets "is more philosophical" than aesthetic. The puppet, with "its plastic expression, its technique of animation and its tradition of movement," necessarily "embodies a programme of its acting self" and imposes this "programme" upon the puppet artist, who "has to submit to the puppet" if he hopes to use it effectively; thus, somewhat paradoxically, the puppet artist "serves the puppet — that is he serves its magic." By comparison, the quotidian object affords the puppet artist much more freedom, as it "holds no programme of acting: the performer must invent one from [her or] his own imagination." The puppet artist therefore no longer "serve[s] the object"; rather, "it is the object which serves the imagination of the performer." The performer, literally or metaphorically, transforms her "puppets into objects, depriving them of the remains of their ancient power and submitting them" to her own "programme" in order to become "the sole creator on the puppet stage" ("Towards a Theatre" 42).

Jurkowski's pronouncements related to the differences that he discerns between the puppet and the object may remind the reader of Craig's recommendation that the puppet manipulator should "let it [the puppet] move itself" (*Puppets* 18) or, as Tillis phrases it, "show humility in the presence of his or her creation" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162). Jurkowski's stance on this issue is revealed through the kind of language that he uses as he accuses "some" object theatre practitioners of "depriving them [their puppets] of the remains of their ancient power." As has already been demonstrated, he is most certainly not alone in his opinion that something is lost when the puppet or object comes to serve "the imagination of the performer." He relates this development to a more general trend that he sees cutting across puppet theatre and "the actors' theatre of the [contemporary] avant-garde": what has become "[t]he most important element" in both of these is not the character or even Aristotle's *mythos* but "the creative process" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) itself. This realization prompts Jurkowski to wonder whether or not one could now "talk about a unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre." He answers in the negative but admits that he does not yet have a clear explanation for this conclusion, for at the time, he believed that there were "no answers . . .[,] only questions." He assumedly was referring only to this particular issue, as clearly he was comfortable giving many other answers in this article and elsewhere; indeed, even here, despite his apparent uncertainty, he cannot resist supplying some kind of answer. The problem that he examines, however briefly, also lies at the heart of the present study, so we will return several times to the question of whether "the puppet theatre still has a separate existence" (43).

This question has, in fact, been one that Jurkowski himself has revisited several times. While, in his article "Towards a Theatre of Objects," he hesitates momentarily before ultimately confirming that

"the puppet theatre still has a separate existence" (43), he also examines the question of when puppet theatre proper began. He argues that "the puppet . . . has been producing the opalisation effect since the eighteenth century" only, as it was not until then that "[t]he puppet was . . . considered a puppet and a live character at the same time" (41). His affirmation of the need for a "character" in the conventional sense has been noted before, but in an earlier article, "The Sign Systems of Puppetry," he mentions an additional requirement, even as he allows for an earlier start date for "European puppet theatre": "Until the seventeenth century, the puppet demonstrations always lacked some elements; they did not have dramas or the puppets were not characters" (68). Thus, it is clear that, as Tillis points out, "Jurkowski does not consider opalisation to be inherent in the puppet itself" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 62), for several significant requirements—dramatic characters, some kind of dramatic structure, among a few other things—had to be met before it could be generated.

In other words, according to Jurkowski, before the aforementioned requirements were met, "the puppet . . . [was] acknowledged only as, respectively, 'object' or 'life'" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 62), as Tillis notes. Jurkowski aligns the emergence of "the opalescence [or opalisation] of the puppet" with the advent of "the puppet theatre sign system" ("Sign Systems" 78), that is, the sign system associated with the puppet as part of an independent puppet theatre and not "in the service of neighbouring sign systems" (68), as it is when used as a storytelling aid, for example (69-70), or "in the sign system of the live theatre" (68), as it was in some *commedia dell'arte* performances (71). Although Jurkowksi charts the historical progression of the puppet through the various sign systems, he stresses that all of these "systems still exist, . . . [and] the puppet still belongs to them at this moment" (68).

While Jurkowski's purportedly historical argument regarding the advent of genuine puppet theatre in Europe is certainly open to debate, an extended repudiation is unnecessary in the present context, as, contrary to what Jurkowski would have one believe, a spectator can still imagine that a puppet is alive even if it is not representing a character in a drama in the traditional sense.[53] Even "[t]rick puppets" such as "metamorphosis puppets and circus puppets" are imagined to be alive, even if only for a few moments, as they achieve their largely "technical accomplishments" (Jurkowski, "Sign Systems" 76). Since "[o]palescence, then, is not inherent in all puppet performance, but only in a certain style of such performance" (62), a "high-art" style of performance, and since Jurkowski's term, "while nicely poetic, requires substantial exegesis to be comprehensible" (64), Tillis finally decides to reject it in favour of his own term: double-vision.

Jurkowski's own concept of opalescence or opalisation was not, of course, developed in a vacuum either. He was building on the work of Otakar Zich, one of the first scholars to address the

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[53] If one were determined to challenge the date set by Jurkowski (itself a movable feast) rather than dismiss his criteria outright, one could turn to Speaight, for example, for evidence, as he has argued convincingly that the fragmentary *Interludium de Clerico et Puella*, which dates from the early fourteenth century, making it "the earliest surviving English secular play text" (*The Earliest English Puppet Play?* 4), may have actually been a puppet play.

subject of puppetry in a rigorous manner, who argued that "puppets may be perceived either as living people or as lifeless dolls," and because the spectator "can perceive them *only* one way at a time," she either "perceive[s] the puppets as dolls [and] stress[es] their inanimate character," as "the material [that] they are made of" is what she believes she is "really perceiving" at that particular moment, or "conceive[s] of the puppets as if they were living beings by emphasizing their lifelike expressions, their movements and speech, and taking them as real" (qtd. in Bogatyrëv 48).[54]

There are two significant problems with Zich's argument, however. The first is that it requires one to assume that the puppet must be wholly inanimate, which is far from true, despite the fact that this is perhaps the most commonly held misconception concerning the puppet, not only in the minds of the public, but in those of academics and practitioners as well. Indeed, much of the existing body of puppet theory is predicated upon this assumption, as it is an essential part of the definition of *puppet* offered by many writers on the topic, including Baird (13), McPharlin (*Repertory* 1), and Jurkowski ("Sign Systems" 79-80), to name just a few, and establishing just such a definition of the term is the traditional starting point for any investigation of the subject.

Taking into consideration the centrality of the audience in Tillis's theory of double-vision, we should expect him to counter this assumption regarding the—according to Zich, among others— necessarily "inanimate character" (qtd. in Bogatyrëv 48) of the puppet, as indeed he does: "The puppet is an 'object' only in the perception of the audience." He therefore recommends, "when not explicitly noting the perception of the audience, to employ the quotation marks [around the word *object*], reminding us that the word is not limited to the inanimate, but, rather, implicitly refers to the audience's perception of the figure in question" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 21). A puppet may, of course, be wholly inanimate, but it may also be wholly animate or even include both animate and inanimate components.

The second significant problem with Zich's argument is the very either-or logic upon which it rests. As we know, he stipulates that "puppets may be perceived either as living people or as lifeless dolls . . . [but] *only* one way at a time." In the second case, "[i]t is the material they are made of that strikes us as something that we are really perceiving," and consequently, "we cannot take seriously their speech or their movements." Although "they demand we take them as people," this only "amuses us, " as "we find them comical and grotesque." On the other hand, "we may conceive of the puppets as if they were living beings by emphasizing their lifelike expressions, their movements and speech, and taking them as real." As a result of this, "we get the feeling of something inexplicable, enigmatic, and astounding" (qtd. in Bogatyrev 48), as "we are faced with something utterly unnatural—namely, life in an inanimate, inorganic material" (qtd. in Bogatyrev 48-49).

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[54] Zich's original article, originally published in 1923, has yet to be completely translated into English, although Bogatyrev helpfully includes an extended quotation, which has just as helpfully been translated by Milanne S. Hahn, who translated Bogatyrev's own article. See Zich's entry in the list of works cited for the bibliographic information for the original source.

Veltruský criticizes Zich's argument, as in it, he does not account for the fact that "there exist puppet performances that are neither comic nor mysterious, but simply serious." Moreover, even if one were to accept "the two opposite perceptions of the puppet" posited by Zich—"and therefore its two opposite effects on the spectator"—one would have to face a body of evidence suggesting that they are are not, in fact, "mutually exclusive," contrary to Zich's dichotomy. Indeed, "the comic and the uncanny are intertwined" in many cases, as Veltruský observes, citing a number of international examples. As shall be shown at several points throughout the remainder of this dissertation, a number of Canadian examples could be appended to his list, including some of the productions developed by Mirbt, Burkett, and Puppetmongers Theatre, respectively. Veltruský does concede that Zich's apparent error "was no doubt due to the fact that he reasoned primarily in terms of the psychology of perception and thus conceived the two opposite effects as some sort of illusion rather than meanings" (109).

Jurkowski is still more forgiving, acknowledging that "Zich did not write about puppetry in general but about the puppetry of his time, the theatre he saw and knew," namely the "folk puppet theatre." Zich believed "that folk puppet theatre was stylized and he took this as being characteristic of puppet theatre in general"; thus, "he suggested that puppet practitioners develop two kinds of stylization: the plastic-art one (with caricatured puppets) and the symbolic one (with symbolic puppets), according to two kinds of perception." Jurkowski further argues that Zich was addressing "the perceptions of two kinds of publics: the folk audience's perception (puppets are mysterious) and the erudite audience's perception (puppets are puppets)" ("Sign Systems" 58).

Bogatyrëv is, by contrast, an uncompromising critic of Zich. He contrives a metaphor bearing on language in order to admonish both Zich and the general public for the way in which they perceive puppet theatre: "The perception of one semiotic system in comparison to another system is an especially interesting problem. Thus someone familiar with only one language often regards a related language as a distorted version of his own native tongue" (47). Despite his already less than generous conclusion that "[t]he public, especially an adult one, does not invariably perceive a puppet performance as a comic spectacle," he goes on to proclaim only two paragraphs later that "the adult public . . . finds it difficult to perceive puppets as such and always perceives signs in puppetry in comparison to live theater, and therefore often perceives puppetry as something funny" (50). Zich, too, he maintains, "fail[s] to recognize the puppet theater as a unique system of signs: without such recognition no work of art can be perceived correctly." He even declares that "[e]verything that Zich says about puppetry can be applied to every other art," including live acting, for "whenever we perceive artistic signs in comparison with a real thing, that is, proceeding from a real thing and not from the sign system that constitutes the work of art, we have the same impression that Zich describes"; that is, we find them to be humorous or mysterious, perhaps even "frightening." Bogatyrëv goes on to assert that these reactions can be elicited not only by the perception of "artistic signs in comparison with a real thing . . . but also [by] the perception of one system

of signs in reference to another system" that is related but distinct. In Zich's case, according to Bogatyrëv, the "basic error was that he did not recognize a separate sign system for puppets, but compared them to living actors" (49).

Jurkowski's riposte to Bogatyrëv (in defence of Zich) will be analyzed further in the fourth chapter, in the context of tandem puppetry performances, during which, as Bogatyrëv writes of the phenomenon more generally, "[t]he audience is forced simultaneously to perceive two semiotic systems: the puppets' system and the actors' system" (64). As one might expect, given his rather low opinion of the average spectator, this situation posed a particular problem for Bogatyrëv. For the time being, however, what is worth noting is Jurkowski's indebtedness to Zich, as his own concept of opalescence or opalisation rests upon the foundation provided by Zich's either-or conception of the puppet. Jurkowski may mock Bogatyrëv, claiming that, in his article, he "act[s] as if he were identifying himself with a puppet player disappointed that his audience misunderstood his performance because they applied the wrong decoding system" ("Sign Systems" 60-61). Jurkowski nonetheless shares his belief in the existence of two related but distinct sign systems; in fact, Jurkowski's theory of opalescence or opalisation is predicated upon it.

That said, Jurkowski conspicuously avoids the constraints of an either-or argument in developing his theory of "the opalescence of the puppet" ("Sign Systems" 78). Although Jurkowski initially seems to be merely echoing Zich's own pronouncements, the difference between Zich's rigid binary opposition concerning the audience's perception of the puppet and Jurkowski's theory of the "opalescence" or "opalisation" of the puppet is clear: the latter allows for "the audience's simultaneous acknowledgement of the puppet's dual nature" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 62) as "object" and "character" or, to use the term preferred by Tillis, "life" (62).

There have been several other variations on Zich's either-or model, which—despite, or perhaps rather because of, objections to it, objections to those objections, and, inevitably, objections to the objections to the original objections—has yet to be shaken from its foundational position. Veltruský, whose own objections to Zich's theoretical groundwork were mentioned just above, advances his theory of the "vivification" of the puppet, clearly also an antecedent to Tillis's concept of double-vision. A "semiotic process of multifarious oscillation between what is inanimate and what is human" (92), vivification endows puppets "with life," so that "the spectators are induced to perceive the inanimate puppets as live beings acting on their own initiative" (88).

Thomas A. Green and W. J. Pepicello, American scholars specializing in folklore and linguistics, respectively, likewise construe "the audience's attention as oscillating between the object as actor (i.e., having life) and acted upon (i.e., an inanimate thing)" (157). For Green and Pepicello, this oscillation is a reflection of the fact that, "while the audience knows, on some level, that the puppet is a mere sign (specifically a metonym), observers are led to disattend this fact by the artistic conventions of the art

form." They go on to postulate a second "convention of disattending" in puppet theatre, namely that "of disattending the human presence in puppet plays." In "some traditions," evidently those that feature visible onstage human operators, "the human presence" is not disattended, however, at least not completely, as such traditions—as well as, presumably, more contemporary approaches that also incorporate onstage manipulation—"create tension in performance — the tension arising from the audience's alternate perception of the puppet as an independent 'actor' and as a manipulated object" (155).

Tillis criticizes Green and Pepicello's theory of oscillation and concomitant disattendance on two grounds, "[t]he first . . . [being] that oscillation between the puppet as 'actor' and 'acted upon' is not considered to be universally operative" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 60-61), for "it is implied that if the puppet-operator is not visible, no such oscillation will occur." This would further suggest that, in such cases, "the universal disattendance of the puppet as 'mere sign' will predominate, supplemented by the local disattendance of the invisible puppet-operator"; consequently, "the 'life' of the puppet . . . will be valued more highly than the nature of the puppet as an 'object' constituted of signs" (61). In short, the "tension" (155) to which Veltruský refers would resolve itself and dissipate.

"The second problem" that Tillis identifies "is . . . the conflicting logic of oscillation and disattendance." Following through on Green and Pepicello's analysis proves difficult, as one is left in a quandary: "[e]ither the audience oscillates between the two aspects of the puppet in balanced tension, or the two aspects are not balanced, and the puppet as 'life' dominates the puppet as 'object,'" as Tillis puts it. By restricting "oscillation to puppetry in which there is the 'human presence' of a visible puppet-operator," Green and Pepicello seem to intimate "that . . . awareness and disattendance of the puppet as 'mere sign' is the more fundamental acknowledgement of the puppet by the audience" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 61), Tillis concludes. Once again, in a more general way, "the object as actor" appears to win out over "the object as . . . acted upon" (Green and Pepicello 157).

Tillis would most likely denounce Veltruský's own conception of oscillation for similar reasons. His criticisms of Jurkowski's concept of opalescence or opalisation have already been cited. Even though he implicitly recognizes the debt that he owes to these and other theorists for preparing the way for his own conceptualization of the puppet, he stresses that "[i]t remains to be suggested that every puppet, in every age, in every theatre and tradition, invites its audience to acknowledge, at once, its two aspects" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 63-64). Moreover, "it remains to be suggested that through the tension inherent in this dual acknowledgment, the puppet pleasurably challenges its audience's understanding of what it means to be an 'object' and what it means to have 'life'" (64). The historical importance and occasional usefulness of the various earlier theories notwithstanding, it is Tillis's concept of double-vision that best captures the inherent alienating quality of the puppet. It is also part of the answer to Jurkowski's question

regarding why "the puppet theatre still has a separate existence" ("Towards a Theatre" 43), but so too is Jurkowski's own emphasis on process.

Craig's Sceptre: The *Über-marionette*

The puppet theatre does indeed have "a separate existence" ("Towards a Theatre" 43), as Jurkowski observes, so much so, in fact, that Craig controversially argued in "The Actor and the Über-marionette" that it could and should conquer the territory of the human theatre. "Art arrives only by design" ("Actor" 55), and thus "in order to make any work of art it is clear we may only work in those materials with which we can calculate" (55-56). Unfortunately, however, the living human body "is not one of these materials," due to its "accidental nature": "The actions of the actor's body, the expression of his face, the sounds of his voice, all are at the mercy of the winds of his emotions" (56). Consequently, Craig calls for a "*new material*" (73) in the theatre, one that, like the artistic materials used in other disciplines, would be subject to change only through the will of the artist, who would be in total control, regardless of emotional state. In short, "[t]he actor must go, and in his place comes the inanimate figure— the Über-marionette we may call him, until he has won for himself a better name" (81).

Scholars disagree over whether Craig's arguments should be taken literally. Interpreting the Über-marionette as a theoretical concept, "rhetorical device," and extended "metaphor" (Taxidou 172) seems to be the most common position to take. At first glance, this explanation also appears to be well justified. After all, Craig himself published a recantation only four years after the incendiary proclamations quoted above were originally published in 1908. In it, he indeed describes the Über-marionette as a metaphor, claiming that he does "not believe in the mechanical, nor in the material" ("Gentlemen" 25) and denying that he ever desired to replace the actor with an inanimate figure manipulated by means of "real metal or silken threads" (26). Irène Eynat-Confino believes that this was "a strategic move to attract new productions" (173), as Craig did have a career to consider, and his bold declarations were becoming a cause for concern for many. As his private notebooks and letters reveal, although his published remarks regarding the Über-marionette were intentionally vague, Craig was striving to make this dream of his a reality: for example, he built a model of the theatre and stage that was to house it, devised lists of necessary props and costumes, organized a suitable repertoire, and designed and constructed several prototypes of the new actor. Indeed, for a time, he had even secured funding for the project from a group of businessmen lead by "'the Dresdenman'" (qtd. in Eynat-Confino 148), but he eventually lost this, apparently due to his inability "to complete a satisfactory über-marionette in time" (148).

Craig echoed his retraction in the 1924 preface to *On the Art of the Theatre*, in which "The Actor and the Über-marionette" was republished: "The Über-marionette is the actor plus fire, minus egoism: the fire of the gods and demons, without the smoke and steam of mortality. The literal ones took me to mean

pieces of wood one foot in height; that infuriated them; they talked of it for ten years as a mad, a wrong, an insulting idea" (ix-x). Even within that original provocative essay, he asserts that he is in search of "a new form of acting, consisting for the main part of symbolical gesture" (61); thus, he was apparently more interested in "puppetizing" actors than actually replacing them with puppets. He came to identify his "new form of acting" with the style adopted by the famous English actor-manager Henry Irving, in whose company Craig himself was an actor for a time, as was his mother Ellen Terry, who was the troupe's leading lady. In his appropriately titled book concerning his mentor, *Henry Irving*, Craig praises the artificiality of Irving's acting style: "In dancing his role, Irving went to the extreme limits possible to an actor of the nineteenth century, of preserving the last tingle of the mighty Greek tradition. . . . He danced, he did not merely walk—he sang, he by no means merely spoke. He was essentially artificial in distinction to being merely natural" (74). As Eynat-Confino summarizes, Craig applauds "Irving's use of symbolic gestures, immobility (*stasis*), and slow movement," traits he also ascribed to the Über-marionette. He argues that "Irving found an endless variety of expressive gestures," each one initially inspired by "nature," but taking its final form only after "a process of contemplation, mediation, reflection, selection, and stylization," arriving finally "at expression." Eynat-Confino identifies Irving's technique as described by Craig as "a kinesymbolic art" (188), as each gesture is discrete and imbued with meaning. Moreover, Craig asserts that, quite unlike most of the other representatives of his profession, Irving would tolerate "no chance movement" (77) in one of his performances, as "every sound, each movement, was intentional" (78). Therefore, as Taxidou proposes, "[t]he *Ubermarionette* could merely be a metaphor for a type of stylized, highly Romantic and expressionist acting," an equation that "could not be accepted by other Modernist theatre experimenters." There is, in fact, "something very incongruous in Craig's combination of Modernist rhetoric with Romantic idealisation" (172), as Taxidou concludes.

It is certainly possible that Craig's identification of the Über-marionette with Irving was part of the "strategic move" (173) discerned by Eynat-Confino. Reconciling Craig's theory and (limited though it was) practice concerning the Über-marionette with his views on manipulation is more difficult. One can choose to emphasize his self-assigned quest "for a 'pliable' material, 'which takes the impression of the artist but does not change after the impression is given'" (qtd. in Eynat-Confino 89).[55] Alternatively, one could draw attention to his suggestion that "the art" of puppetry is to be truly discovered "once you have made a Puppet and taught yourself *to allow it* to move" (*Puppets* 18). Both of these threads will be teased out further over the next two chapters. We can already perceive, however, that Craig, at least with respect to the ways in which he presented himself in his theoretical writings, can be associated with both of the

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[55] Eynat-Confino is quoting from one of Craig's unpublished "Uber-Marions" notebooks, which—along with "The Actor and the Über-marionette"—"are the main sources on the über-marionette." Eynat-Confino explains that they "were completed during 1905 and 1906 and contain several additions made in 1912, 1921, and 1934; their entries do not follow any chronological or topical order, and few of them are dated" (85).

two types of puppet artist posited by Jurkowski: one who chooses "to submit to the puppet" and one who "does not serve the object; it is the object which serves the imagination of the performer" ("Towards a Theatre" 42). Jurkowski's binary perspective has already been analyzed at length. What should be added here is that he stresses Craig's pioneering role in establishing the trend that, according to him, characterizes "contemporary puppet theatre" and "[c]ontemporary avant-garde [human] theatre" (43): "[t]he most important element is the creative process, dominating all other elements of theatre" (42). "Craig gave a sceptre to the theatre artist" (43), Jurkowski declares, because he "wanted to liberate the theatre from the domination of literature . . . [and] from the egoism of actors to make possible creation in the theatre" (42). Thus, Craig must be credited with being one of the most influential figures in the development of a state of affairs that could prompt Jurkowski to speculate as to whether or not "we are . . . at the point of being able to talk about a unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre" (43).

Even so, despite considerable evidence of Craig's practical experimentation, Taxidou's argument that he "was more interested in the puppet as an *idea* rather than as an agent of a specific technique in theatre practice" (154) remains compelling. He certainly left behind few tools that could be used to address Jurkowski's query with much rigour or specificity. To do so, one must go beyond fundamental inquiries—such as attempting to determine what is and what is not a puppet or whether or not Craig's writings concerning the Über-marionette should be interpreted literally—as important as the theoretical foundation that they establish is. The particular nature of the instruments that could be employed in order "to make possible creation in the theatre" (Jurkowski, "Towards a Theatre" 42) must be understood more clearly, because no one type of puppet is truly "*über*" in the sense of being superior to the human performer in every respect and in every context; indeed, no one type of puppet is superior to all other types. The category of *puppet* must accordingly be broken down into smaller subcategories, so that a "vocabulary for comparing and contrasting" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 94) puppets of all descriptions can be developed.

From Definition to Taxonomy: Classifying Puppets

To this end, Tillis advocates a semiotic system—or, more specifically, a synchronic, structuralist system—of classification, asserting that "the puppet's abstracted signs can be located along a continuum of representation that ranges from the imitative to the stylized to the conceptual, according to the quality and quantity of the signs" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 114). By correlating these "three basic points on the continuum of sign representation with the three sign-systems of the puppet" (118), namely design, movement, and speech, he claims, one should be able to "ascribe general location to the signs" (119) of a particular puppet "and understand the manner in which such ascription can be made." Tillis's "charting out of the puppet's sign-systems" (119) is a unique and useful tool for those interested in a close analysis of puppets in performance. Since Tillis considers his own theoretical work to be "prologue" (9) to studies

yet to come, his belief that, for him, "it is a sufficient task to identify and discuss the range of possibilities in puppet signification" (119) should not come as much of a surprise.

Tillis was not the first puppet theatre scholar to construct a taxonomic system, although he appears to have been the first to do so in such a self-conscious and methodical manner, given his familiarity with earlier systems. Just as he does with regard to earlier definitions and understandings of the puppet, Tillis points out the strengths and weaknesses of the three methods of classifying puppets that historically have been employed the most frequently: "description" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 89), "the historic-geographic method" (91), and "the object-control method" (95). The first is not actually a taxonomic system as such, as it is but "[t]he simplest method of description," which "involves little more than an effloresence of adjectives applied to specific puppets or puppet-shows." To this adjectival strategy we might also add the positivist tendencies—listing dates and production titles, for example—that, in the context of the existing published sources on Canadian puppetry, were criticized in the first chapter of this study. "Examples of this method," Tillis proclaims, "are legion" (89) and can certainly be found in the works of authors who are not Canadian—Tillis himself provides a Russian example. This method of description can be used to provide "detailed and useful information for the reader's re-creation of a particular puppet," but it is still "predicated on the theory that each puppet is unique," which, as Tillis argues, "is certainly true, but only in a literal sense." "Despite such uniqueness," he continues, "each puppet is in some way like and unlike other puppets," but "[t]his method of description is limited in that, however much information it may purvey, its vocabulary is not especially suited for comparing and contrasting" (90).

Indeed, one "will understand more about the unique value of each puppet," Tillis insists, if one is able to "understand its place in the general world of puppets." Implementing a particular taxonomic method can aid one in gaining this kind of insight, but this should be undertaken with an awareness that "taxonomies, and the theories that are imbedded in them, powerfully shape the way people comprehend and discuss their subjects" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 90). As we know, Tillis himself opts for a synchronic approach to taxonomy, since he believed that a diachronic approach was, at the time, impossible, as no "methodology for such [a] study exist[ed]"; moreover, as has already been strongly implied, "no satisfactory theory, and no satisfactory vocabulary, ha[d] yet been created for the theatrical puppet" (8).

Attempts at a diachronic study have certainly been made, however, most of them employing what Tillis calls "the historic-geographic method" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 91). Baird's impressive if, as Tillis notes, "popular work" (94), *The Art of the Puppet*, serves as a revealing example of a text structured according to this taxonomic system. Baird's table of contents is indicative of the organizational tenets of this taxonomic system (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 91): the third chapter, "Eastern Heritage," is primarily concerned with the puppetry traditions of India and Indonesia; the fourth chapter, "Angels, Devils & Everyman," mainly with those of Northern and Eastern Europe, with some mention of some

Western and Southern European traditions; and the fifth chapter, "Karaghioz: A Turkish Delight," with those of Greece and Turkey (5). The next three chapters deal with the respective traditions of England, Italy, and two "Oriental" (131) nations, China and Japan, while the last three chapters explore the history of Western puppetry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the mid-twentieth century (along with some predictions and advice with regard to the future of the art form), respectively (5).

Tillis, however, dismisses this taxonomic method, as it "has two significant problems, one practical, the other theoretical." He claims that "[t]he practical problem is that the historic-geographic method breaks down upon close examination of the history and geography involved" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 91). The geographical areas that Baird posits, for example, "are . . . problematic, both for what they include and what they exclude," according to Tillis, especially in the chapters respectively devoted to "Eastern" and "Oriental" puppetry. In the former chapter, entitled "Eastern Heritage," Baird examines the various traditional forms of puppetry in both India and Indonesia "because they are, in a broad sense, geographically proximate, and because most of them have been influenced by Hindu literature" (92), as Tillis writes. Baird himself is reluctant to present even just Indian puppetry as a unified whole, as "[f]rom its beginnings in antiquity Indian puppetry took many different forms," and "[t]he kind and style of village puppetry [still] depends on where you are" (46). Tillis agrees that "the relationships between the various traditions in India alone are quite unclear" and adds that "the relationship of any Indian tradition to the various traditions of Indonesia is the subject of substantial controversy," concluding that Baird "becomes foolhardy" when he attempts to establish firm connections between the puppetry traditions of the two countries. "[B]etween the geographic borders" of the countries that Baird forcibly includes in his two chapters on non-Western puppetry (India and Indonesia in "Eastern Heritage" and Japan and China in "Oriental Tradition"), moreover, there are numerous "fascinating puppet traditions that cannot be incorporated in either chapter, because the traditions are simply too different" (92), as Tillis realizes. In short, "[t]he geographic areas that Baird terms the East and the Orient exemplify the practical troubles of the historic-geographic method: each includes traditions that are relatively independent, while together they exclude traditions that are significant in their own right" (93).

The historical periods upon which proponents of the historic-geographic method rely also fail to survive closer analysis, as they "are little more than artificial constructs" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 91), as Tillis reveals. Moreover, in Baird's text specifically, little interest in the evolution of puppetry is expressed except when examining the development of the art form in Western Europe and America, for "he is generally silent about change over time in Eastern cultures, perhaps on the assumption that Western readers are not interested in such matters, or perhaps on the facile presumption that the Orient is timeless." Even when discussing the advancements made in the West, however, Baird's "sense of history seems quite arbitrary" (91). In his chapter on the history of puppetry in the West from the early eighteenth

century to the mid-nineteenth century, entitled "Impact of Genius," for example, Baird examines how a number of historic figures of the period—such as Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck, Franz Joseph Haydn, Carlo Gozzi, François-Dominique Séraphin, and George Sand (145-52)—were connected, in varying degrees, to puppetry. Tillis, however, in an argument that parallels in part his one concerning Baird's postulated geographical areas, underlines the fact that "the temporal proximity of these people in no way suggests any unity of thought toward the puppet among them or during this period, whatever broader cultural movements might have been afoot" (91-92), as they "formed no particular school of thought concerning the puppet" (92).

This "practical problem" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 91) that Tillis examines can be mitigated to a considerable degree "when writers maintain their focus on a particular historic-geographic area" or tradition, as he himself acknowledges. When such self-imposed boundaries are respected, it becomes more evident "that the historic-geographic method has ample value" (94). A number of valuable studies written with such boundaries in mind have been consulted in the writing of this dissertation, such as Speaight's *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* and Barbara C. Adachi's *Backstage at Bunraku: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Japan's Traditional Puppet Theatre*. That said, "the relative paucity of information on many puppet traditions, and the lack of an adequate vocabulary for description of those traditions for which we do have information, have thus far made it impossible to use the method to much purpose" (112), according to Tillis, at least when a study embracing multiple traditions spread across various geographical areas and historical periods has been undertaken, as he neglects to add. He admits, nonetheless, that once a critical mass of texts of the same quality as those of Speaight and Adachi, for example, but "treating of other traditions" has been reached, "the historic-geographic method might at last provide grounds, given an adequate vocabulary, for a thorough diachronic aesthetics of the puppet" (94); as we already know, it is precisely this "vocabulary" that he intends to supply.

"The theoretical problem" that Tillis associates "with the historic-geographic method" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 93) can, on the other hand, prove more difficult to overcome:

> [I]f every manifestation of puppetry is to be viewed primarily within the context of its historic-geographic tradition, then the puppets themselves cannot easily be considered outside of their traditional contexts. Or, to put it another way, the historic-geographic method makes little allowance for comparison between puppets of differing traditions. (93)

"[B]y focusing attention on the obvious differences of history and geography," this taxonomic system "obscures [both] the obvious similarities" (94) and, one should add, the less obvious differences among, to use Tillis's own example, shadow puppets from several different traditions. To be fair, Baird does cover all of the traditions mentioned by Tillis. There is the Karaghioz tradition: originally found only in Turkey, Karaghioz, a Punch-like character, emigrated to Greece in the days of the Ottoman Empire and then to North America (Baird 78). Baird also discusses the famous flat leather *wayang kulit* figures of

Indonesia, as well as the *tholubomalatta* of India, which are "made of 'nonviolent leather,' meaning that the skin comes from an animal that has died a natural death rather than one that has been slaughtered" (55). He even writes about the "two principal kinds" of shadow puppets in China: "the Pekingese, or northern, shadow," which is "made of a fine leather taken from the belly of a donkey and painted in brilliant, translucent colors," along with "the Cantonese, or southern shadow" (134), which is "larger than the Pekingese and necessarily made of thicker leather" (135), although still coloured. Tillis remarks that the "contemporary shadow-puppets in Europe and America" (93), as well as in Canada, we should state further, could also be addressed by a more nuanced comparative approach. Such an approach "might . . . shed light not only on shadow-puppets in general, but on the choices behind, and the implications of, the traditions themselves" (94).

Unfortunately, this sort of comparative approach is missing from Baird's text. When he does attempt, albeit only in a few fleeting passages, to compare shadow puppets from several different national traditions, he must rely upon a different taxonomic method entirely, since, as Tillis states, "the historic-geographic method lacks the vocabulary for comparing and contrasting" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 94). In contrast with the historic-geographic method, this one "generally, though not exclusively, takes a synchronic approach," not unlike Tillis's own classification system. That said, it differs from his taxonomic method into two significant respects: it fails to take into account all three of the sign systems of puppetry, and, more generally, it fails to take into consideration the other "half" of a performance, the necessary complement to the puppets and puppet artists involved, namely the audience. Rather, this classification system "follows from the observation that the puppet is a physical construct that must be manipulated, and may be called the object-control method" (95), as Tillis clarifies.

Almost every writer who has endeavoured to address the subject of puppetry with any degree of rigour has indulged in the use of some form of this method, which usually begins by establishing a dichotomy between "[f]lat" or "[t]wo-dimensional" puppets (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 95)—even though, of course, no puppet, or any physical object, for that matter, can actually be two-dimensional, for even if its "third dimension, that of depth, is quite insubstantial, it nonetheless exists" (100), although the shadow cast by a "flat" puppet (or any other object) is indeed two-dimensional—and "[r]ound" or "[t]hree-dimensional" puppets (95). Following "this fundamental division, the object-control method organizes puppets according to certain types, predicated on their manner of control" (95), as Tillis elucidates, whether it be strings, rods, direct contact, or something else entirely. In his examination of several different shadow-puppet traditions, Baird is simply using the same method in a more narrowly defined context, as he is only interested in analyzing the "flat" puppet—indeed only one kind of "flat" puppet, namely the shadow puppet—by listing the different ways in which the control rod can be connected to the puppet, each of which enables the puppet to execute an equally different range of movements (79, 134-35).

Thus, the object-control system of classification can prove quite useful if the author employing it maintains a tight focus, as Batchelder does in a more extended fashion in *Rod-Puppets and the Human Theatre*, for example, which was cited in the first chapter in relation to the "[j]igging [d]oll[" (pl. xvi). There is an obvious parallel with the historic-geographic method in this respect, just as there is when an aspiring puppet taxonomist seizes the object-control method of classification in order to divide the entire world of puppetry into neat categories. Neither of these taxonomic methods is well suited to a survey approach. In the case of the object-control method, there are three clear assumptions implicit in this model that render it incapable of coping with the protean nature of the puppet, as Tillis outlines: "puppets are inanimate objects of a limited number of distinct and established types, and that the manner of control is their most important element." In reality, Tillis stresses, "[p]uppets may or may not be inanimate objects, the number of their types is unlimited, and the manner of their control describes surprisingly little about them" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 111). His first point has already been addressed in this chapter. His second one is also worth bearing in mind, for if one were determined to adhere to the object-control taxonomic system, one would be forever updating and amending one's list of control types. His final summary judgement, on the other hand, might initially seem too harsh. Still, by focusing solely on the ways in which manipulators gain control over their creations, the object-control method of classification "offers little descriptive vocabulary" (111) outside of that which is related to control mechanisms, thereby allowing only "limited discussion of the design and movement possibilities available to the puppet, and no discussion at all of the speech possibilities, since object and control have no bearing upon them" (111-12). By overlooking these important sign systems, this taxonomic method "fails to acknowledge that puppets exist to perform, and thus avoids discussing the complexities of puppet performance" (112), Tillis pronounces in his final verdict.

Despite his seemingly largely pessimistic attitude with regard to the potential usefulness of these other two taxonomic systems, Tillis ends his analysis of them with an acknowledgement that "[i]t would be foolish . . . to abandon the descriptive vocabularies of the two standard taxonomies, for traditions based on the particulars of history and geography obviously exist, and the manner of puppet control is obviously important." He nevertheless cautions that both of "these vocabularies must be substantially augmented, and set within the context of a more encompassing theory, if we are to hope for a full description of the puppet" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 112). As we will soon see in the final section of this chapter, however, Tillis's own method of classification also needs to "be substantially augmented" and contextualized before its potential, at least in relation to the present study, can be fully realized. Following Tillis's lead, therefore, all three "vocabularies" will be used herein, each at the appropriate time, or that, at least, is my hope.[56]

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[56] It should be noted that there have also been a handful of other, much more idiosyncratic systems of taxonomy for which Tillis does not account. Two particularly notable ones would not even be proposed (in published sources, at

Beginning to Answer the Questions: From Synchronic "Prologue" to Diachronic Contextualization

Thus, we now have at our disposal a theoretical toolbox with which to analyze the puppet more effectively and incisively. However, just as the puppet cannot be fully comprehended outside the context of some kind of performance—Tillis explains that, if one were, theoretically at least, to "[s]trip the actor and the puppet of their theatrical signs," one would "still have a living person, while the puppet [would] ha[ve] ceased to exist" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 83)—so too must these theoretical tools be applied in a particular context if their full usefulness is to be realized. Tillis himself emphasizes that "synchronic study is useful as prologue . . . to any rigorous diachronic study" (9), so in the next chapter, the synchronic "prologue" that has composed much of this chapter will give way to diachronic analysis for the most part, as Tillis's structuralist concepts and theories must be grounded in a Canadian context if they are to remain both relevant and serviceable as we draw ever nearer to the crux of this dissertation, namely the overlaps and interstices between Canadian puppetry and devised theatre. Several of the other key components of the theoretical framework that has been laid out over the course of this chapter will be similarly contextualized; one sustained example of this contextualization will be the provision of more specific answers to the "questions" that seemed to overwhelm Jurkowski's mind as he contemplated the question of whether or not "we are arriving at the point of being able to talk about a unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43). Given the "diachronic approach" employed in the following chapter, the "historic and geographic development" of puppetry in Canada—especially from the 1970s up to the present—will have to be taken into account, "with due consideration to the details of

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least) until several years after *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet* had been published. Kaplin, frustrated that existing methods of taxonomy "hardly do justice to today's plethora of new technologies and hybrid styles of puppet theatre" (32), suggested in 1999 in his article "A Puppet Tree: A Model for the Field of Puppet Theatre" that their limitations could be transcended "[b]y focusing on the dynamic of the puppet/performer relationship instead of fixating on the puppet as an expressive object" (29). He discerns "[t]wo quantifiable aspects" to this "dynamic." The first is "'distance' . . . the level of separation and contact between the performer and the object being manipulated— beginning at the point of absolute contact (where performer and object are one) and running through psychic, body, remote, and temporal degrees of contact." "'Ratio,'" the second variable, "refers to the number of performing objects in comparison to the numbers of performers" (32). Blumenthal, in *Puppetry: A World History*, something of a spiritual successor to Baird's *The Art of the Puppet*, opted for a less technical approach. Given that, as its title alone indicates, this volume was intended as a global survey, the historic-geographic and object-control methods could not be eschewed entirely. That said, she wished to provide "just an overview of history and technique" over the first two chapters before, over the remaining nine full-length chapters and the short concluding one, following "a thematic approach" (7). This approach, as described by Blumenthal herself in her preface, appears to have been inspired, at least in part, by Jurkowski's typology of the "theatrical functions" of the puppet, "which have changed from century to century, depending on cultural and social life, and that of the theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 38). Jurkowski's typology could, of course, be considered a taxonomic system in its own right, albeit one outlined over just a few pages in an article. Blumenthal nonetheless seemed to disclose her indebtedness to Jurkowski: "Drawing together material from different continents and periods, it [her book] examines the distinctive nature and abilities of constructed performers and surveys the kinds of roles they have played in human societies." In the end, she preferred to offer "a multifaceted image of the richness of puppet life," rather than "the clearest possible landscape of puppetry in individual regions or centuries" (7). While her emphasis here on "constructed performers" might seem like a cause for concern, she demonstrates that she is quite willing to include "hybrids combining live actors and puppets (57), as well as "live actors pretend[ing] to be puppets" (251), for example, in her survey. Each of these less well-known taxonomic systems has its merits and has therefore found its way into this dissertation in some capacity.

its technical practices" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 8). Consequently, the answers supplied may well have to be reconsidered in the future—by myself or indeed by others.

In admitting this, I am, in a sense, following Jurkowski's lead. Despite the fact that I have felt compelled to challenge him on a number of points, both in this chapter and throughout the balance of this dissertation, attempting to imagine what the current state of puppet theatre scholarship would be had it never been shaped to such a degree by the influence of his theoretical and historical work is perhaps a hopeless (and, frankly, not particularly useful) endeavour. One trait for which he should particularly be respected is his openness to qualifying his own theories and conclusions. He opens his article "Towards a Theatre of Objects," for example, with a poetic but ultimately fairly conventional definition of *theatre* that was quoted in the previous section of this chapter: "Theatre is transformation . . .[,] a vision created by an artist, transforming . . . himself or a puppet or even an object into an imagined character" (37). Towards the end of the same article, however, he allows for a more fluid understanding of what *character*—and, by extension, *theatre*—means: "Today when an actor enters onstage he firstly plays the role of an actor who, if needed, is able to create some stage characters with the use of every possible means of expression" (43). The significance of this shift will be unpacked further in the next chapter.

Jurkowski has in fact also evinced a willingness, even an eagerness to revisit and rework his propositions at a later date. Of particular note—and of particular relevance to the present study—has been how he has tempered both his condemnation of much of object theatre and his nostalgia for an idealized and vaguely defined past when the constructed puppet reigned unchallenged, two stances that are closely related, as has already been established in this chapter. A decade after the revised version of "Towards a Theatre of Objects," the article in which the clearest expression of these twin perspectives is to be found, was published in *Aspects of Puppet Theatre: A Collection of Essays*, he was much less reserved in his acceptance of object theatre as "a separate genre of puppetry"; he even devoted an entire section of a chapter in the text in question, the second volume of *A History of European Puppetry*, to this particular form of puppetry. In what appeared to be a self-contradiction, however, he persisted in refusing to acknowledge the objects themselves as puppets, since, he maintained, puppets must be "specifically manufactured for theatrical use – in most cases they are a figurative representation of all kinds of living things" (477). Objects as such, on the other hand, must continue to be defined by the fact that "they have an everyday use" (477-78), he insisted, even though, by imbuing these objects with life in the imaginations of spectators—and thus, we must recognize by this point, legitimately transforming them into puppets—puppet artists "negate . . . [their] intended functions and use . . . [them] according to . . . new theatrical functions which may be various" (478), as he himself grants. Still, he concluded his section on object theatre with a rather broad-minded flourish: "The theatre of objects . . . is far from the orthodox puppet theatre: nevertheless . . . [it is] an extension of that theatre, since . . . [it] bring[s] matter, regardless of form, to life on stage" (484).

When we skip still further ahead, from the late twentieth century to the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we discover that Jurkowski (whose record as a puppetry scholar would be difficult to match, to say the least, in terms of either breadth or depth) has come even closer to making his peace with object theatre. That said, it seems that there may never be a complete end to hostilities. In his brief "International Message," composed for UNIMA to mark World Puppetry Day in 2011, he wrote thoughtfully that "every object, all matter, when animated, speaks to us, each demanding its right to a theatre life." He perceived object theatre to be gaining dominance over more conventional puppet theatre, which, apparently, was not an entirely regrettable development: "Thus from now on the object will replace the figurative puppet, opening a pathway for the artist which leads to a new poetic language, to creations full of rich and dynamic images." Even so, he could not refrain from describing this development as "the invasion of the object" into "the territory" once "occupied" by "the ancient figurative puppet." This loaded language aside, his observation that "the tradition of the figurative puppet has not disappeared" and his "hope that it will always remain as a valuable point of reference" ("World") should not be dismissed too quickly.

The same can be said of the overlap between the "contemporary puppet theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43) and "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" with respect to their shared emphasis on "the creative process" (42) above everything else, the significance of which Jurkowski indicated but then almost immediately undercut by denying the possibility of "being able to talk about a unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre." As we have already begun to see, "the puppet theatre still has a separate existence," but the explanation for this can be articulated with greater precision than is evident in attributing it to "some transcendent reason" (43), as Jurkowski did. Nonetheless, the aforementioned overlap that he discerned should give us pause, for the particular "process of creation" (40) that is employed will inevitably affect the production that is thereby developed. Not only does this hold true in the context of both puppet and human theatre, but it has also always held true; that is, it should, like Tillis's theory of double-vision, albeit in two domains instead of just one, be "considered to be universally operative" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 61), even if Jurkowski framed it in the 1980s as "a phenomenon of our time" (43) specifically. This constitutes yet another synchronic thread that will have to be pursued further in the next chapter, for one should not, having taken the foregoing into consideration, assume that the focus on the perceived object in puppetry therefore has no bearing on either processes of creation or the work that comes out of them.

Chapter 3: Canadianizing Theory:
Bodies, Alienation, Ritual, and Other Puzzles

Bodies in Bondage: The Actor and/in the Puppet

As its title and subtitle indicate, this chapter is devoted in the main to establishing a firm—and firmly—Canadian context for many of the concepts and theories that were scrutinized in the previous chapter. Now that the "synchronic . . . prologue" has been put into place, "extended as it may [have] be[en]," this dissertation can, since Tillis's advice has been heeded, transition into a "rigorous diachronic study" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 9), for the most part. Broadly speaking, one of the primary objectives will be to frame with greater specificity the "questions" to which Jurkowski alludes in his consideration of how "puppet theatre still has a separate existence" and then to start to answer them, the intention being to uncover explanations that, I hope, will be perceived as more concrete than "transcendent" ("Towards a Theatre" 43).

It therefore seems most appropriate to open this chapter with an explicitly corporeal discussion of where performance itself begins: the body. Human bodies and puppet bodies, as well as bodies that are hybrids of the two, will be analyzed, with particular attention being paid to the liberties and restrictions associated with each in the context of performance. This line of inquiry will continue through the next chapter, in which a style of puppetry characterized by the semiotic collision of all of these types of bodies onstage will be identified and analyzed for the first time. This style, tandem puppetry, has been found to be particularly compatible with the other theatrical approach that will come to be a focal point of this study: theatrical devising. Thus, when this approach begins to be examined in earnest in the fifth chapter, the similarities and differences between human, puppet, and hybrid bodies will again come to the fore, especially as they relate to issues of control and spontaneity, and the sixth chapter, in large part a case study of one Canadian devised puppet theatre company, Puppetmongers Theatre, is intended to shed still further light on these matters. Before all of that, however, some more fundamental arguments related to "the puppet as perceived object and imagined life" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 28) will have to be put forward here. Many of them were in fact first proposed in the last chapter, but we will follow through on them here, situating them in a more specific "historic-geographic" (91) context, to borrow Tillis's term. Alienation, in a fitting parallel with its place at the heart of all puppetry, will become something of a leitmotif for this chapter, as in pursuing the aforementioned more fundamental arguments, we will find ourselves repeatedly revisiting this core concept.

Which Side of Which Body?: Spontaneity and/in the Puppet

Bruce Barton—a Canadian theatre scholar, playwright, and dramaturg who has collaborated with several devised theatre companies—emphasizes that the human body itself "is 'spatial matter,'" as "we

are not merely 'in' space, but actually made 'of' space." As a result, "spatial relations and movement through space" become "the most immediate and potentially complex source of 'bodily knowledge'" and "our most powerful means of communication"; in fact, "from this perspective[,] the lived body is, itself, an *act of communication*." Regardless of how primed and responsive a performer's body might be, however, there is always a border between the two principal spaces: that which is located within the body and that which is located without. This results in a kind of bondage, for, "as the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty observed, we are 'always on the same side of the body'—that is, within it—so that our perspective on our own bodies is always partial and always unique." One's "lived body—the body in space—is," therefore, something that one "can never fully know or control" ("Making" 4), Barton concludes.

If, having been introduced to it in the second chapter, we can accept Tillis's definition of the puppet as "a theatrical figure, perceived by an audience to be an object, that is given design, movement, and frequently, speech, so that it fulfills the audience's desire to imagine it has having life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 65), then the body of the puppet forces conditions upon the human participants in a given performance that are radically different from—even in opposition to—those normally prescribed by the human body itself. The puppet always exists outside of the live body or bodies onstage, even if only conceptually, such as when a performer "puppetizes" part of her body and presents it as a separate character. Human operators are in a position to take advantage of this, for they therefore have even more control over their puppets—at least those of the wholly inorganic variety—than they have over their own bodies, since they both see and control the figures from the outside; of course, they are also able to trump performers in the human theatre in this respect. The puppets, moreover, are "immune to gravity's force," as Kleist's Herr C. observes. Thus, while puppets may not be as well suited for "the innumerable small, subtle actions of everyday life" (63), which are realized largely through minute gestures and slight changes in facial expression, as Arnott argues, they are capable of performing actions such as flying or disappearing that "live actors can do only with difficulty and with the aid of mechanical apparatus, and then only half-convincingly" (65-66), assuming they can perform them at all. Arnott is specifically discussing marionettes, his preferred type of puppet, in this section, but clearly this argument can be expanded to encompass puppets more generally.

This power of control over the puppet has its limitations, however, as while the human body of the performer can react intuitively to commands from her own mind—and, in the right circumstances, to those coming from others—the puppet manipulator has an additional step to complete before any such directions can be realized onstage, as her reaction to it must be channelled through the puppet. Moreover, in many cases, there will even be an added step before this one can be fulfilled, since the body that is to give form to these insights—in tandem with the fleshy body of the manipulator—must often be constructed. If human material makes up a significant portion of the puppet, on the other hand, then at

least some of the restrictions associated with the live performer begin to come into play, while some of the "flexibility" of the human body—that is, its ability to respond intuitively and spontaneously—is recovered. Wholly animate puppets are even closer to live bodies in these respects, since they are, of course, often simply isolated parts of such bodies. Although some time is required in order to determine how to configure the body of the human performer so as to present the puppet's character as effectively as possible, a number of tasks related to designing, sourcing materials, and building can still be skipped. As was indicated above, these concepts of control, intuition, and spontaneity are particularly relevant in the context of devised theatre, so they, along with a few other related ideas, will be examined in greater detail in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Irrespective of the composition of a given puppet with regard to the proportion of animate to inanimate material, it, just like all other puppets, is always already alienated and alienating, as was shown in the second chapter. The puppet's status as external to the body of the human performer is one of the underlying reasons for this. This fact would seem to make the puppet an ideal instrument of radical political analysis and even change, embodying as it does Brechtian alienation. This was also suggested in the previous chapter, but the various implications and complications have yet to be teased out. Some of them now will be by placing the entire topic in a more specific context, namely the theoretical pronouncements and practical work of Mirbt. This promise is somewhat deceiving, however, since it implies that all of these components combine harmoniously to form a cohesive contextual framework. The reality of such situations is probably never so neat. In Mirbt's case, at least, this is definitely true, as although he was perhaps more directly influenced by Brechtian theory than any other artist in Canadian puppet theatre history has been, his attitude towards Brecht was not consistent. Nonetheless, from examining their published comments and their productions, one can see that Brecht, by way of Mirbt, has been an inspiration to several prominent Canadian puppet theatre artists. Mirbt's impact on Canadian puppetry was noted in the first chapter with reference to Burkett's visible stage presence and emphasis on puppet theatre for adults. The more theoretical aspect of his legacy has yet to be analyzed, however, so once again, he will move into the spotlight.

A Question(ing) of Influence: Mirbt and Brecht

In his review of the remounted production of *Woyzeck* that was part of the inaugural season (1988-89) of the newly formed Canadian Stage Company,[57] Robert Crew flatly states, "Mirbt's style of presentation . . . [was] resolutely Brechtian." He followed an "anti-illusionist approach" that was "intended to make the audience do some of the work, to think about what they . . . [were] seeing rather

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[57] Now often referred to as CanStage, the Canadian Stage Company was created out of a merger of Toronto Free Theatre and CentreStage. Mirbt's production of *Woyzeck* was staged at the Free Theatre Downstairs, one of the two performance spaces at the former home of Toronto Free Theatre at 26 Berkeley Street. The Canadian Stage Company is currently one of the largest not-for-profit theatre companies in the country.

than reacting emotionally." Brecht himself suggested a variety of methods of alienating both the actors—from their characters, the text, and the stage action—and the spectators—from the performance. The goal in both cases was the same as Mirbt's, that is, to oblige these two groups to "do some of the work, to think about what they" were presenting or watching, to quote Crew again. Indeed, Mirbt, who was the sole director for this production,[58] borrowed at least one staging technique directly from Brecht, namely the use of "titles preceding the scenes, announcing the contents" ("Short Description" 143n9). However, rather than being painted or, as Brecht particularly advocated, projected onto curtains, placards, or screens, the "few words" by which "[e]ach of the 25 scenes . . . [was] introduced" (Crew) were simply spoken aloud. The episodic structure of the play itself could also be described as "Brechtian," but this would be not only anachronistic, as the play was written just over sixty years before Brecht was even born, but also hasty, as the author, Georg Büchner, died before he could finish the piece, so only a fragmentary text was left behind.

There is a further, deeper connection between Mirbt and Brecht, one related to a signature performance technique of Mirbt's that was discussed in the first chapter. Brecht recommended revealing the "means of production," so to speak. One of his better-known suggestions was to avoid concealing the lighting equipment in order to "destroy part of his [the spectator's] illusion of being present at a spontaneous, transitory, authentic, unrehearsed event" ("Short Description" 141n3). He similarly urged the use of a half-curtain only, so that changes in scene would be only partially hidden. In "The Curtains," a poem named after this device, Brecht writes, "[D]on't show him [the audience member] too much / But show something. And let him [or her] observe / That this is not magic but / Work, my friends" (lines 20-23). Thus, to draw upon Erving Goffman's terminology, this conventional type of "temporal and spatial" (*Frame Analysis* 252) bracket was undermined without being completely negated: it was retained as a physical reminder to orient the audience to some degree while also "giv[ing] meaning to violations" (417) that were intended to frustrate the spectators' expectations.[59]

As has already been mentioned, Mirbt and the other four puppet operators in his production of *Woyzeck* were in full view of the audience, "occasionally interact[ing] with the puppet characters" (Crew). Consequently, an anticipated frame seems to have been broken here, with the puppets and operators being in such close proximity to one another. That said, according to Robert More, a Canadian puppet artist who was a manipulator in the first *Woyzeck* production to involve Mirbt, a certain kind of

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[58] Jean Herbiet, the artistic director of the French theatre section of the NAC from 1971 to 1982, directed the first version of *Woyzeck* to feature Mirbt's puppets, as well as Mirbt's staging of *A Dream Play*.

[59] Goffman declares that brackets "occur before and after the activity in time and may be circumscriptive in space; in brief, there are temporal and spatial brackets" (*Frame Analysis* 251-52). Despite his potentially misleading wording, which would seem to allow for brackets to "occur before and after the activity in time and . . . be circumscriptive in space" at the same time, he maintains a distinction between these two types of brackets. A stage curtain, albeit a full and not a half one, is in fact one of Goffman's examples of a temporal bracket (259), as, when used in a conventional manner in Western theatre, its rise marks the beginning of a performance, its fall the end.

distance was maintained, albeit through performance style rather than actual physical distance. More recounts that, during rehearsals, he and the other operators learnt "to go with their [the puppets'] physical reality, rather than fighting it." The manipulators, in other words, eventually came to realize that they needed "to follow" (18) their puppets not force them to perform particular actions. This may initially seem quite idealistic, but it is in line with what could be described as a particular school of puppet manipulation, namely the presentational style endorsed by Craig, Kleist, and Jurkowski (among many others, no doubt) that was examined in detail in the last chapter.

  None of these influential authors on puppetry appears to have had a direct impact on More's philosophy, however, which was shaped through the intervention of Mirbt, who in turn had been inspired by Brecht, even though he had never worked with him. Nonetheless, More believes that the "one central challenge" of puppet theatre, regardless of which type or types of puppet are employed, is "discovering and sustaining the inner stance of the manipulator" (17), which should be one of "detachment" (qtd. in More 18), as More's mentor Mirbt instructed, clearly drawing upon Brechtian theory. More's description of Mirbt's own performance style reveals how this inner "detachment" translated into a specific relationship with the puppet, one of which Jurkowski would certainly have approved: "He was there, but only as a supporting presence. His face was relaxed, and the actions of the play seemed to flow through him into the puppet" (18). James O'Regan, one of the "presenters" in Mirbt's 1986 production *Wild Child*, which "originated with the desire to link [François] Truffaut's [film] *L'Enfant Sauvage* with artificial intelligence and computers" (10), also seeks to justify this outlook on manipulation as he writes, "When working with a mask, puppet, or anything that can be manipulated, the presenter must be detached from the action or the mask: the presenter *serves* the mask" (13, emphasis added).

  O'Regan and More's perspective therefore differs markedly from that of the much less "detached" Powells. One would hope that there is room enough in Canadian puppet theatre for myriad performance styles, but O'Regan is particularly judgmental: "If the presenter becomes involved in the action or emotion, then the mask or puppet ceases to 'read,' and the audience will be distracted by the presenter's position" (13). Puppetmongers productions like *The Brick Bros. Circus* would seem to be evidence to the contrary, however, even though the gesticulations and facial contortions of the human performers can reach a near manic intensity. Surely the interplay between Brikko the Clown, moved by the artistry of the other performers in the circus, and David Powell, histrionically sobbing on behalf of the puppet and spraying the audience with a water pistol to exaggerate the melodramatic quality of the scene even further, for example, plays upon the audience's double-vision rather than interferes with the readability of the puppet. As "involved" as Powell is, the spectators are still encouraged to believe in those tears, despite the fact that their real source could not be made more obvious. Indeed, this kind of ontological playfulness is one of the potential pleasures of puppet theatre.

Even within the school of puppet manipulation that could be said to unite Jurkowski, Mirbt, More, O'Regan, and perhaps even Craig, which holds that one should "serve" the puppet, just as Jurkowski and in fact O'Regan command, considerable room is made for agency on the part of the operator. Although More maintains that "[t]he frame of mind necessary in the art of puppet manipulation is beyond the 'outer' techniques of focus and support and reaches towards a puppet's own vocabulary, which each performer must learn to find by trial and error," he adds that the other "critical elements in the training process for puppet manipulation" are "[d]iscovering how to tap one's inner impulses, how to allow them to flow unimpeded into the puppet and how to keep this path between imagination and action open" (19).

Just how active the human performers should be, in terms of not only puppet manipulation but also text interpretation, was a question that Mirbt never seemed to be able to answer definitively. Once again, we need to turn to his complex relationship with Brecht in order to explore this problem further. As should be clear by now, Mirbt's vision of the theatre owed much to Brecht; indeed, in 1981, Mirbt, again using large puppets, even staged Brecht's play *Happy End*, a production that was coproduced by Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Calgary, and the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, the theatres to which the production also toured (Conlogue, "Fun"). One can sense the presence of Brecht in Mirbt's work in aspects other than his choice of plays to stage or his favoured performance and staging techniques. Brecht's impact on Mirbt can in fact be discerned at the fundamental level of how the relationships among those present at a performance are organized, with regard to not only the nature of the relationship between the performers and the spectators, which has already been mentioned and which will be explored further, but also the relationships among the performers and those between them and Mirbt himself. The last two types of association proved to be particularly thorny, given their hierarchical implications.

As Mirbt told *Toronto Star* writer Vit Wagner less than a week before *Woyzeck* opened in 1988, "For me, theatre is not a documentary form, a realistic form. Television deals with that. But theatre is something else. This presentation forces people to look at things differently because it isn't presented in the expected way." While Mirbt seemed reluctant to admit to having been influenced by anyone (other writers at the time, including Crew and Ray Conlogue, however, made the connection between Mirbt and Brecht clear), one need only be reminded of Brecht's definition of the "A-effect" or the "alienation effect," which "consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected" ("Short Description" 143n17), to realize how closely Mirbt's "own" theory matched that of Brecht.

For Mirbt specifically, however, the puppet itself is the key to the alienation effect, and it can be used to alienate both the actors and the spectators. Convinced that the audience should "only identify with the actor" as such and "not with the role" she is playing, the latter of which the actor only encourages

when she "identifies with the character," Mirbt called for the use of the puppet, for it can split the "union" of actor and character, giving "us image instead of identification." He carried this process of estrangement even further, however, by splitting the actual corporeal actor into two bodies, albeit not literally: he employed "one performer to manipulate the puppet" and "another to read the text." Although never citing Brecht as an influence, Mirbt stressed the distance he was able to achieve as a result of this division of the performers into manipulators and speakers, as he directed the first group to "manipulate as indication (not motivation)" and the second to "read the text as information, not interpretation" ("My Story" 6).

His use of the term *interpretation* is potentially confusing. Certainly, neither the Brechtian nor the—if the term can be accepted—Mirbtian performer is supposed to "interpret" the text with an eye to creating a "realistic" character. The Brechtian actor, at least, is, however, still expected—in theory, that is—not only to develop specific attitudes towards her own character, that character's circumstances, the audience (although she should "not treat it as an undifferentiated mass" ["Short Description" 143n13]), and so on, attitudes that can certainly change over the course of the play, but also to express these attitudes to the audience. Clearly, somebody needs to construct at least one interpretation of the text and its characters, whether it be the actor or a director, in order for the actor to discover—or to be assigned, depending on the circumstances—the appropriate attitudes. Mirbt's position on the actor is considerably more unclear. Conlogue, in an article on *Happy End* and Mirbt's work more generally that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on the day that *Happy End* opened at Tarragon (his actual review of the production would be published the following day), writes, "The clue to his passion for puppets is a strongly held belief that the egos of human actors interfere with the audience's relationship to the play" ("Fun"). He then quotes Mirbt himself in order to back up his claim: "An actor doesn't become a character, he comments on it and tells me something about it. He's really saying, 'This is what Hamlet should be,' even while he believes he is really being Hamlet. Brecht called it 'alienation,' . . . I call it throwing people a curve" (qtd. in Conlogue, "Fun") Here, Mirbt equates Brechtian alienation with a kind of untruth on the stage, implying that a puppet is better able to "become a character," as if such a mystical transformation were actually possible for any kind of performer, human or otherwise. It is also worth noting that although he finally mentions Brecht, he does so only to dismiss him and not to acknowledge the centrality of Brechtian theory to his own work.

Nevertheless, only seven years later, he claimed that the human performers—manipulators, speakers, and actors—in his productions were asked "to make their own choices about the way they want[ed] to play a scene," which pushed "them into a political stance because they . . . [had] to make up their own mind on which way to do it" (qtd. in Wagner). Furthermore, in 1998, he wrote that the "private personae" of the performers working with him were "allowed to break through" ("My Story" 7) in a thoroughly Brechtian fashion, although he never actually identified Brecht as a source of inspiration. He was apparently now demanding "creative contributions from all of the performers" (Wagner),

proclaiming, "The cast has to make their own choices about the way they want to play a scene" (qtd. in Wagner). Mirbt would later confess that he probably "went for puppets" because of "the safety of an image . . . [that he] could control" ("My Story" 5). He claimed that the *Woyzeck* cast, however, was "uncomfortable" with the creative freedom he was supposedly allowing them: "They expect me, the director, to tell them to do it this way or that way." Like Brecht (despite never admitting to it), Mirbt wanted his performers to take "a political stance" on the material, which, he alleged, they were reluctant to do, for "[m]aking choices is painful for most people . . . [,] [n]ot just actors" (qtd. in Wagner).

Judging from the more personal testimony from some of the artists who worked with Mirbt, one can conclude that this experience could be "painful" for reasons other than—or at least in addition to—the responsibility of "[m]aking choices."[60] At the very least, he was not particularly forthcoming when it came to giving directions, whether theoretical or practical. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that there was a pronounced contradiction between his theory and practice with regard to the agency granted

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[60] Karen Lazar, a former PhD candidate at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto, who played one of "the gods" in the Toronto production of *Woyzeck*, confesses, "Perhaps we (actors) were unable to fulfill M[irbt]'s vision, because of a difference of 'technique,' but to be honest, we never discussed what that vision was." The performers felt that they "were adrift in a conceptual un-communication," and Lazar, upon reading Mirbt's assertion that he wanted to receive "creative contributions from all of the performers," responded that the production was only "participatory" in that there were few "guidelines as to what and how to 'do'" ("Re: More on Mirbt"). More, one of the manipulators in the original production, writes that "[i]nstruction was cryptic" (18) then as well. In fact, Mirbt was in favour of emphasizing the schism he had created—in more than one sense—in each character by focusing on what he characterizes as the "counterpoint created between 'Voices' and 'Manipulators'" (7). These two "halves" were not equal, as was briefly noted earlier, which, of course, was intentional. Lazar describes how this imbalance seemed to build upon themes already present in *Woyzeck*, although the motivations behind Mirbt's decision to divide the performers were ambiguous: "We, the voices, [w]ere giving orders to the manipulators? [T]o the puppets? It made me think of a 'gulag,' the peremptory vs[.] the submissive." Mirbt hoped that the division he imposed on the performers would give rise to actual conflict amongst them, which could then somehow be harnessed and used to fuel the production. "Mirbt wanted anarchy," Lazar explains, "[h]e wanted to spark it. He wanted to recreate the ugliness of Woyzeck's world in the humans . . . through the muteness of the puppets." Indeed, Lazar recounts that, on at least one occasion, he even attempted to incite "a physical altercation" ("Re: Felix Mirbt") between one of the male manipulators and the two female speakers.

to the performers who participated in his productions.[61] Interestingly, these are two further parallels between Mirbt and Brecht.[62]

Brecht, Barthes, and Bunraku: Back to the Body

      Brecht was not, of course, Mirbt's only source of inspiration. According to McKay, the first *Woyzeck* production in which Mirbt participated featured "puppets, almost one-half life-size, [that] were manipulated with short rods or handles by actors costumed in military uniforms of the period [early nineteenth century] and, like most of Mirbt's characters, featured very simple outsize heads, cast and coated with celastic" (McKay 46-50).[63] More, who performed as a puppet operator in the same version of the show, recalls that these figures were actually "mostly rod plus string" (17) puppets, which would

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[61] Coming to any definitive conclusions concerning what it was like to work with Mirbt is most likely impossible. Regarding the Toronto production of *Woyzeck*, for example, we are left with two very different accounts of the same production. At the time, Mirbt declared that the performers were "uncomfortable" (qtd. in Wagner) with being asked to participate in the developmental process, as they were accustomed to a more hierarchical organizational structure. On the other hand, Lazar recalls that the lack of communication, coupled with Mirbt's apparent interest in triggering real emotional responses in the performers, resulted in "post-Brechtian lava, where the actor was not to comment on the action, but instigate and drown in it." Mirbt himself "was almost non-committal, didactic in the most general way," Lazar says, "goading" the performers "with a dismissive condescension, and encouraging . . . [them] to somehow 'live' in the dynamic that Woyzeck did" ("Re: Felix Mirbt"). Reconciling these accounts with one another is difficult, particularly since one is also faced with More's and O'Regan's reports on working with Mirbt, albeit on different productions, and neither of them is written from an especially critical perspective. This problem is of a type that is encountered often in historical research, of course, but that does not make it any less frustrating. Conducting additional interviews with other individuals who knew him in a professional capacity would be a worthwhile endeavour.

[62] Martin Esslin reveals that Brecht "refrained from expounding his theories to the actors." Indeed, Esslin claims that "[l]eading actors who worked with him found little difference in his approach from that of other directors with a literary background . . ." (128). Although Brecht was considered more open to receiving ideas from actors—which would seem to reflect his pronouncements regarding the estranged actor—an author who had observed Berliner Ensemble rehearsals wrote that everything "in the end . . . is done as the director wanted it in the first place" (qtd. in Esslin 128). According to Lazar, divining just what Mirbt wanted was itself difficult; moreover, from the existing descriptions of his rehearsal process, we glean that he was not necessarily even as amenable to suggestions from others as Brecht was. Although both rehearsal environments were therefore characterized by a certain theoretical murkiness, Brecht and Mirbt each blamed a different factor for the failure of their theory to translate into practice. Both were in agreement, however, that they themselves were not culpable. Esslin cites *Theaterarbeit*, the impressive text published by Brecht's own company, the Berliner Ensemble, in which the group reveals that most its members expressed doubt "when asked whether the . . . [company] was using a special style of acting" (129). They further explained that, although "some practical hints" from Brecht's theoretical corpus were heeded for some productions, his more general conclusion was that the "state of the theatre" at that time would not allow for the "full application" (qtd. in Esslin 129) of his principles. As we already know, Mirbt had a more specific target in mind when faced with the question of why it was so difficult for his conceptual aspirations to be realized onstage: the actors working under him. None of the foregoing is intended to suggest that there was a complete divorce between theory and practice in the work of either Brecht or Mirbt. Even when there was an overlap between these two aspects in their work, ascertaining "[w]hether . . . [their] theories were merely rationalizations of . . . intuition, taste, and imagination . . . or whether they were the results of the application of ice-cold logic and deeply probing sociological analysis" (Esslin 129) can be problematic. Esslin is referring to Brecht specifically here—and he explicitly favours the first explanation offered—but his argument could also be applied to Mirbt, given what Lazar and even More have had to say about the lack of clarity throughout the process.

[63] *Celastic* is the "[t]rade term for cotton flannel impregnated with long-life plastic (fire-retardant)" (Philpott, "Celastic" 47), which is "softened by saturation with [a] solvent (acetone) becoming plastic for shaping, setting hard in half an hour" (47-48).

seem to mean, judging from the few available photographs of the production, that they were hybrids of the puppets of the Japanese Bunraku tradition and string marionettes.[64] The control systems comprised the "short rods or handles" (46) mentioned by McKay, which were used to control the heads and torsos of the puppets, and the strings that were at least sometimes incorporated in order to help control the arms. There were also "a few smaller marionettes" (18), More adds. The puppets used in the Toronto remount were probably quite similar; perhaps they were even the very same puppets. Thus, once again, we find evidence of the kind of innovative recycling in Canadian puppet theatre that was examined in the first chapter.

More reveals that conceptual structure for the production was perhaps even more innovative, at least in the Canadian context, but the influence for it also emanated from a site outside of the borders of this country. It had "a three-tiered structure," he explains, both literally and conceptually:

> The readers (*les voix*), dressed as European royalty, were on a balcony upstage. They were "the gods." The manipulators, the "messengers of the gods," were Prussian soldiers dressed in grey, and fully visible at all times. The challenge was to create and sustain a synchronicity between speaking actor and silent actor which would bring to life the main figures of the performance, which of course were the puppets themselves. (17)

Thus, the puppets were given speech and movement but from separate sources. The same is true in the Bunraku tradition, and its practitioners also have to face the challenge of "creat[ing] and sustain[ing] a synchronicity between speaking actor and silent actor" (17), as More writes with reference to the production of *Woyzeck* in which he was involved.[65]

As was emphasized above, this kind of fragmentation, irrespective of whatever "synchronicity" is realized in performance, can only further estrange audiences from the puppets. The gaps between the bodies of the puppets and the bodies of the human performers—and among the bodies of the human performers themselves—multiply. The same holds true for either of the two contexts mentioned above, that is, the Bunraku tradition or Mirbt's *Woyzeck*. Although this proliferation is tempered somewhat by

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[64] See the photograph on p. 8 of Mirbt's article "My Story," for example, as well as the photographs in the Ontario Puppetry Association Collection housed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization: *Scene of the Play* Woyzeck *Adapted by Felix Mirbt and Jean Herbiet* and *Felix Mirbt (Right) and An Other* [sic] *Puppeteer in a Scene of* Woyzeck, *Presumably at the NAC, Adapted and Directed by Jean Herbiet and Felix Mirbt*.

[65] The Bunraku tradition is more properly called *ningyo-joruri*, *ningyo* meaning "doll" or "puppet," and *joruri* referring to "an earlier folk-art form of narration with music" (Philpott, "Bunraku-za" 41). Although the name *Bunraku* was originally tied to a specific company, since the "golden age [of the form] during the Meiji Period (1867-1912)," *Bunraku* and *ningyo-joruri* have become "interchangeable" (Ito 49) terms. Consequently, for the sake of convenience, *Bunraku* is the term that has generally been used—and that will continue to be used—in this study, since the reader is probably more familiar with it. That said, the more neutral term *ningyo-joruri* is particularly appropriate when discussing the early history of this form of puppetry, which "dates back to the end of the 16th century when Chosaburo Menukiya, a *joruri* singer-narrator, and Awanojo Hikita, a puppeteer, combined *joruri* (musical and narrative story telling) and puppetry" (Ito 49), becoming "a well-established theatrical art by the time the great chanter Takemoto Gidayu founded his puppet theatre . . . in Osaka in 1684" (Adachi 4). The company name *Bunraku-za*, on the other hand, was not formally put in place until 1871 (Ando 136). The equivalent in the Bunraku tradition of the "speaking actor" (17) mentioned by More is the *tayu* or chanter-narrator. The responsibilities of this performer will be examined in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this study.

the generally close proximity of the manipulators to the puppets in both contexts, it cannot be entirely offset. This is not meant to suggest, of course, that this is a regrettable state of affairs. In fact, Roland Barthes extolled the Bunraku tradition as an ideal vehicle for Brechtian distanciation, given that it is distinguished by its "discontinuity of codes" ("Lesson" 177). The Bunraku tradition severs the "link between character and actor" (173), since movement and speech do not come together in the body of the actor. Rather, they are supplied by discrete performers, which acts to subvert the "alibi of an organic unity" that appears to unify the human actor and, by extension, the production in which the actor participates. The human actor, or at least "[t]he (naturalistic) Western actor," according to Barthes, "is a collection of organs, a musculature of passions," but all of these parts are seemingly unified under "a 'living' and 'natural' outward appearance." Nonetheless, each "resource (voice, facial expressions, gestures)" upon which the actor draws "is subject to a kind of gymnastic drill" (171), which comes through in performance, as each of these components is "in turn eroticized, like so many pieces of the body, like so many fetishes." The Bunraku tradition, on the other hand, "converts the body-fetish into a lovable body," Barthes argues. He offers a paradoxical explanation: because each puppet representing a human character in the tradition is a "concrete abstraction" of the human form, it can assume the characteristics one associates with "the total [or ideal and complete, assumedly] body," such as "fragility, discretion, sumptuousness, extraordinary nuance, abandonment of all triviality, [and] melodic phrasing of gestures." The human actor is denied these "under pretence of a 'living' organic unity" (172) because of her corporeality and the eroticization of her faculties and body parts.[66]

Thus, we return already to the topic with which this chapter opened, namely the body or, more precisely, the contrast between the body of the human performer and that of the puppet. Barthes's analysis is certainly complex, insightful, and even poetic, but it is also problematic. Getting to the heart of what he

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[66] On a more macrocosmic scale, the Bunraku tradition also undermines the "illusion of totality" ("Lesson" 174) that seems to bind the various elements of the theatrical production itself together, Barthes claims. Just as "the unity of movement and voice produces *the one* who acts," so too do "gesture and speech (not to mention song) form but a single tissue . . . that sets expression going without ever dividing it." Those working in the tradition fragment "the sticky organicism" (175) that dominates theatre in the West by explicitly breaking its "tissue" up into its constituent parts, thereby creating the opposite of the unified *Gesamtkunstwerk*, of which Barthes and indeed Brecht disapproved: "So let us invite all the sister arts of the drama, not in order to create an 'integrated work of art' in which they all offer themselves up and are lost, but so that together with the drama they may further the common task in their different ways; and their relations with one another consist in this: that they lead to mutual alienation" ("Short Organum" 204). Mirbt, as we know, also advocated the separation of the dramatic elements, and both Brecht and the Bunraku tradition would appear to have been models for him in this regard, despite his taciturnity on such matters. In fact, as was noted earlier in connection with Brecht, Mirbt would generally break this silence only to deny that he had ever been directly influenced by such sources. In his article "My Story," for example, he insists, "The definition BUNRAKU . . . is wrongly applied to some of my work." His case here, however, is admittedly more convincing than his repudiation of Brecht, even though it is based upon a generalization concerning the Bunraku tradition that has crept into many of the discussions that touch upon it: "The Japanese want to make the performer beside the puppet invisible; I want to make them very visible in a multitude of stances, vignettes, colorations" (9). As was elucidated in the first chapter, not all manipulators working in the Bunraku tradition are particularly concerned with being "invisible" when onstage (see 38-39n21). Still, the dynamic interaction between the three "tiers" in the *Woyzeck* production—the speakers, the manipulators, and the puppets—which was a significant part of what made the production so innovative, does not exist in the Bunraku tradition.

is trying to say can be difficult, but he clearly views the actor's body as a type of prison, which evokes Merleau-Ponty's argument, even though Barthes's perspective and purpose are quite different. Barthes acknowledges the discipline required by live stage work more generally, but for him, it does not free the performer to respond more immediately—in two of the main senses of the word, that is, more quickly and more directly—to impulses from within or to suggestions from others. He concludes that, despite being "subject to a kind of gymnastic drill," or rather as a result of this, the actor's body remains "essentially physiological and not plastic." We must keep in mind, of course, that he is referring to "[t]he (naturalistic) Western actor" ("Lesson" 171) specifically, although he does not give the non-naturalistic (or the non-Western, for that matter) actor a way out here, a way to gain access to this plasticity.

At this point, one might be surprised to be reminded of Craig's appeal for "*a new material*" ("Actor" 73) to be used for creating theatre, something that could replace the human actor, who is compromised by "an accidental nature" (56). Craig and Barthes in fact arrive at comparable judgments, notwithstanding what might appear to be conflicting explanations as to why the actor is unacceptable. Craig, as the reader may recall from the second chapter of this study, condemns the unpredictability of the actor, who must rely upon emotion, which can all too easily overwhelm the performer, according to him. Thus, the actor is a prisoner here as well, although emotion, rather than the body, is ultimately the jailer in this case. Barthes, on the other hand, as was just discussed, criticizes the actor for hiding behind a false "organic unity" ("Lesson" 171), which nonetheless fails to conceal the always already accomplished carving up of the actor's body into faculties and physical parts, all of which are "subject to a kind of gymnastic drill" ("Lesson" 171). Craig's claim that "emotion *possesses*" (56) the actor still resonates with Barthes's description of the actor's body as "a musculature of passions" (171), and Craig does admit that some attempt can be made by the actor to gain control over emotion and thereby the body, face, and voice, although such an endeavour is almost certain to fail, regardless of whatever programme of "gymnastic drill" (Barthes, "Lesson" 171) might have been implemented. Furthermore, they both agree that the actor has been fetishized. Barthes describes the process as a matter of course, as the actor's status as an assemblage of objectified "pieces" (172) cannot be overcome, so she necessarily becomes "the food of . . . [the audience's] fantasies" (171). Craig, however, blames two specific individuals for initiating a trajectory of degeneration in this regard. He does not actually name them in his suspiciously spurious account, but he insists that "[t]he actor springs from the foolish vanity of two women who were not strong enough to look upon the symbol of godhead without desiring to tamper with it" (94); that is, the human theatre has its origins in a jealous imitation of the then sacred puppet theatre of "the Far Eastern coast." Quite unlike the serene puppet, whose "eyes were fixed on the heavens" (93), these women "exhibited themselves on the stage in his place" and gave rise to "that wilderness of weeds, the modern theatre," which is emblematic of the modern "riotous personality" (94).

Given Barthes's and Craig's respective verdicts on human actors, one might be led to assume that they would champion puppets in general as potential saviours of the theatre. For the most part, however, puppets—at least, according to these two authors, as they were understood by the majority of the Western contemporaries of Barthes and Craig—do not fare any better under their scrutinizing eyes.

Barthes sees the Western puppet as just another piece or "fetish," one that, despite having gone one step further in separating itself from the other pieces of the actor's body by supposedly falling from it, continues to exist as "a grating reflection with an adherence to the human order ceaselessly recalled by a caricatural simulation." Quite unlike the puppet of the Bunraku tradition, this mere "scrap of man" is anything but "a total body"; it is not the "concrete abstraction" of the human body but rather just a pale imitation of it. Barthes is, of course, entitled to his preferences, but taking into consideration what has already been written in this study and elsewhere on both puppetry traditions originating in and contemporary work coming out of the West, his conclusions seem overgeneralized. As was stressed in the second chapter, a puppet need not be representational, much less "caricatural." Moreover, his concept of "the total body" is far too vague to permit rigorous analysis. Lastly, his equation of the Western puppet with the "doll" and the "automaton" ("Lesson" 172) is, as we already know from the second chapter, theoretically unsound. To dismiss all of the puppetry issuing from a certain geographical area, particularly one as vague and subsuming as "the West," in such a brief and reductive passage is too bold. He does provide one specific example, namely Punch, whose design could in fact be described with some accuracy as "caricatural," although doing so would seem to fix limits on his type that are far too restrictive, far too personalizing. Admittedly, however, Barthes is making the broader argument that the Western puppet caricatures humanity as a whole. But Punch cannot be considered a doll, as that object, strictly speaking, belongs to the world of private play, as Baird explains (13), nor can he be considered an automaton, for one would be obstinate indeed to maintain that he "cannot sustain the audience's imagination of life, owing to its relative poverty of movement possibilities" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 110-11), as Tillis writes of the automaton.

Craig is not nearly as dismissive of Punch as Barthes is, for he is moved to adopt a respectful, almost elegiac tone when addressing the puppet character: "You stand alone, dignified in your despair, as you look back across the centuries with painted tears still wet upon your ancient cheeks." It should in fact be emphasized that, whatever one thinks of his theoretical and practical work, few if any English-language writers have approached the subject of puppetry with as much poetry and insight as Craig did. Nonetheless, although he "mean[s] no slight to" ("Actor" 90) Punch, he still laments the current state of puppetry. Just as he does when he chronicles his version of the beginning of the fall of the puppet—a decline that, as one might expect, coincided with the birth of the human theatre, according to him—Craig prevents humans from denying their responsibility, in this case for the puppet's present condition: "If we should laugh at and insult the memory of the puppet, we should be laughing at the fall that we have

brought about in ourselves—laughing at the beliefs and images we have broken" (92). The puppet itself therefore is not to blame, and yet the situation remains dire, even though this figure, Craig asserts, "had once a more generous form than" humans themselves: "Do you think that he kicked his feet about on a little platform six feet square, made to resemble a little old-fashioned theatre, so that his head almost touched the top of the proscenium?" (91).

Thus, both Barthes and Craig agree that the solution to the "problem" of Western puppetry is to be found in a distant space—and time, in Craig's case, as he wants puppetry, theatre more generally, and even human civilization itself to return to an idealized, largely mythical past through the intervention of the Über-marionette. It is through that figure, he declaims, "that once more will it be possible for the people to return to their ancient joy in ceremonies—once more will Creation be celebrated—homage rendered to existence—and divine and happy intercession made to Death" ("Actor" 94). Craig, at least, as we saw in the preceding chapter, made some progress towards his ambitious goals through practical preparations and experiments, contrary to what many scholars have since written about him in this regard. Barthes was not, of course, a puppet-theatre practitioner; indeed, although his short but penetrating study of the Bunraku tradition is certainly valuable, as its title and conclusion reveal, its evocation of this tradition serves a largely metaphorical purpose. It offers, after all, a "Lesson in Writing." Although the reader might therefore now question the relevance of this text, even a brief look at the connection he draws between the tradition and "the modern text" ("Lesson" 178) will demonstrate that we are again returning to one of the cruxes of this author's present investigation. Barthes's theoretical connection involves praising the Bunraku tradition because it "excludes improvization [sic]" (177), which Craig also sought to avoid. Consequently, we will revisit this overlap between these two authors in the next chapter, when a style of puppetry that has in fact proven especially encouraging to improvisation, namely tandem puppetry, will be analyzed in detail.

For the moment, however, the theme of corruption that runs through Craig's and Barthes's writings—corruption of bodies, of forms of theatre, even of society itself—also emerges in discussions related to ritualism and alienation in puppet theatre. These in turn are connected to the differences between puppets and other stage objects that still need to be placed in a more specifically Canadian context. Thus, we will turn to these matters next.

Ritualism and/in Alienation: Illuminating the Differences between Puppets and Other Stage Objects

Although puppet theatre is a liberating theatrical form in many ways, one must be able to recognize what is and what is not a puppet, as was argued in the second chapter. If one does not possess the analytical tools necessary for this kind of discrimination, then any stage object to which some movement or speech is attributed might start to have the appearance of a puppet. If everything is a puppet,

however, then nothing is. Much of what makes the puppet unique, as we already know, is related to its relationship with alienation. It may initially seem odd that this potentially highly politically charged aspect is often linked with a more spiritual one, that is, its position in relation to—and even within—ritual. Nevertheless, these are both inherent, inalienable qualities of the puppet that have been present throughout its long history, and examining the interconnection between them, particularly as it has manifested itself in the Canadian context, will clarify further what sets the puppet apart from related phenomena, such as the mask.

Mirbt in fact provides another illustrative point of departure in this context. In his article "My Story," he attempts to elucidate his approach to puppetry and give some indication of its theoretical underpinning; nevertheless, as we have already seen, neither is sufficiently unambiguous. Still, this evidently did not prevent him from developing a guru complex by the time the article was published in 1998; indeed, his self-assigned identity is as pronounced as that which others have attributed to Grotowski (Wolford 126-29). In "My Story," he underscores the importance of "the shaman in" himself, which allows him "to bring together the Upper and the Lower Ones," meaning, one is left to assume, the gods and the puppets, "to communicate with us, the people" (9). While still advocating alienation, he expresses what would seem to be a rival interest in ritual:

> What is that rite, that guidance I have to provide to draw the performers into the deeper layers of my work?
> Out of ritual I can create true images that become a key to underlying myth; true images that sometimes trigger the access to an archetypal vision. (9)

Mirbt's decidedly Brechtian rhetoric appears to be at odds with his mythopoeic project, yet another paradox that should be identified. The two are nonetheless closely related for him, as is revealed in one of his definitions of *ritual*, "a prescribed, recognizable, repetitive movement and moving of objects, bodies, sounds (and so on . . .)." Ritual, he contends, allows one "to gain the (mystical) permission to enter a character, a space, a text in a 'formal' way," but it also "sustain[s] one's distance (the performer's as well as the audience's)," thereby permitting one "to step 'out of it' again." Indeed, he claims that "only in mastering the quality of 'in/out'" through ritual is he able to "project the multiplicity, the layers of a work or concept," the "layers" here assumedly being the same ones to which he refers in the quotation cited above in connection with his self-professed role as "shaman" (9).

Mirbt was not the only—or even the first—author to merge a discussion concerning ritual with one concerning alienation in the context of puppet theatre. The reader may have already recalled Jurkowski's claim (first introduced in the second chapter of the present study) that, by the time his 1984 article "Towards a Theatre of Objects" was published, we had entered two "cycle[s] of the puppet's history." One was related to "magic, rites, religious and similar sorts of puppets, all based on animism and the supernatural," the other to "profane and secular puppets, wherein all interest lies in the process of

creation" (40). Both cycles will be situated in a Canadian context here, and we will return to them again in the next chapter with reference to tandem puppetry.

To begin with, however, we must call to mind how Jurkowski exploited these two posited cycles in his analysis of object theatre. Ordinary objects, which are usually related more closely to the "profane" cycle, according to Jurkowski, must go "through two stages of transformation," whereas constructed puppets need only go through one, as they are "pictorial representation[s] of the character[s]" ("Towards a Theatre" 41). As was emphasized in the last chapter, although puppets can of course be designed to represent specific characters, they can also be reassigned to other roles. The Powells, for example, repurposed two puppets that they had acquired from others and added them to the company of bricks that stars in their object-theatre production *The Brick Bros. Circus*, a particularly innovative production that will be mentioned many times over the remainder of this chapter and the course of this dissertation as a whole.

For this production, first staged in 1978, the Powells, as they themselves write, present "a complete tongue in cheek, miniature one[-]ring circus, performed by highly trained building bricks" in collusion with the ringmasters, played by the Powells, who "introduce each act with true circus panache, and are always ready to give the brick artistes a helping hand" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*The Brick Bros*[.] *Circus*"). There is no doubt that this kind of object theatre asks much of the human performers involved, as Eileen Blumenthal emphasizes in her recent survey text *Puppetry: A World History* with specific reference to the production under discussion here: "Their show will fall flat if they cannot launch the audience into an imaginative leap of lunatic scale." Certainly, as Blumenthal elaborates, "[a]ll theater engages its viewers in a double reality," as "spectators at live theater never quite forget where they are, however much they buy into the fabricated world on stage." In puppet theatre, however, "this so-called 'willing suspension of disbelief' becomes a high-wire act as the gap between normal reality and stage truth becomes a chasm." Performers must expend a considerable amount of energy to bring a puppet character like Trixie LaBrique the tightrope performer in *The Brick Bros. Circus* to life, as one can clearly see from the Powells' smiling but tired faces at the end of a performance. Although Trixie herself, for example, "has neither flexibility nor grace," as Blumenthal observes, the Powells "make up for it by spurring their audiences to canyon-spanning feats of disbelief suspension" (71). They do this by attempting to invest the inanimate objects onstage with their own energy but not, as the Powells are careful to mention, by "disguising or changing the essential brickness of the artistes" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*The Brick Bros*[.] *Circus*").

In order to ease the audience into the considerably more abstract world of the brick circus performers, the Powells use three conventional puppets to introduce the show: a traditional Chinese hand puppet (albeit "a child's toy one or a tourist version"), a Mexican gunfighter marionette ("one of several character 'types' that were mass produced, no doubt for sale to [A]merican and other tourists"), and a

vaguely Muppet-like "pink fluffy thing" resembling a rat, which "is a hand/mouth type of puppet, with my (right) hand inside working the sock puppet-style mouth and my (left) hand working its tail," as Ann Powell explains. These puppets also serve to challenge the audience, according to Ann Powell, as they are all "symbols of what the general public seems to accept and expect at a 'puppet show' […] [and] are used to get the audience thinking about what's a puppet" ("Re: Intro Puppets"). By temporarily playing into the audience's assumptions and then exploding them, the Powells constructively avoid presenting a facile implied definition of the puppet. As is most likely already becoming clear, determining what is a puppet and what is not is indeed not always as easy as it might seem initially. The "pink fluffy" puppet is the only of the three actually made by one of the Powells—David, as it happens ("Re: Intro Puppets"). The other two were acquired through different means. The marionette was a gift from a friend (although precisely which friend cannot be recalled), while the hand puppet was "purchased somewhere" (A. Powell, "Re: Intro Puppets"). The provenance of these two manufactured puppets is therefore now unknown; besides which, they were originally intended for private use only. Thus, any "character" created for one of these puppets would be the original work of the Powells and not the realization of something latent in the figure itself.

It is certainly conceivable that Jurkowski has seen *The Brick Bros. Circus*, as it has toured internationally. Predicting how he would have received it, however, is complicated by the vague criteria that he employs when evaluating object theatre pieces, as such productions cease to be "the work of the imagination of the artist . . . [w]hen the actors as well as the public no longer believe in the life of the puppet" ("Towards a Theatre" 39-40). In *The Brick Bros. Circus*, the Powells are relying upon classic alienation strategies: they use both conventional puppets and bricks in order to encourage spectators to rethink their assumptions about puppetry—and bricks. Although they most definitely manipulate these bricks onstage, they also employ Jurkowski's "ritual way of making a figure live, which can be referred to as the 'animisation' of the figure," which was discussed in the second chapter with reference to the DRAK Theatre production of *Cirkus Unikum*. Having set up Brikko the Clown to perform his routine, the Powells sit down in front of the audience to watch. As one might expect, Brikko was unable to provide much entertainment on his own. Still, some residual sense of imagined life remained, since one child attending a performance of the show in 2005 felt compelled to shout, "Do something!" The outburst could conceivably have been directed at the Powells, but given the direction in which the child was facing, that seems less likely. Thus, Brikko is brought to life through being "treated . . . as a live person" (37), to quote Jurkowski again. This production is therefore located at one of the points at which Jurkowski's two cycles "touch and even penetrate each other" (40).

For the bulk of this production, conventional puppets have been "replaced by actual objects taken from everyday life," as Jurkowski surely would observe. Moreover, given that the conventional puppets that are in fact featured in the production—in the opening sequence—are used ironically, he might

construe that as them "being used as objects *per se*" ("Towards a Theatre" 40). This in turn would entail categorizing each of these puppets under, at best, the function of "the puppet as a sort of prop, or accessory for the actor" (39), since, for each, Jurkowski might contend, the Powells create "the character, using the puppet as an iconic sign, but paying no attention to it as a true acting subject" (39-40). At worst, each puppet could be seen as fulfilling the role of "the puppet as an object as such, deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public." As was noted in the previous chapter, Jurkowski concludes that this treatment of the puppet "as an object" can ultimately result in an object proper taking its place. Thus, if he were to write a review of this production, he might attempt to shoehorn at least the bricks from *The Brick Bros. Circus*, perhaps along with the conventional puppets from the introductory episode, into this category. That said, imagining someone finding the puppets in this spirited production to be "completely dead" (40) is certainly difficult. Jurkowski himself remains open to the idea of accepting "an umbrella" (39) as a puppet, so perhaps he would deem a brick an equally appropriate choice.

In the section on the differences between performing objects and puppets in the second chapter, Veltruský's useful but complicated performing object theory was introduced. In language that seems to foreshadow that of Jurkowski, Veltruský states, "Objects are . . . animated by acting when the characters are represented treating them as live beings . . ." (86). Unlike Jurkowski, however, he does not make any explicit references to ritual here. Moreover, as was explained at length in the previous chapter, objects of this type do not encroach upon the domain of puppets proper; rather, these "objects perceived on the stage as agents" occupy a space somewhere between puppets and more obviously inanimate stage objects, such as props and set pieces. According to this more inclusive understanding of personification, the objects actually need not "be 'made into persons' (as they are by personification in the narrow sense)" (88); thus, they remain objects in both the perception and the imagination of the audience.

Given the distinct personalities that the Powells have assigned to these brick characters—such as the sensitive Brikko the Clown, who has already been mentioned, or the bustling Maid, who cleans up after the Untamed Brick from Brikkistan—one has to conclude that they are indeed "made into persons" and that they therefore transcend the category of *performing object*. Even so, although the Powells must give the bricks the focus for most of the show so as to bring them to life (hardly an easy feat) they are also quite easily able to step out of the action and comment on it, even as they continue to keep the bricks alive in the imagination of the audience, as was illustrated above with the example of Brikko the Clown. Ritual and alienation collide here, so Jurkowski is overstating the case when he declares that a puppet artist who opts to use objects instead of constructed puppets is "depriving them [the puppets] of the remains of their ancient power" and forcing them to serve "the imagination of the performer," who is therefore now "the sole creator on the puppet stage" ("Towards a Theatre" 42).

When one analyzes the Powells' ever-growing body of work, one still has to acknowledge that, in almost all cases, for them, "[t]he most important element is the creative process," as it is for a number of other contemporary puppet artists and in fact "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" in its entirety, according to Jurkowski. We shall return to this point repeatedly throughout the rest of this study. The "ancient power" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) of the puppet still has its place here, however. Jurkowski himself mentions Craig, Brecht, and Antonin Artaud all in the same paragraph, and while a production like *The Brick Bros. Circus* is most likely not the first thing that comes to mind when one encounters the term *theatre of cruelty*, one can start to see the connection when one recalls that Artaud "imagined a total theatre in which actors would co-operate with masks, mannekins, moving pictures and props . . ." (42-43). As Marvin Carlson states in *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*, "Brecht and Artaud . . . came to represent positions almost diametrically opposed, the one associated with a theatre stimulating the spectator to reason and analysis, the other with one regarding discursive thought as a barrier to the awakening of the body's inner spirit" (392-93). Nonetheless, these two poles can be seen to be coming together to some degree in the trend outlined by Jurkowski, who, relaxing somewhat his grip on the idea of the embodied character (which was discussed in the preceding chapter) writes, "Today when an actor enters onstage he firstly plays the role of an actor who, if needed, is able to create some stage characters with the use of every possible means of expression" ("Towards a Theatre" 43). He finds a strong parallel with the modern puppet theatre here.

As has already been argued here, both the bricks and the constructed puppets in *The Brick Bros. Circus* qualify as puppets. Although they therefore serve as helpful examples to corroborate Tillis's theory of double-vision, they do little to demonstrate how performing objects, as they are understood by Tillis and Veltruský respectively, are different. There are certainly some traditional (if quite small) props, costumes, and set pieces that are used in this production to clarify the characters assigned to the bricks, but not one of these in a performing object in the strict sense of the term. In order to provide a Canadian context for this type of stage object, the work of another company—one that has also incorporated alienating and ritualistic elements into its productions—will be analyzed: that of Mermaid Theatre. This company's work will prove particularly helpful with regard to clarifying the differences between the puppet and the performing object, since, as Tillis asserts, "[n]earest the puppet within each range [that of the performing object and that of acting] are the performing object of mask or costume on the one side, and the actor in a mask or costume on the other" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 83-84). Thus, if what sets the puppet apart from these other phenomena can be confirmed through the examination of specific Mermaid productions, then identifying what makes it distinct from everything else along the aforementioned two ranges should be that much easier.

Puppets, Performing Objects, and Performers: Mermaid Theatre as Case Study

Tillis's judgment regarding "how . . . we [are] to distinguish between the actor who is perceived as an object and the actor who merely performs in mask or costume" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 20) was addressed in the second chapter. As was mentioned then, his primary criterion is whether or not, when a human actor or group of actors is somehow combined with a stage object, this combination's "physiognomy is distinct from that of its operator" (108) or operators. Since Mermaid's very first production, *The Nose*, which was based on the short story of the same title by Nikolai Gogol, the company has often employed such combinations, indeed probably more often than any other Canadian puppet theatre company. For *The Nose*, which premièred in 1972, a "body puppet" was used to represent "the nose after it came off the woman's face" (Miller, "Body Puppets"). *Body puppet*, the term that Tom Miller, the original artistic director and principal designer for the company, uses to refer to this kind of theatrical object, should be defined carefully, as while the term itself is somewhat idiosyncratic, it is actually a rather common kind of puppet but one for which the standard object-control taxonomies do not account:

> . . . [A] body puppet generally encloses the manipulator in a structure/costume which hides the manipulator from view, but allows the performer to express action and emotion. . . . With a body puppet the performer must behave as if their whole body is the puppet, rather than the puppet being an object completely separate from the performer and manipulated by rods [or] strings. ("Body Puppets")

According to this definition, both Mickey Mouse and Big Bird—the examples Tillis uses in his own exploration of this shadowy borderland—qualify as puppets, as in both cases, the operator is completely enclosed within the puppet but is still able "to express action and emotion," if only through gesture, as his face is hidden. Tillis indeed implies that the operator must be "entirely inside the theatrical figure" (108) in order for it to be recognized as a puppet, but Miller, qualifying his initial definition, argues that a body puppet can leave part or even most of the actor's body exposed and still subsume the actor, citing some of Julie Taymor's creations for the Broadway version of *The Lion King* as examples: "[S]everal characters were body puppets, but in this case the puppet was worn on the performers body, manipulated by body gesture and rods, but the performer was still visible to the audience." The body puppet for *The Nose* was rather similar, as "[t]he performer's arms and legs showed, but [the] face was hidden[,] and [the] performer saw through the mouth of the 'puppet'" ("Body Puppets").

Thus, Miller concludes that "there are no definitive bound[a]ries or absolute definitions" ("Body Puppets"), a statement that Tillis would not be able to counter convincingly, as distinctiveness of physiognomy would seem to be far too subjective a variable to be of any use. In a very real sense, it is: what Tillis is actually arguing is that he himself finds Big Bird to be sufficiently objectified (in a neutral sense) to be considered a puppet, while he does not find Mickey Mouse to be equally convincing in this regard. He is certainly permitted to interpret these figures as he sees fit. I have found myself in

disagreement with Anne Barber and Brad Harley of Shadowland, who refer to the oversized "bobblehead" masks as puppets, on similar grounds. Tillis's only error—a common one, of course—is to attribute his own interpretations to an entire hypothetical audience: like the actor, he should heed Brecht's advice not to address the "audience . . . as an undifferentiated mass" ("Short Description" 143n13). When attempting to determine (for oneself) whether a given figure is a "puppetized" actor or just an actor wearing a mask or costume, one is "dealing with a 'sliding' scale where one category merges seamlessly into another," as Miller realizes. Indeed, while the figure of Medoonak from "Medoonak the Stormmaker"—originally staged as a part of a collection of Mi'kmaw tales entitled *Glooscap's People*, which premièred in 1974, this playlet was later made into a film by the National Film Board—would seem to fit Miller's description of a body puppet, as it completely enclosed the human performer, Miller himself, he actually "think[s] of Medoonak as a masked dancer in an elaborate costume" ("Puppets and Tours"). Ironically, having just questioned the practical relevance of struggling to tell the difference between "puppetized" actors and actors in masks or costumes ("[D]oes it really matter?" ["Puppets and Tours"]), Miller stumbles upon a possible solution: "[D]efinitions of types of puppets don't matter, and are only of some help when speaking about the art. The goal is always to create a believeable [sic] character by whatever means are useful and appropriate to the conception of the production and text" ("Body Puppets").

Miller's stylistic flexibility and open mind are certainly admirable, but his use of the term *believable character* to describe the aim he was pursuing in his puppet-theatre work might give one pause, as it is—superficially, at least—reminiscent of Jurkowski's initial claim in his article "Towards a Theatre of Objects" that "[t]heatre is transformation . . .[,] a vision created by an artist, transforming . . . himself or a puppet or even an object into an imagined character" (37). Moreover, Miller's comment might be interpreted as being indicative of a bias towards realistic representation. Jurkowski's assertion was criticized at length in the second chapter; he himself, as was noted above, modifies it near the end of the article when he writes, "Today when an actor enters onstage he firstly plays the role of an actor who, if needed, is able to create some stage characters with the use of every possible means of expression" (43). As for Miller, even given only what has already been said in the first and present chapters with respect to his puppet designs, attributing to him a strong predilection for realistic staging techniques would seem to be a stretch, to say the least.

One could instead relate Miller's idea of believability to Tillis's concept of double-vision: rather than promoting the realist project—the directly relevant elements of which were summarized in the second chapter—Miller could be seen as "simply"[67] having striven to create a range of different types of stage objects that, when manipulated by or merged with human actors, could capture and hold the

[67] The word *simply* is being used here somewhat ironically, thus the use of scare quotation marks. Although what is being posited as Miller's objective is not nearly as all encompassing as the realist compulsion to represent "reality" is, it is by no means easily achievable.

audience's imagination and thereby convincingly maintain the illusion of life. Certainly, some details of characterization can help to bring these creations to life, particularly when characters such as Medoonak—which are traditional and conventionalized to a degree, making precise characterization of them "useless" (Pavis, "Characterization") when they are presented to members of a community that is already familiar with them—are introduced to new communities outside of their established domain. However, as we learnt from Tillis in the second chapter of this study, "[i]n mask/costume acting, the actor neither makes a pretense of being a naturalistic dramatic character, nor desires to be acknowledged as a person or as an actor who happens to be playing a role" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 82), as the performer engaged in presentational acting does. There is still clearly a transformation occurring onstage in mask/costume acting, even if it is different in quality (but not necessarily in degree) from that which takes place in naturalistic acting and even in presentational acting, an essential technique of which is to play "a double role" (Brecht, "Short Organum" 194), that of a given character and that of the actor as such, as was discussed in greater detail in the previous chapter.

This transformation is caused by the mediating effect of the object of mask or costume. Although several points were raised against Malkin in the second chapter, one of his arguments needs to be repeated here: a mask such as that which constitutes Medoonak's head combines both "[t]he thing mask[, which] disguises and conceals, [and] the concept mask[, which] implies or expresses something that was not there before." In doing so, it "partakes of mystery, ritual, symbol and the intellect" (7). Although an actor wearing a mask—or an "elaborate costume" (Miller, "Puppets and Tours"), we should add—can therefore tap into the residual ritualistic power of this ancient stage object, "the audience is always aware of the life behind it – the creative forces that maintain it and are the reasons for its existence" (7), that is, the "forces" mustered by the actor herself, Malkin claims. Tillis openly makes use of Malkin's analysis in his own theorizing on mask/costume acting, but he, unlike his source, allows for the possibility that what might initially appear to be an object of mask or costume may actually slide into the category of puppet, depending on how it is received by an audience member.

This author now runs the risk of overgeneralizing about the audience, just as Tillis was accused of doing. Nonetheless, an actor wearing a body puppet resembling in structure and purpose that which represents Medoonak is so far along Miller's "'sliding' scale" ("Puppets and Tours") that the "indirect or abstract relationship between the actor and the audience" (Malkin 7) that is generated by mask/costume acting in general is pushed to the extreme. To be sure, Miller as Medoonak may remain for some nothing more than a masked performer. However, given that impressive wings completely replace merely human arms and that the formidable head and beak of the bird deity take the place of—sit upon, in fact, as holes out of which to see can be spotted in the neck—a normal human head, this conjunction of animate and inanimate material begins to seem "larger than life." To be more precise, unlike the merely masked or elaborately costumed actor, the performer subsumed in the body puppet may no longer be "perceived by

the audience to be nothing other than alive" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 82). On the contrary, the actor will likely be perceived to be a theatrical object representing a "believable" character and therefore imagined to be a living being, which qualifies her as a puppet, according to Tillis's definition. One need watch only a short clip from the film version of *Medoonak the Stormmaker* in order to realize this, as Miller as Medoonak stands out so clearly against the masked dancers around him: their transformation is not nearly as radical as his is.

The limits to their transformation can be demonstrated by examining both the design of their mask and costume components and their performance vocabulary. The performers' own necks and hands are exposed, for example, and are not conspicuously objectified or isolated from the rest of their bodies in the perception of the audience through the application of a specific puppetizing performance technique. All of this works against their objectification by prompting a reading of their masks, costumes, and props as pieces pulled together to signify their roles. However, the masks, at least, still seem to be "more than . . . object[s] of dress worn by . . . living actor[s]" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 21). They draw upon the power "of mystery, ritual, symbol and the intellect" (7) mentioned by Malkin and can therefore rise above the restrictions of objects that have merely been semiotized by their use onstage, to refer again to the process summarized by Elam (6-8). The masks employed in *Medoonak the Stormmaker* by both the performers representing the sea and those playing the fishers, although not quite capable of allowing the performers to partake of their "object nature" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 82), given the aforementioned limitations, are able to merge with the performers to a degree. These masks cover the performers' heads completely, thereby effectively replacing them. Thus, even though these masks are not "made into persons" in their own right, they do appear to be more than just "passive objects of a process" and move towards being "active subjects" (qtd. in Veltruský 88), to turn once again to Mukařovský's "concept of personification in its broadest sense" (88) as explained by Veltruský. Of course, these masks remain bound to the performers—structurally, semiotically, and phenomenologically—and therefore cannot successfully produce the illusion that they are independent "active subjects": each must continue to be nothing more than an object in the perception and imagination of the audience, since "life is not imagined to inhere in the mask . . . itself, but in the living being who wears it" (80), as Tillis argues more generally. The masks that help to create the characters of the sea and to personify the sea can consequently be classified as nothing other than performing objects. However, to go beyond Tillis's rather ruthless categorization, some attenuated sense of life does seem to spill over from the performers into the masks, as these artificial heads are much more noticeably integrated extensions of their bodies than, for example, the batons adorned with cloth strips that are used by the performers representing the sea to indicate the shape and movement of the waves.

In short, neither the masked performers in *Medoonak the Stormmaker* nor their accoutrements are transformed into puppets. There is an important exception with regard to the first case, assuming one

could even justifiably include him in that group: Miller as Medoonak. As was noted earlier, Miller deems himself to have been "a masked dancer in an elaborate costume." Indeed, he even believes that "most people involved in theatre" would agree with him. In spite of all that, he also concedes, "I never thought of Medoonak as a puppet[,] but according to the information [concerning body puppets] I have given you recently[,] of course it could be so characterized" ("Puppets and Tours"). Although Miller is willing to acknowledge that fixing such definitions and identifications is a subjective—and perhaps even useless, although that is going too far—enterprise, Smyth, in her article on Mermaid's early productions inspired by the legends and myths of the Mi'kmaq, declares that "myth cannot be treated subjectively." In fact, using language that might remind one of that which is used by the puppet theatre semioticians, she insists that "[t]he shadowy 'soul images' [of myth] must become bright and clear, must be objectified until they are filled with their own life and move of their own accord." As one might expect, she asserts that Mermaid achieves this "objectification through the use of masks, dance, mime, puppets and a sparse, clean style of playing" (29).

Smyth, however, does not associate any kind of distanciation with this reification of mythic images into objects, as the reader might have assumed, given the connections between ritual and alienation that have been discussed in this chapter already. She does claim that, in watching a Mermaid production based on Mi'kmaw cultural material, "[w]e are startled out of ourselves," but this is not due to some kind of estrangement; on the contrary, "[t]his is dramatic recognition in the fullest sense of the word" (29). The effect of watching one of these productions is quite the opposite of that which Brecht proposes is the result of seeing temporal periods—or cultures, we should add—different from those in which one is situated represented onstage as, in fact, different, so as to ensure that they do not "all look more or less like . . . [one's] own, which then acquires . . . a certain air of having been there all along, in other words of permanence . . ." ("Short Organum" 190). Indeed, Smyth adopts an appropriationist tone— a common rhetorical move when Aboriginal cultural material is being framed by non-Aboriginal artists and authors as a potential creative source, as was outlined in the first chapter—as she proclaims that, as hypothetical audience members at a Mermaid performance, "we transcend a particular time and place so that this legend no longer belongs only to the Micmac Indians. . . ." Far from alienating spectators, these productions, according to Smyth, push identification into spiritual territory, for "[w]hat we are recognizing is the mythopoeic truth: our own souls are reflected here" (29).

Although Smyth's position may not be sufficiently critical, I do not mean to imply here either that Mi'kmaw cultural material is now irrelevant or that alienation completely displaced identification on the Mermaid stage. Some mention of the continued cultural relevance of the Mi'kmaq and other First Nations—for both Mermaid and Western society more generally—was made in the first chapter. As for the second potential misunderstanding, Smyth's phenomenological perspective cannot simply be dismissed: her experience of identification when watching the early Mermaid productions was clearly

very affecting for her. According to Pavis, however, "[t]he mask denaturalizes the character by introducing a foreign body into the relationship of identification between spectator and actor . . . [and] is therefore often used when the mise-en-scène seeks to avoid emotional transference . . ." ("Mask"). Smyth's decision not only to include the mask in her list of Mermaid's means of "objectification" (29) but also to place it at the head of this list therefore simultaneously confirms—given the semiotic and phenomenological effect that results from objectifying elements of Mi'kmaw cultural material in this manner—and challenges—given the affect that can be elicited from some spectators when presented with this objectification—Pavis's statement. We need not be overly alarmed by this apparent contradiction: even Brecht, after all, admits that empathy and alienation are not necessarily mutually exclusive theatrical processes, as was explained in the second chapter.

Brecht also offers some analysis that is more specifically relevant to the identification-alienation dialectic in the context of mask/costume acting. He reminds us, "The classical and medieval theatre alienated its characters by making them wear human or animal masks; the Asiatic theatre even today uses musical and pantomimic A-effects." He adds, however, that, although these "devices were certainly a barrier to empathy, . . . this technique owed more, not less, to hypnotic suggestion than do those by which empathy is achieved." He concludes that "[t]he social aims" behind the use of these devices were therefore "entirely different from" those behind his own work, for the practitioners of these historical forms of performance sought to "remove the object represented from the spectator's grasp, turning it into something that cannot be altered . . ." ("Short Organum" 192). His argument can be connected back to Malkin's concerning the "something" that is the mask, the power of which over the audience and even the performer wearing it, whose "role is welded to the mask" (7), is difficult to describe but palpable nonetheless. Although Mermaid is not, of course, actually part of "classical and medieval" or "Asiatic theatre" (192), Brecht's criticism still obtains to some degree, since, in the productions examined by Smyth, the company employed "the same combination of hieratic gesture and ritual costume that we see in Aztec art or the Kathakali dance troupe" (29).

To pursue this point with greater rigour, we should return to Malkin's observation that the masked performer's "role is welded to the mask": mask and performer can never be truly "face to face," as "[a]lthough he may hold it in his hands and examine it, he must step into it from behind" (7). As both Malkin and Pavis argue, the mask has an important mediating effect, but while it can defamiliarize the character being represented, the performer wearing it may find severing her ritualistic bond with it in order to comment on or interact with that character and then successfully regenerating this bond to be a challenge. If the performer "is entirely inside the theatrical figure" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 108), which for Tillis is a critical factor in determining whether this "theatrical figure" is a puppet or not, then establishing the aforementioned estranged relationship becomes even more problematic. One should certainly not underestimate the audience's ability to appreciate and readiness to support any such negotiations on the

part of the performer. There are, however, other types of theatrical figures that are better suited for this kind of play with alienation.

Miller as Medoonak did not engage in this kind of play, no doubt largely because it would have disturbed the mythic atmosphere described by Smyth. Even if he had decided to do so for whatever reason, however, as we have seen, he would have been asking much of both himself and the audience, given that he was completely covered by his body puppet. In a much more recent Mermaid production, on the other hand, the performers wear body puppets that only partially cover their bodies, so that they can stop playing the characters assigned to their puppets and present their own, independent characters, which are then free to interact with anything or anyone onstage. A given performer can even speak to the very puppet that she is wearing. The body puppets for *When Dinosaurs Dine by Moonlight*, first staged by Mermaid in 2001, were designed to exploit this dialogic flexibility to the fullest.

Although each of the puppets is "very large, [having been] built on a frame like a crinoline," in each of the puppets that is particularly immense (that is, the size of a person or larger), there is "a hole in the center in[to] which the performer" steps "with a backpack-type contraption on her back," which has "rods and strings extended to various parts of the animal, enabling manipulation" ("Re: Playwrights"), as Managing Director Sara Lee Lewis, one of the three cofounders of the company, elucidates; the puppet representing an ankylosaurus actually accommodates two operators, having been built with two holes in it. The smaller puppets, on the other hand, are still manipulated using this "backpack" system but from behind, so since they are controlled completely from without, they cannot be considered body puppets proper, even according to Miller's inclusive definition of the term. When manipulating one of the larger dinosaur puppets, the performer wears "special dino shoes" (Lewis, "Re: Playwrights") that represent the dinosaur's feet, while when controlling one of the comparatively smaller figures, she attaches brackets to her feet that connect them, via a pair of boards resembling skis, to the puppet's own feet, with one exception: the feet of the smallest of the dinosaur puppets, which represents a compsognathus, are attached directly to a skateboard, and the figure is controlled through one of the "backpacks" described above and a handle affixed to the skateboard itself. Each of the operators therefore has a high degree of control over her puppet; nonetheless, since, even when operating one of the larger puppets, the performer's head, at least, is clearly visible, and the shoulders and upper legs can also often be seen, she can use her own focus to attempt to direct the attention of the audience either towards or away from the puppet. This technique is in fact used to great effect in *When Dinosaurs Dine by Moonlight*, as not only are the dinosaur puppets made to engage in dialogue with each other, but they are also made to talk to both the costumed human actors with which they share the stage and their own manipulators, who are, of course, also speaking for the puppets. In addition, the manipulators themselves—who, despite the fact that they are clearly visible onstage, do not "really" exist, according to the theatrical reality that is initially presented—interact with the costumed actors and each other. Thus, in *When Dinosaurs Dine by*

Moonlight, Mermaid effectively makes more concrete the rather abstract conception of dialogism that Pavis, drawing upon the theoretical work of Ferdinand de Saussure and its radical reworking in the writings of Bakhtin, presents in the entry for *discourse* in his *Dictionary of the Theatre*: "By multiplying the sources of speech (*parole*), by making scenery, gestures, facial expressions or intonation 'speak' as much as the text itself, the staging creates a space for all of the subjects of discourse and establishes a dialogue among all sources of speech (*parole*)" ("Discourse" 106). We could almost certainly add *stage object* to Pavis's list without causing controversy.

Bogatyrëv, who cofounded the Moscow Linguistic Circle and worked with the Prague Linguistic Circle, warns in an article in which he ventures beyond the confines of folk puppetry, understandably his chief subject of interest within the world of puppet theatre, given his dedication to the study of folklore, that "[t]he audience does not always easily perceive scenes in which actors and puppets participate," as it clearly must be able to do in order to "read" productions such as *When Dinosaurs Dine by Moonlight*. When watching such productions, Bogatyrëv continues, "[t]he audience is forced simultaneously to perceive two semiotic systems: the puppets' system and the actors' system." Although audience members "who have repeatedly perceived both semiotic systems separately . . . can easily move from the perception of one system to the other," this supposed oscillation between sign systems can be made easier for others, Bogatyrëv implies, through several means. One method is to bring "the actors' sign system . . . nearer to the puppets' sign system" through the use of masks, for example, as, according to Bogatyrëv, they "deprive the actors of any use of facial gestures and at the same time fuse one system of signs with the other" (64). A performer is, of course, only completely deprived of the "use of facial gestures" when wearing a full mask, a qualification Bogatyrëv fails to make, but in the production that he cites as exemplifying this technique, *I and Dead Matter* by Mircea Crisan and Radu Stanescu as performed by the Tandarica Marionette and Puppet Theatre of Bucharest, the performers are only wearing half-masks (see pl. 161 in Niculescu and Union Internationale [de la Marionnette]). This is little more than a quibble, however. At a deeper theoretical level, Bogatyrëv's argument could be interpreted as reflecting "the desire of many people involved with the puppet to annex the mask into the field of puppetry" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 20), and, as we have already learnt from Tillis and our examination of Mermaid's work, one must be very careful indeed when attempting to identify a particular masked performer as a puppet. Still, while Bogatyrëv is clearly going too far when he claims that covering the faces—completely or otherwise—of the human performers with masks "fuse[s] one system of signs with the other," it does push these performers towards the range of the puppet. Although the production that Bogatyrëv cites as his example in this argument is a fairly modern one, as it was first staged in 1964 (Niculescu and Union Internationale [de la Marionnette] 225n161), and the related Canadian examples, such as those provided

by Mermaid in *Medoonak the Stormmaker*, that one could examine are even more contemporary, the staging technique that he outlines can actually be traced back to *commedia dell'arte*.[68]

Working with/in the Gaps: Freedom (and Its Opposite?) in the Form

This semiotic transmutation of human performers by means of masks is not the only way to help the audience to make some sense of a performance in which the respective sign systems of human performers and of puppets are juxtaposed: in the traditional Petrushka show, the human musician also facilitates this, as Bogatyrëv explains (64-66). The first definite account of this Russian folk puppet show dates back to 1843 (Jurkowski, *History* 1:311). Jurkowski provides a concise description of this traditional hand-puppet performance, which has obvious links in terms of form and content to the Punch and Judy show of England, a tradition approximately one hundred years older (Speaight, *History* 178):

> The comedy of Petrushka was performed with a special movable booth, with a musician in front who talked with Petrushka. The human musician fulfilled a number of functions. He was, of course, a musician. . . ; he was an actor as a partner of Petrushka (their talks were a sort of frame for the proper action of Petrushka, which might be described as the theatre within the theatre); when necessary he acted as a real intermediary, interpreting the words of Petrushka since they were distorted by the swazzle.[69] ("Sign Systems" 64)

Thus, as Bogatyrëv elaborates, the role of the musician in the Petrushka tradition "differs from that of other actors in puppetry since the Musician does not participate onstage in the puppet booth, but is located in the audience" (65-66). Bogatyrëv concludes that the musician therefore "fulfills two functions: he is a living actor carrying on a dialogue with Petrushka and he is a link connecting the audience and the puppet Petrushka" (66). Consequently, Bogatyrëv seems to contradict his initial claim that the Petrushka show represents a "union of puppets and actors," as the musician—unlike the masked performers in *Medoonak the Stormmaker* and *I and Dead Matter*—is not "brought [any] nearer to the puppets' sign system" (64) due to the mediation of a mask or some other similar device. Rather, the musician serves as a kind of double agent but only in the sense of a genuine ally of both the spectators and the puppets: a guide and translator for the audience and, as Jurkowski notes, "a partner of" ("Sign Systems" 64) the puppets.

In a later article, Jurkowski again refers to a "partner" relationship between the puppet and the performer; this type of partnership, however, is much more intimate. Certainly, the musician does much

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[68] For some helpful perspectives on the complicated historical relationship between puppets and *commedia dell'arte*, see Howard ("Puppets and the Commedia") and Jurkowski (*History* 1:103-17, 302-06; "Sign Systems" 71-73).

[69] A swazzle is a voice distortion device used by puppet operators in the Punch and Judy and other related traditions. Phipott notes in his dictionary that it typically "consists of two slightly curved pieces of silver, one above the other, the curves being outward (convex); a reed is formed by stretching a piece of tape from side to side between the metal and binding the ends with thread." Swazzles have also been made out of various other materials, including alternative metals, ivory, and even plastic. Once the instrument has been "moistened with water (or beer)[,] the swazzle is placed on the tongue and pressed up to the roof of the mouth" ("Swazzle" 253) in order to produce the whistling, screechy, squeaky voice associated with Punch and his cousins. The puppet operator's voice is only distorted when producing the voices for these particular characters, however, so he must become skilled at moving the swazzle into and out of position.

to flesh out the characters represented by the hand puppets in the booth, and this is an essential responsibility. Still, in "Towards a Theatre of Objects," Jurkowski includes "the puppet as partner of the actor" (39) among the legitimate functions of the puppet that he enumerates, and in this context, the puppet and the human performer (in this case, the operator) work so closely together, physically and representationally, that they could be seen as genuine collaborators: that is, they are working in tandem.

I will, of course, expand upon the nature of this type of relationship between puppet and manipulator in the next chapter, but it is worth repeating here that both the style of puppetry that takes full advantage of this function of the puppet and the alienated or presentational style are able to fulfill the requirements imposed by puppet theatre as a unique form of theatre. Moreover, practitioners employing either approach are also certainly capable of navigating any other constraints brought into effect by production decisions made with regard to lighting and set design, developmental process, and so on. In short, puppet theatre persists in being a rich and fertile territory in spite of—or rather, due to—its intrinsic restrictions, which not only make it a distinct form of theatre but also encourage creative solutions to working within the boundaries that they establish. We will now turn to that "other" style of puppetry, tandem puppetry, in order to ascertain the various ways its practitioners negotiate these restrictions, as they are quite different from those to which advocates of the presentational style adhere. Although these two styles are not actually diametrically opposed to one another, there are still appreciable differences in emphasis that, among other consequences, can render each of them particularly effective in specific contexts. As was noted in the introduction to this chapter, tandem puppetry has proven especially compatible with the other theatrical approach at the centre of this study: devising.

Chapter 4:

Acting and/in Puppet Theatre: Introducing Tandem Puppetry

Beyond Brecht and Mirbt: A "New" Approach to Puppet Theatre

Now that the theoretical, historical, and situational context has been established over the course of the last three chapters, we are at last in a position to begin to delve into the matters that lie at the true core of this study. Consequently, in this chapter, tandem puppetry, particularly as it has been practiced in this country, will be dealt with in earnest. Although this style of puppetry will now be defined and explained in detail for the first time (ever, in fact), it has already been mentioned a few times in various contexts over the preceding chapters. Consequently, a number of topics to which it has already been related—including the similarities and differences between puppet and human bodies, the ways in which these different types of bodies can generate meaning together onstage, the potential "theatrical functions" (Jurkowski, "Towards a Theatre" 38) of the puppet in relation to its operator, and so on—will inevitably come up again in this chapter.

New questions will be posed as well, however, as elaborating upon a particular style of puppetry must entail some consideration of what the difference is between a style and a form—the latter often in "the object-control" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 95) sense—of puppetry, for example. Furthermore, an analysis of the tandem style specifically will necessitate an examination of where the onstage activities of the puppet artist do and do not overlap with those of the actor and how the collisions between human performers and puppets (and between their associated sign systems) bear upon collaboration, spontaneity, and control, three concepts around which this dissertation ultimately revolves. As was mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the tandem style is not in fact the opposite of the presentational style in an unqualified sense: the similarities between the two are, in truth, as significant as the differences. Thus, several of threads related to the presentational style that ran through the last chapter, most notably those concerning ritual and, once again, alienation, will also be developed further here.

Uncomfortably Close?: Puppets and Performers Onstage Together

Given the comments made by Bogatyrëv that were quoted in the second and third chapters, the reader should hardly be surprised by Jurkowski's observation that "[t]he relationship of live theatre and puppet theatre troubled Bogatyrev [sic] throughout his life" ("Sign Systems" 61). As was noted before, Bogatyrëv deploys a linguistic metaphor to attack both Zich's and the public's understanding of puppet theatre: "The perception of one semiotic system in comparison to another system is an especially interesting problem. Thus someone familiar with only one language often regards a related language as a distorted version of his own native tongue" (47). Neither Zich nor the average adult spectator can readily "perceive puppets as such," and thus each "perceives signs in puppetry in comparison to live theater."

This, for Bogatyrëv, explains why an adult audience member "often perceives puppetry as something funny" (50), irrespective of the nature of the specific content or form of the puppet theatre performance being staged. Bogatyrëv argues, however, that one will invariably react to any work of art in one of the two ways described by Zich: with amusement if the piece is perceived to be artificial, even though it appears to "demand" (qtd. in Bogatyrëv 48) to be received as real, or with amazement and even fear if it is in fact perceived to be alive. Zich fails to acknowledge not only that humans actors themselves, like puppets, are complexes of signs and not, strictly speaking, "real life" but also that puppet theatre as a whole comprises "a unique system of signs" (49), Bogatyrëv maintains.

Jurkowski, in his turn, censures Bogatyrëv for his criticism of Zich, stressing "that perception is only a part of the greater process of theatrical communication," for "[t]he understanding of the message depends not only on the public and its ability to understand, but on the artist and his ability to be understood as well." All artists, including those working in puppet theatre, "should know the sign systems existing potentially in the minds of the audience," because the "[r]esponsibility for possible misunderstanding of the puppet theatre sign system" ("Sign Systems" 61) is shared by spectators and puppet theatre artists alike.

The fact that several Canadian puppet theatre companies have managed to communicate effectively with child, adult, and mixed audiences demonstrates that both of the parties mentioned by Jurkowski are up to the challenge of "learn[ing] the necessary codes, i.e. cultural codes and theatrical and dramatic subcodes" ("Sign Systems" 61). These companies have even developed productions in which "the actors' sign system" and "the puppets' sign system" collide onstage with no effort made to "fuse one system of signs with the other" (Bogatyrëv 64) or even to bring one system closer to the other, and yet, if the appreciation from their audiences and the recognition from their peers that they often receive can be accepted as testimony, spectators who may have little knowledge—at least of a formal nature—of these sign systems, as well as those with considerable knowledge of this kind, are still able to comprehend them. In fact, a production like Puppetmongers Theatre's *The Brick Bros. Circus* is arguably more useful with respect to the type of semiotic education recommended by Jurkowski than one that makes use of a more conspicuous bridging device to aid the audience. Rather than donning masks or relying upon an outside interlocutor, to cite two techniques that were discussed earlier, the Powells, as we already know from the third chapter, turn to more conventional puppets in order to acquaint the audience with the initially familiar but soon estranged milieu of the bricks, whose routines are introduced by the human ringmasters. To put it more semiotically, the Powells bring the sign systems of multiple forms of performance (puppet theatre, human theatre, and even circus) into play, allowing them not only to complement but also to contradict each other, as opposed to somehow making these collisions more palatable to spectators.

One might assume that, if the sign system of the human theatre were allowed to confront that of the puppet theatre in the same performance space, with no measures having been put in place in order to telescope the semiotic distance between the two systems, the former system would inevitably triumph. The human performers, with their expressive faces and limber (particularly in the case of those working in physically-based devised theatre) bodies, would presumably overshadow, figuratively and, in many instances, literally, the often smaller puppets, with their less dynamic, frequently even static faces and alienated—and, frankly, generally less obviously sensual—bodies. Even when these two sign systems meet without an arbitrating element, so to speak, it need not be in the form of a contest.

Jurkowski's list of the historical roles of the puppet was introduced in the second chapter. As was first mentioned there, among the "functions" ("Towards a Theatre" 38) that he proposes is "the puppet as partner of the actor, who is visibly manipulating the figure onstage." When the puppet is functioning in this mode, it and its operator "co-operate to create a theatre character": the former "is the mobile picture of this character," while the latter contributes "his voice, feelings and even . . . facial expression." All of this results in a performance in which "the actor has replaced the puppet player," and although Jurkowski claims that this was "quite a new situation" (39) at the time, the puppet manipulator is now more commonly understood to be an actor, at least within the puppet theatre community itself. Burkett, for example, has stated that "a puppet can only exist if there is a really good actor-puppeteer, manipulating it, speaking it"; indeed, "you need the better actor . . . to take an inanimate object and give it life, and breath, and focus" (Personal interview). The Powells have often stressed that using their own facial expressions to express the emotions that their puppet characters are supposed to be feeling at a given moment is one of their central performance techniques, and the partnership between David Powell and Brikko the Clown in *The Brick Bros. Circus* has already been examined in this context.

Puppet Artists and/as Actors: Where to Draw the Lines

We must be careful not to push this identification of the puppet artist with the actor too far, however. Veltruský concedes that "[t]he puppeteers' performance is closely related to, and yet different from, acting" but clarifies further that this relationship is context dependent: "the area of their overlapping keeps expanding and shrinking from one form of puppetry to another." He makes a major division between "[t]he puppeteer's delivery" (73) and "[t]he manipulation of puppets" (74) with regard to the degree to which this perceived overlap obtains. The former aspect of the human side of a puppet theatre performance requires performance skills that are the most demonstrably related to acting of all the skills regularly deployed in puppet theatre. Veltruský is referring to vocal delivery specifically, but he states further that the oral content of a given performance can be "enhanced by the inclusion of other elements of acting — facial play, expressive gestures, etc. — in the performance of the actor who delivers the words" (73). The last part of his point deserves attention, since, as we already know from our earlier

examination of the Bunraku tradition and Mirbt's staging of *Woyzeck*, the source of a puppet's speech can be separate from that of its movement—indeed, as was discussed in the second chapter, speech, unlike movement, "can be presented automatically, without affecting the audience's sense of the puppet as perceived object and imagined life" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 150). As Veltruský circumspectly adds, however, "in certain forms of puppetry there are no speeches to be delivered" (73). He fails to mention whether any human performers other than the operators continue to supply facial expressions and the like for the puppets used in these forms, even though there is no oral content whatsoever. Nevertheless, he does stress that such "elements of acting" (74) can be found in the extramanipulatory stage business of some operators.

When viewed as a whole, "[t]he manipulation of puppets is a human action that . . . is not a form of acting properly so called" (74), according to Veltruský. It should be noted that his own definition of *acting* avoids the undue emphasis on "character" for which Jurkowski's definition of *theatre* was criticized in the second chapter: "the representation of human and anthropomorphic beings (including animals) and their actions and behavior by human beings and their actions and behavior." In fact, he explicitly acknowledges that "[t]he stage figure need not always represent a character"; moreover, one must not assume that "the stage action always represent[s] action." These two halves of "[t]he *signans* ["signifier"] produced in acting . . . may also comprise certain, sometimes crucial, components that are not produced by the actor but stem from the theatrical space, the use of machinery, lights, sounds, music, and so on" (70). Nonhuman elements, of course, often come to the fore in puppet theatre performance. Veltruský is therefore justified in contending that manipulation is not acting per se, for "[i]t does not by itself represent human or anthropomorphic beings and their actions and behavior"; rather, "it makes the puppets represent them" (74). His argument could be expanded to include animate puppets composed of isolated parts of the performers' own bodies. The form of puppetry with which they are associated should not be equated with mime, since the work of representation is being undertaken by limited regions—perceived by spectators to be objects—of the performers' bodies as opposed to the bodies in their entireties—perceived by spectators to be just what they are, wholly animate human bodies.

Although manipulation in itself should consequently be considered distinct from acting, as it is, in a sense, more manifestly mechanical, "the puppet operator's own motion may have distinct elements of acting," Veltruský admits. One of his examples is the performance style of "the Chinese rod puppet theater of the Guangdong province," which requires the manipulator to control the puppet's "head and . . . eyes with . . . [the] right hand and the arms with the left." As for the legs, however, the puppet itself does not have any; thus, any leg movements must be supplied by the operator's own legs and "transmitted to the puppet" (74). This is but a more physically dynamic version of the type of semiotic transference—from the performer's face to the puppet—that characterizes Puppetmongers productions like *The Brick Bros. Circus*. In each case, however, an exchange rather than a unidirectional transposition is taking

place: the boundary between the puppet and the human performer becomes permeable. The close juxtaposition of these two elements—undoubtedly the two most essential elements in puppetry—allows the puppet to share in the nature of the performer as a living thing and the performer to share in the nature of the puppet as a (perceived) object. The true essence of each, however, remains uncompromised, both in the perception of the audience and, of course, in reality.

Form versus Style: The Relative Position of the Artist and the Puppet

A close—even if not literally, in terms of spatial distance between the two—relationship between puppet and artist is, to be sure, always important, irrespective of the exact form or forms of puppet theatre being practiced in a given production. I would argue, in fact, that the degree to which this relationship is evident in a given performance is the fundamental criterion to use when evaluating it: if that connection is in place, then all else will follow, or so one hopes. I am indebted to Bogatyrëv in this regard, as he similarly claims "that the principal difference between puppet theater and live theater is the organic bond between puppeteer and puppet" (59). Consequently, no puppet, Über-marionette or otherwise, could ever completely replace the actor, as the puppet and the performer rely on one another, and each must sometimes cater to the other's needs. At this point, we should recall that total unification is impossible, given that all puppetry is inherently alienated and alienating. Still, while the "organic bond" mentioned by Bogatyrëv is elastic, and the literal and conceptual space between the puppet and the manipulator can expand and contract, this tie can never be severed, as the puppet would, in fact, no longer be a puppet and would revert to being a mere object; body part or collection of such parts, in the case of what was a wholly animate puppet; or assemblage of body parts and objects, in the case of what was a puppet composed of animate and inanimate material.

The approach to puppet theatre that has here been designated *tandem puppetry*, however, explicitly takes this relationship between the puppet and the operator as its first principle. Because this school places equal emphasis on the puppet and the human performer, it is counterposed in this regard to both the alienated or presentational style that has already been described at some length and what could be called *virtuosic puppet theatre*. In the former style, the human performer is, as we already know, supposed to serve the puppet, while in the latter style, the puppet (and every other production element) must serve the artist. This assertion with regard to virtuosic performance may remind the reader of Jurkowski's analysis—covered in the second chapter of this study—of contemporary object theatre, in that, in both, "it is the object which serves the imagination of the performer" ("Towards a Theatre" 42). Consequently, some clarifications and qualifications need to be made. Object theatre is a form of puppetry, whereas virtuosic puppetry is a style. All this distinction means is that, as a particular type of puppetry, object theatre is generally associated with a particular type of puppet (in this case, any object not originally intended as a representation of some living thing to be used in a performance) that brings

with it certain design and movement conventions. An artist can, of course, reject, adapt, problematize, or even explode these conventions, but they are still part of the legacy of the form that has been inherited. The virtuosic style, on the other hand, is a way of "doing" puppetry: like any other style, it could, theoretically at least, be applied to any production, regardless of the form being employed. That said, a given style might be especially compatible with a specific form or set of forms.

As is so often the case, however, this type of distinction is not always so neat. Consider cabaret puppetry, which was briefly introduced in the first chapter. Given that it has been shaped largely by circumstances related to the kind of venue in which it is usually presented—a nightclub or other establishment for adult audiences at which refreshments can be purchased—and that it has historically been associated with puppets of a certain kind, namely "short-strung marionettes" (Baird 229), one could speak of it as a form of puppet theatre in itself. The virtuosic style has been closely linked with cabaret puppetry ever since Frank Paris—who was also discussed in the first chapter—first stepped onto the stage with his marionette variety show. "Polished, slick presentation is [a] vital ingredient of such acts" ("Cabaret Puppets" 44), Philpott informs us, no doubt because such technical mastery—the key attribute of the virtuoso—has managed in the past to hold the attention of the easily distracted (given the lively surroundings) nightclub patron, particularly when it has been brought to bear on narrowly defined (in terms of content, running time, and required stage space) pieces. Such attention to technique presumably also allows for the quick transitions that are imposed by this form.

The variety so essential to cabaret puppetry could potentially preclude it from being deemed a puppet theatre form proper, however. Philpott notes, for examples, that "shadow figures were a feature of the *Chat Noir* . . . in Paris in [the] nineteenth century" ("Cabaret Puppets" 44). Modern puppetry cabarets—or "slams" as they are now often called in an effort to relate them to the edginess and vitality of poetry slams, although puppetry slams are not necessarily competitive—attract practitioners at all levels of experience and of every conceivable form of puppetry.[70] Cabaret should therefore be considered more of an event or venue type than a form of puppetry as such. In fact, the content of a given cabaret could be so diverse that the kind of virtuosity described by Philpott might benefit one type of performance while compromising another, depending on which production elements were to be emphasized in each case. Since, as was argued above, any form of puppetry could hypothetically be coupled with the virtuosic style in a production (and then presented at any type of venue or event) this contention regarding the relative value of virtuosity in the context of cabaret puppetry could be extended to apply to puppet theatre as a whole. Burkett's early marionette productions, for example, "astonished audiences with their physical and

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[70] A conference paper or journal article should be written soon on the perceived similarities and—if indeed there are any—differences between puppetry cabarets and slams. Producers, performers, and spectators should all be surveyed more formally, but it would seem that there might be a slight preference for the term *slam* when attempting to put together an event that is particularly welcoming to experimental, even unfinished short pieces, as opposed to pieces that are merely short (but perhaps more "polished," as those performed by Paris were).

verbal virtuosity, their visual flamboyance, their high-camp brio" ("World" 32), according to Nicholls. However "astonished" the spectators might have been, Burkett himself eventually started to feel that something was missing: "I got so tired of being clever, jiggling the dollies, winking at the audience. . . . I wanted to create characters you gave a shit about. I wanted you to care more about the character I created than me" (qtd. in Nicholls, "World" 32-33).

This increased attention to characterization was not, however, accompanied by a denial of interest in the technical side of puppetry, in just how one should be "jiggling the dollies" (qtd. in Nicholls, "World" 32), to use Burkett's dismissive expression more ironically. His "deconstruction of technique" became less about virtuosity for its own sake and more about developing a "movement-based vocabulary around text" (Personal interview). As was explained in the first chapter, Burkett appears to have been inspired more by innovative human theatre companies like Calgary-based One Yellow Rabbit in this regard than by puppet theatre theorists (or artists).[71] This connection does not need to be examined again here. What is most relevant to the current context of styles of puppet theatre performance—and what will bring us back to the more specific topic of tandem puppetry—is Burkett's twin focus on his own movement and that of his puppets (Burkett, "Civil Disobedience" 12). He is by no means the only Canadian puppet artist to emphasize the importance of the puppet artist's movement as much as that of the puppet's in helping "these things [puppets] seem real to the audience," even though he, along with presumably every other puppet artist in this country and abroad, "know[s] they're not" (Burkett, Personal interview). The Powells share this interest in both categories of movement—so much so, in fact, that they have worked with choreographer Yvonne Ng in the past, a collaborative relationship that will be explored more thoroughly in the sixth chapter. The puppet's movement is, of course, only putatively attributed to it by the audience: it is the direct result of movement on the part of the human manipulator, and thus, in a sense, there really is only one category of movement.[72]

Still, one needs to account for both parties, as Burkett does when he stresses how important "creat[ing] a movement vocabulary that included both the puppeteer and the puppet" was to his development as an artist. As was mentioned above, this dual emphasis sets the perspective shared by Burkett and the Powells apart from that of the more purely virtuosic puppet artist. As Burkett says of a number of other operators who appear onstage with their puppets, "[T]hey're so busy stealing focus from

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[71] See 26n12.

[72] Tillis does note that "lighting and scenery can be used to generate 'implicit' movement in the puppet in the absence of actual movement." "The illusory, or implicit, movement of the puppet's facial features, generated by the puppet's movement through light and shadow," for instance, "can also be generated while the puppet remains stationary, with the light and shadow moving instead" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 141). Nevertheless, this kind of movement is still "perceived by the audience as puppet movement, and, as with the puppet's abstracted signs in general, it helps provoke the imagination of life" (142), Tillis affirms. Furthermore, even if the puppet is not being directly manipulated in such cases, action—however insignificant it might seem at first—and agency on the part of human practitioners are responsible for causing "implicit" movement to occur. The changes in lighting mentioned in the example above could certainly be preprogrammed, but someone had to press the appropriate buttons or keys at some point, for example.

the puppets and trying to be great dramatic *artistes* that you don't even watch the poor little wooden thing hanging down between their legs" ("Civil Disobedience" 12). Luman Coad confirms that "[w]hat makes Burkett's theatre unique . . . is humanity and focus" ("World" 35), Nicholls reports. When "actors are competing with puppets for attention," Coad asserts, "puppets, with their fixed facial expressions and limited mobility, can't hold their own." Using language reminiscent of Jurkowski's, he in fact claims that they become "props." Burkett, on the other hand, is able to "draw attention to himself and then instantly focus attention back onto the puppet, pushing personality back into the puppets" (qtd. in Nicholls, "World" 35), Coad insists.

The forms of puppetry most frequently incorporated into productions by the Powells and Burkett respectively differ considerably. In fact, David Powell reveals that the initial idea for *The Brick Bros. Circus* came from a conversation with friends during which the point was made that, since "marionettes [are] often pretty inanimate on their strings," one could conceivably replace them with bricks and still stage the kind of variety or cabaret show in which they are often featured. The original tone of both the comment and the conversation as a whole was undoubtedly jocular; nevertheless, the Powells decided to accept the challenge. They did choose to forgo actually attaching strings to the bricks, perhaps because that would have been too pointed an attack on skating marionettes and the other "'classic'" ("Re: Sources/Creation") acts upon which some of those who would follow in the footsteps of Frank Paris have relied. They manipulate the brick circus performers directly instead, sometimes taking advantage of the "Canadian control," which was explicated in the first chapter, since bricks are obviously capable of remaining upright on their own. Of course, when they began to develop this production, they were most likely not yet aware of Burkett's work, and he himself had not yet made marionettes his focus. Thus, he could not have been among the marionettists whom they were indirectly parodying; Burkett himself, moreover, would come to criticize the same type of variety or cabaret puppetry more directly in the more recent production *Billy Twinkle: Requiem for a Golden Boy* (2008).

The differences in terms of favoured forms of puppetry between Burkett and the Powells still obtain, regardless, but this does not necessitate a difference in style, given that form and style are distinct aspects, as has already been demonstrated. The common ground between Burkett's and the Powells' approaches to movement in puppet theatre is itself compelling, but it is also related to a nexus of characteristics that ultimately shapes the work of tandem puppetry practitioners. These attributes are admittedly present to varying degrees, depending on the artists or companies under consideration, but they are nonetheless all conspicuous consistently enough to define the style. Some of these have already been mentioned, but the remaining ones will now be considered, and this newly identified style will be compared more methodically with the presentational or alienated style, particularly with regard to the "interest [of each] . . . in the process of creation" (Jurkowski, "Towards a Theatre" 40).

Tandem Puppetry: At the Crossroads

Tandem puppetry in general is situated where the two cycles postulated by Jurkowski "touch and even penetrate each other," just as—at the more microcosmic level that, in this context, was discussed in the third chapter—*The Brick Bros. Circus* is. As we already know, the first "cycle of the puppet's history" is ritualistic in nature, while the second is "profane and secular" ("Towards a Theatre" 40). The ritualistic cycle was brought up in the previous chapter in relation to David Powell's performance relationship with Brikko the Clown, but the identification of this with Jurkowski's concept of animisation was not entirely justified: his theory only addresses how an object can be brought to life through its close proximity to and interaction with human performers. Certainly, Brikko is brought to life, but there is no controversy related to whether or not Brikko is actively manipulated during the performance. This alone sets that character apart from the puppet representing Nadezhda—the case study Jurkowski uses to illustrate his theory—in the DRAK Theatre production *Cirkus Unikum*, as was we already know from the last chapter. There is more to it than that, however.

As the reader has probably already gathered, visible manipulators onstage are essential to tandem puppetry. Already we have a point of similarity with the presentational style employed by Mirbt here, but the motive and the method of execution are different. Mirbt sought to alienate the spectators by having the manipulators carry out their responsibilities onstage in a detached manner. The Powells, Burkett, and other tandem puppetry practitioners are no doubt also alienating because of their tangible presence in their productions, and yet their demeanour is anything but continuously detached, as has been emphasized in connection with David Powell. That said, the emotionality that they project onstage is not always of the order exemplified by Powell's exaggerated performance with Brikko the Clown in *The Brick Bros. Circus*. Moreover, the degree to which they choose to contain this emotionality within their puppets varies. As Burkett states with reference to his own relationship with his puppets in *Tinka's New Dress*, first staged in 1994, and afterwards, even these puppet artists can endeavour "to get out of . . . [their] own way, and let the characters breathe" (qtd. in Nicholls, "World" 33). Nonetheless, according to *Guardian* reviewer Lyn Gardner, in *Billy Twinkle*, Burkett got "in the way of his own marionette creations; he dominate[d] them, rather than merely bringing them to life." Rather than "acting as a conduit for his creations," he was "merely acting - and very noisily indeed."

Gardner's wording in describing Burkett's performance as "merely acting" is patently intended to be taken as a criticism, yet it also indicates just how difficult regulating the permeable boundary between the puppet and the performer in tandem puppetry can be. Ideally, as was noted in an earlier section of this chapter, each of these two halves that compose the onstage performance should partake of the nature of each other; that is, neither component should prove completely "overwhelming," as Gardner found Burkett to be. Otherwise, to use Jurkowski's terminology once again, rather than a "partner of the actor," the puppet becomes nothing more than a "prop" ("Towards a Theatre" 39) or, worse yet, "an object as

such, deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public" (40). The audience's attention is directed towards the human performer, potentially to an even greater extent than it is in well-executed virtuosic puppet theatre. Even so, we do not have here another style to consider, properly speaking, but rather the collapse of manipulation and vocalization into "mere" acting—and apparently overwrought acting at that.

A strong human presence in itself is certainly not inimical to tandem puppetry. Indeed, practitioners often create characters for themselves to play even as they manipulate the figures that represent the other characters in a given production. The Powells' roles as ringmasters in *The Brick Bros. Circus* were examined in the previous chapter, and Burkett has assigned himself many such roles over the course of his career (Nicholls, "World" 35). In *Billy Twinkle*, he even took up the titular role himself for extended sequences. This actorly quality in their performances can still be pushed too far, however. Neither they nor their creations can be allowed to dominate, which sets tandem puppetry apart from not only alienated or presentational puppet theatre and virtuosic puppetry, as was highlighted earlier in this chapter, but also any style that employs the ritualistic animisation analyzed by Jurkowski. Animisation, as we know, requires only a one-way semiotic "flow" from the human performers to the puppets, given that each puppet is transformed into a character by being "treated . . . as a live person" ("Towards a Theatre" 37). Tandem puppetry, on the other hand, demands a genuine exchange, as we have seen: humans and puppets mutually transform one another.

Despite the seemingly obvious potential in this kind of relationship—which is a defining feature of tandem puppetry, although traces of it can no doubt be found in other forms—Jurkowski insists that "[t]he puppet seen alongside human beings is more puppetlike, and the human being seen alongside puppets seems to be more humanlike" ("Sign Systems" 78); that is, the essential nature of each can only be accentuated, rather than transmuted, when they are juxtaposed. Veltruský differs on this point, as he emphasizes "the metonymic potential" of the "collective work" of theatre, which relies upon the contiguity among all of the performers, including any puppets present, for "[t]he interplay [that] is the source of a great variety of meanings that would otherwise not arise" (112). It is this "potential [that] is a powerful factor in the vivification of the puppets whenever they are combined with human performers." A puppet operator or another human performer may be the more active agent, "addressing them [the puppets] as performers" (116), or the performer could represent "the undergoer of the action performed by the puppet" (117).

Finding Canadian examples of both of these methods of vivification is not difficult. The Powells rely heavily upon the first type in order to bring the otherwise stone-, or rather clay-faced, cast of *The Brick Bros. Circus* to life, while Burkett—"as Billy, a puppet visionary turned cruise-ship entertainer who has just been fired" (L. Gardner)—in an altercation with his character's deceased mentor Sid Diamond, who has been resurrected as a hand puppet, makes use of the second in *Billy Twinkle*. These more

contemporary examples actually have much in common with the historical and literary ones examined by Veltruský. He includes the musician in the Petrushka tradition among his examples of human performers treating puppets as fellow performers. Jurkowski's description of the role of this musician in the tradition was discussed in the third chapter, so perhaps the parallel with the Powells is already clear: each of these performers acts as an "intermediary" (Jurkowski, "Sign Systems" 64) for the puppets that are also onstage, encouraging the audience to imagine that they are alive by interacting with them as if they were simply other members of the troupe (which, of course, they are, in a sense). Even more evident is the similarity between the verbal and physical exchange in Burkett's *Billy Twinkle* and Veltruský's example of "[t]he verbal abuse and blows the puppeteer Leatherhead receives from the puppets in [Ben Jonson's] *Bartholomew Fair*." In both cases, by submitting to being "the undergoer[s] of the action[s] performed by the puppet[s]" (117), these human performers ascribe agency and life to their puppets.

There are important differences that also need to be recognized, however. In *The Brick Bros. Circus*, neither of the Powells functions as what Jurkowski calls "a real intermediary" in quite the same way as the musician in the Petrushka show does, since they are never "interpreting the words . . . distorted by the swazzle." Not only do they not use swazzles in this production, but they also attribute only a few vocalizations of any kind to the bricks themselves. Still, they remain "partner[s] of" ("Sign Systems" 64) the bricks in a more general sense, much like the aforementioned musician, introducing their acts, speaking directly to them, reacting to their various feats and routines, and so forth.

The points of correspondence between *Billy Twinkle* and *Bartholomew Fair* are undeniably compelling and even amusing. Veltruský refers to the following sequence in the latter while outlining how the "vivifying effect on the puppets" produced by the human performer being subjected to their physical and verbal attacks can be "enhanced" through a kind of ironic echoing of this stage business:

> Thus, after the line 'Knave in your face, goodman rogue' has been addressed to Leatherhead on behalf of the puppet representing the skuller Cole, the spectator Cokes says: 'He said, knave in your face, friend', and Leatherhead, who himself spoke Cole's line, replies: 'Ay, sir, I heard him; but there's no talking to those watermen, they will have the last word.' (117)

Leatherhead has also, of course, just recently been hit by the puppet representing Cole. In *Billy Twinkle*, right after Sid and Burkett (as Billy) fight violently onstage, this echoing takes on a sharper metatheatrical edge:

> SID. . . . Now will you listen to me?
> BILLY. Now, I won't, because you're not going to talk anymore.
> SID. Sir, I've just begun!
> BILLY. No, you're done. You've been using my mouth, Sid. What the hell is that about?
> SID. Gee, I don't know. I'm a puppet and you're a puppeteer. Figure it out, asshole! (18)

This comparison also reveals a distinction between Leatherhead's and Burkett's roles in their respective productions. Leatherhead certainly has a number of responsibilities as an "'interpreter,'" for that was "[a]n essential feature of the Elizabethan puppet show," Speaight informs his reader. This precise duties

associated with this position probably varied from show to show, as "[s]ometimes he may merely have described the action that was being presented by mute puppets upon the stage; sometimes he may have spoken for the puppets. . . [;] and sometimes he certainly introduced each character as it appeared and talked with them" (*History* 66). Leatherhead, who announces that he is "the mouth of 'em all" (5.3.69)—the puppets, that is—fulfills all of these roles, leaving the actual manipulation of the puppets to an assistant hidden within the booth, or so one is left to assume. Burkett, on the other hand, manipulates, speaks for, and speaks *to* his puppets, and the same can be said of the Powells, of course (albeit with much less speech being attributed to the puppets, in the case of *The Brick Bros. Circus*).

All of these performers—traditional, contemporary, and fictional—"assume some definable role in the action of the puppet performance." Spectators are unlikely to find themselves "disattending the human presence in" (155) puppet-theatre performances in such cases, to revisit the arguments put forward by Green and Pepicello, which were introduced in the second chapter of this study. These two authors propose that indexicality is a semiotic relationship that is particularly germane to discussions of puppetry, given that the "actor is a signifier, the puppet . . . a signifier of a signifier," and that between the two, there is a "meditational" or "*physical link*," which is of the very "nature of the index" (154). This relationship holds true even when the puppets in a given production are not "miniaturized icons of human beings" (150): classifying the bricks in *The Brick Bros. Circus* as iconic signifiers, for example, would seem to be pushing at the boundaries of the term to the point of compromising its usefulness. In fact, taking into consideration the upsurge in interest in object theatre following the pioneering work of Puppetmongers and a few companies outside of Canada, indexicality has, if anything, become even "more revealing of the nature of puppetry than iconicity" (154), since Green and Pepicello's pronouncement that "[i]n most instances, puppets are . . . icons of human beings" (150) can now, at least, be disputed. By "play[ing] with indexicality," human performers with "definable role[s]" in puppet theatre performances, such as those who were mentioned just above, generate "tension arising from the audience's alternate perception of the puppet as an independent 'actor' and as a manipulated object" (155).

As we also learnt in the second chapter, Tillis disagrees with Green and Pepicello on this last point, as he believes both of these "perception[s] of the puppet" are in effect at the same time, at all times (*Toward an Aesthetics* 63-64). When assessed in the context of contemporary Canadian puppet theatre, Green and Pepicello's own "perception of . . . the audience's attention as oscillating between the object as actor (i.e., having life) and acted upon (i.e., an inanimate thing)" (157) becomes ever more problematic. Although the aforementioned human performers with "definable role[s]" (155) in puppet theatre performances are often hard to ignore, Green and Pepicello contend that disattendance on the part of the audience can in fact be induced by a puppet operator who, "while . . . play[ing] no role in the performance as such, is nonetheless visible as he manipulates the figures" (156). There are constraints upon this disattendance, however, as they emphasize in their examination of the Bunraku tradition, for "due to the

conventions of this form, spectators may focus their primary attention on the puppets rather than the puppeteers, . . . [but] they [do not] discount the manipulators entirely" (157).

Canadian tandem puppetry practitioners often implicitly problematize Green and Pepicello's neat division of the possible functions of human performers into two main categories by simultaneously playing "definable role[s] in the action" (155) and "remain[ing] in full view of the audience" (156) as they operate their puppets. This differentiates Burkett and the Powells, for example, from the performers working in the traditional forms analyzed by Green and Pepicello—such as the musician in a Petrushka show or the operators of the Bunraku tradition (155-57)—who only carry out one of these two functions as either a character or a manipulator.[73] Green and Pepicello therefore provide no answer as to whether or not the audience would disattend a human performer engaged in this kind of dual role. Perhaps they would conclude that there is a stronger chance of "the audience's attention . . . oscillating between the object as actor (i.e., having life) and acted upon (i.e., an inanimate thing)" (157) when tandem puppetry practitioners are concentrating more on operating—as opposed to addressing, introducing, or some other similar activity—their puppets. Demarcating one domain from the other is rarely a simple task, as the sequence from Burkett's *Billy Twinkle* cited above illustrates. The previously discussed distinction that Veltruský makes between "[t]he puppeteer's delivery" (73) and "[t]he manipulation of puppets" (74) therefore also becomes even more complicated in the context of tandem puppetry. These certainly remain useful analytical categories, especially when essaying to draw connections between the puppet theatre and the human theatre—as I am trying to do over the course of this study—even as these two theatres seem to overlap to an increasing degree the more tandem puppetry performances one watches or helps to stage.

Indeed, when actually watching a given performance unfold, particularly if it is for the first time, the boundary within each of the aforementioned pairs of categories may seem quite porous. Veltruský himself, when describing some of the performance techniques used by the French company le Théâtre du Petit Miroir, indicates how acting and manipulation can bleed into one another:

> [T]he puppeteer stamps with his own feet while he invests the puppet with motions
> signifying the character's walking heavily or stomping in anger, and the puppeteer's
> whole body shakes whenever the puppet is to shake. The puppet operators here also feel
> unable to represent the character's fierce action without their own faces taking on a fierce

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[73] Green and Pepicello do briefly refer to Obraztsov's recollection concerning a traditional Chinese hand-puppet show (156). Obraztsov himself recalls being "very astonished to find that despite the absence of a musician, there was nevertheless an intermediary between the puppets and the audience." This "intermediary" was in fact "the puppeteer himself, but his functions were the same as those of the Russian organ grinder" (*The Chinese Puppet Theatre* 21). There is therefore considerable overlap between the role of this performer and that of each of the Canadian tandem puppetry practitioners mentioned thus far, as they are all responsible for both manipulating and interacting with their puppets. The traditional Chinese puppet artist, however, unlike the visible manipulators of the tandem style, is hidden within "a 'portable booth'" that "is easily carried about on a 'beam' or 'yoke' which rests on the actor's shoulders" (10), Obraztsov explains. In the second chapter of this study, we were introduced to the degree to which "the on-stage absences or presence of the puppet-operator(s)" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 130) affects how a given performance is received by an audience, and this is being re-examined in the Canadian context in this chapter.

expression (which the audience sees more or less distinctly at the same time as the corresponding movements are imparted to the puppet). (74)

This account may remind the reader of the earlier reference to the Powells' technique of intentionally bringing their own faces into the performance, since they are so much more pliant than those of their puppets are. The Powells, however, also often take on their own parts to play and interact with the puppets, as has been repeatedly emphasized. Consequently, even as they "vivify" their puppets, they sometimes place themselves on the same level, thereby sharing in the object nature of the puppets, as was noted earlier. Boundaries between manipulator and actor and between human and puppet fade, as we have seen. This can lead to a certain theoretical murkiness that can be challenging to penetrate when attempting to analyze such a performance after the fact. Nonetheless, the emotional richness that this style of puppetry can produce makes such an analytical effort worthwhile. We will therefore now return to the discussion concerning Craig and Barthes on improvisation in puppet theatre, as it is directly related to the emotional quality of tandem puppetry. Moreover, further links between this style of puppetry and the human theatre, particularly devised theatre, will be revealed in this context, which will prepare us appropriately for the final two chapters.

Puppets and/against Emotion and Improvisation: Creative Process(es)

It is actually in this context of a physically and emotionally more active style of puppetry that we find a rather surprising parallel with Mirbt's perspective on puppetry, although it concerns his theory much more than his practice. In his article "My Story," Mirbt recollects asking some Sicilian rod-marionette operators "about the noise level" that resulted from them "walk[ing] on loose planks behind their stage," just as "their eighty-pound puppets on stage" (7) did. They supposedly responded that they preferred to "make noises, it indicates purpose and energy" (qtd. in Mirbt 7). One might therefore be tempted to compare their approach to that of le Théâtre du Petit Miroir, the French company mentioned just above in connection with Veltruský's analysis of the "elements of acting" (74) that can seep into puppet manipulation. The Sicilian operators, however, are hidden above the stage, so the same kind of blending of human and object in the perception of the audience cannot take place. Moreover, the context surrounding this passage in Mirbt's article must be taken into consideration, as fragmentary and even tangential as the piece is as a whole. Immediately prior to his remarks regarding the Sicilian manipulators, Mirbt shares another memory, that of a conversation with "[a]n old travelling puppeteer" (7) who explained, "The strings on my puppets are black and fat. If my audience doesn't see the strings, they wonder how I do it and not how my story goes" (qtd. in Mirbt 7).

Although he does not elaborate, Mirbt's interest in these "black and fat" (qtd. in Mirbt 7) marionette (assumedly) strings would seem to be directly related to the Brechtian strain in his perspective and his desire to disclose the mechanics of the performance to a conspicuous degree. Given that this recollection and the one concerning the Sicilian operators are in such close proximity to one another, a

connection can be inferred: the stomping is to be praised primarily because it alienates the audience by emphasizing that it is a performance, not because it adds emotional colouring. That said, the "old travelling puppeteer," at least, did imply that he hoped that his spectators would focus on the "story" (7), albeit without indicating what their attitude towards it should be: alienated and critical or engaged and empathetic.

Burkett, much like Mirbt's "old travelling puppeteer" (7), maintains that he shares the stage with his puppets in order "to deconstruct" (Personal interview) his staging methods, since, if he were hidden, he assumes that at least some spectators would become distracted trying to ascertain whether or not he was actually the sole human performer ("Civil Disobedience" 12). His concern with attentiveness is twofold, however, as he holds that visibly operating the puppets compels not only the audience but also the manipulator to pay more attention to the content of the performance (Personal interview; "Civil Disobedience" 12). He once claimed, in fact, that he "introduced the notion that perhaps if the puppeteer wasn't hidden, the audience would get beyond trying to figure out the technique of the show and ease more readily and quickly into the story" ("Mentored Path" 4). As has already been demonstrated, Burkett was not actually the one who "introduced the notion," not even in the West. Moreover, at least two of the puppet artists who adopted the technique before Burkett have also attempted to justify this stylistic choice in passages that initially appear to be strikingly similar to Burkett's. In 1983, American puppet artist Bruce Schwartz stated, "I keep the mechanics out in the open because I don't want people to pay attention to them. . . . My theory is that watching me move the puppets with my hands will become dull after a little while. When it does, the puppets will be more interesting than I am" (106). Interestingly, almost twenty years before Schwartz described "his" theory, Arnott wrote, "I have found that after the first few seconds the audience is oblivious to my presence and concentrates wholly on the marionette action. The convention of my 'invisibility' is easily created and accepted." Arnott admits that, in order to further the illusion of "invisibility," he concealed the lower half of his body behind a screen and "follow[ed] the practice of the Japanese operators in wearing a black shirt, and black gloves with the thumb and forefinger removed to facilitate operation."[74] Still, even when he was "compelled to perform in halls less than adequately darkened, and was in full view of anyone who cared to see," he remained convinced "that the audience preferred to concentrate on the play and not the manipulation" (81).

Thus, Burkett's comments on the subject of operator visibility reflect the same trope that Tillis criticizes as he declares, "If these explanations are not taken to be disingenuous, then they must certainly be considered naïve . . ." (*Toward an Aesthetics* 132). He insists that the presence of the operator is not something that the audience simply chooses to ignore or deny, for as soon as the manipulator steps onto the stage and begins to work with the puppets, "the quality of the puppets' design-signs is immediately

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[74] While generalizing about "the practice of the Japanese operators," Arnott fails to note that usually only the stagehands and the assistant puppet operators of the Bunraku tradition are hooded and dressed in simple black robes, thumbless black gloves, and sandals (Adachi 34-51). Please see 38-39n21 in the present study for more on this.

transformed, just as the quantity of design-signs is expanded to include the operator's presence." Irrespective of however "lifelike" the puppets might be in terms of their design, this human presence "presents an overall design that is unlifelike in quality and quantity, and is conceptual, in that the visual concept of the puppet as puppet is stressed" (131). That said, the operator's "obvious concentration on his puppets also encourages the audience to accord them imaginary life" (132). Consequently, according to Tillis, a paradoxical situation is created by the onstage presence of the operator (and in some cases, speaker) since the puppets become "unlifelike" stage figures that are nonetheless imagined to be alive. What now seems most obvious is that, whatever the intentions of Burkett and the other puppet artists mentioned above in deciding to manipulate their puppets in full view of the audience, they do not in fact "become dull" (Schwartz 106), nor do the spectators become "oblivious to . . . [their] presence" (Arnott 81). On the contrary, "their on-stage presence must be recognized as a vital aspect of their performances in general" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 132), as Tillis concludes.

It should be emphasized at this point that Tillis has in mind all existing and potential forms and styles of puppetry that involve visible manipulation, not just tandem puppetry—which is, of course, being identified here for the first time anyway. His understanding of visible manipulation appears to have been derived from both Jurkowski's position that "[t]he puppet seen alongside human beings is more puppetlike" ("Sign Systems" 78) and Veltruský's that this kind of onstage juxtaposition has a "vivifying effect on the puppets" (117). It also implicitly denies the possibility of "disattending the human presence in" (155) puppet-theatre performances, thereby serving as a challenge to Green and Pepicello's perspective on the matter. As we saw in the second chapter, Tillis is certainly also willing to contradict these two scholars—among many others—much more explicitly.

The foregoing revisitation of and elaboration on some of the theories first presented in the second chapter was undertaken in order to provide a more specific theoretical context for the observation that was made earlier in this chapter: although both the alienated or presentational style of puppetry and tandem puppetry are "conceptual" in Tillis's sense of the term, in that both render conspicuous the fact that one is watching a performance, they differ radically with regard to the motivations behind the aesthetic choices with which they are respectively associated. This holds true even when the same aesthetic choice is made—such as the decision to manipulate the puppets in full view of the audience—which can result in dissimilar, even contrasting effects upon the audience being triggered by this choice, depending on what other such choices have also been made. Burkett's marionettes, for example, could in many cases be accurately described as "lifelike" in terms of their design and could therefore (initially, at least) be located towards the "imitative" end of Tillis's "continuum of representation that ranges from the imitative to the stylized to the conceptual, according to the quality and quantity of the signs" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 114). Tillis's continuum was also introduced in the second chapter, and it will again prove useful here, as Burkett's pronounced stage presence pushes his puppets in the direction of the opposite end of the

continuum, "for nothing that is truly lifelike can so obviously be controlled by others" (132), as Tillis observes with reference to the puppets of the Bunraku tradition in a passage that is clearly of broader relevance. This would seem to be a clear case of alienation in practice, and yet Burkett believes that his presence helps to clear the spectators' minds of questions related to technique. Rather than distancing audience members from the material presented, his visible manipulation apparently allows them to enter the world that he is trying to create onstage all the more successfully; in other words, Burkett's presence onstage seems to ally him with what Brecht would call "Aristotelian" or "dramatic" theatre, as opposed to the "epic" or Brechtian theatre with which Mirbt identified, so to speak. Burkett's approach to puppetry, to quote just two of the tendencies that Brecht attributes to the dramatic theatre, "implicates the spectator in a stage situation," and thus, "the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience" ("Modern Theatre" 37). The emotional quality of the work that was discussed above is also responsible for these outcomes.

As was also noted earlier, Burkett has come to be criticized at times for this emotionality. Although Lyn Gardner, for example, found it and "his presence as Billy" overall to be "overwhelming" in *Billy Twinkle*, more generally, these stylistic elements would seem to do much to bring his puppets to life, even as they simultaneously make the production as a whole more conceptual. Burkett's work is actually a particularly intriguing case in this regard, for his frequent use of puppets relatively lifelike in design—especially when compared with many of the puppets created by the Powells, our other primary Canadian example here in discussions related to tandem puppetry—justifies drawing a parallel between it and the Bunraku tradition, despite the fact that he normally makes use of a type of puppet (namely the string marionette) that has no place in that tradition. In both, "signs of design are pushed to the limits of both imitative and conceptual representation," as Tillis writes of the Bunraku tradition specifically. Claiming that Burkett's work therefore "provok[es] the process of double-vision in perhaps its most extreme form" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 132), as Tillis does of the Bunraku tradition, would possibly be overstating the situation, since, strictly speaking, there can only be one "most extreme form" of anything. Still, Tillis leaves the door open for additions and substitutions with his inclusion of that "perhaps."

This comparison between Burkett's work and the Bunraku tradition only gets us so far, however, and not only because of the difference in terms of types of puppets employed in each.[75] A number of authors, as we have seen over the last two chapters, have championed the puppet precisely because it has no emotions of its own. As was mentioned in the third chapter specifically, Barthes looks to the Bunraku tradition in particular, as in it, "a lovable body," a "total body," stands in the place of "the body-fetish" ("Lesson" 172) of the naturalistic Western theatre of the human actor, in which the body ""is a collection of organs, a musculature of passions" (171). As was emphasized before, his interest in this tradition is

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[75] Tabletop puppets and jointed dolls, which were probably inspired at least in part by the puppets of the Bunraku tradition, did figure prominently in Burkett's *Provenance* (2003).

partly due to its usefulness as a metaphor related to "the modern text" (178) and "*quotation*" (177). This aspect of his argument will now be analyzed in greater detail, as it has a bearing on both the emotionality of tandem puppetry that we have been examining here and the spontaneity so central to the other theatrical approach that lies at the heart of this study, the one with which tandem puppetry has proven so compatible: devising.

Barthes's final words of praise for the Bunraku tradition centre on the observation that it "excludes improvisation," a tendency that is to be commended, he believes, because "the return to spontaneity is the return to all those stereotypes which go to make up our 'inner depths'" ("Lesson" 177). Earlier, he censures "the Western theatre of the last few centuries" for its "opposition . . . of *inner/outer*." He contends that "[i]ts function is [still] essentially to reveal what is reputed to be secret ('feelings,' 'situations,' 'conflicts') while concealing the very artifice of the process of revelation" (172-73), that is, the theatrical reality. The Bunraku tradition, on the other hand, by disposing of the link between character and actor" (173), challenges not only the putative "organic unity" (171) of the human actor, as was noted in the preceding chapter, but also this "expressive channel of an interiority." For Barthes, the manipulators of the Bunraku tradition are not actors as such: their actions onstage are less emotive and more "operational" (173). Through this change in intention, "work is substituted for interiority" (174).

Barthes therefore refuses to make any kind of distinction within the "work" of the artists of the Bunraku tradition with regard to what elements should be deemed as "belong[ing] to the realm of acting" (Veltruský 73), as Veltruský attempts to do with reference to puppetry more generally: on the contrary, he equates "theatre" as a whole with "hysteria" and proclaims that it has been entirely "expelled from the stage" ("Lesson" 173) for performances in this tradition. Moreover, his proposed solution to the question of "whether or not the spectator can forget the presence of the manipulators" is simply to dismiss it, at least in the context of this tradition. By avoiding both "the dissimulation . . . [and] the emphatic disclosure of its various mechanisms," the practitioners of this tradition, according to Barthes, strip the art "of any suggestion of the sacred." By removing the control "thread, there is no longer any metaphor": the puppet is "no longer aping" humanity, and no human is figuratively "a puppet in the hands of the deity" (174).

I hope that this study has already begun to demonstrate that completely extricating puppetry from its ritualistic and metaphoric load is probably impossible, given the long and rich history of the art in connection with both of these domains, which, of course, overlap to a considerable degree. Even if it were possible, it would require more than a few changes in control methods and performance style to accomplish, not to mention greater distance between us and "the metaphorical relationship of god/person to person/puppet" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 160), which, as Tillis reveals, was international in origin (160-66). In fact, examples of this metaphor are so numerous across space and time that Tillis concludes that it "might well be as widespread as the phenomenon of the puppet itself, and might be operative, as is the process of double-vision, in a synchronic manner." He even goes so far as to wonder, "[D]oes the

metaphor follow from observation of the puppet, or does the puppet follow from recognition of the metaphor?" (165).

Tillis also cautions that "the metaphor of the puppet is richer and more complex than it might first appear to be" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 164). Barthes is incorrect to argue that this metaphor is absent from the Bunraku tradition: it is present there too, albeit in a more complex form than that of the simplistic one he associates with Western puppetry. Theatre critic and scholar Jan Kott—in an analysis of this tradition that Proschan describes as "far more convincing than Barthes's, in large part because he is knowledgeable about a broader range of theatrical and puppetry traditions" ("Semiotic Study" 26)—seems to hint at this:

> The aesthetics of this art consists in evoking an absolute illusion, and in its equally absolute destruction. Bunraku is *simultaneously* a theatre in which the puppets act human dramas . . . and a metatheatre, whose protagonists are the manipulators operating the puppets, the narrator, and the samisen[76] [players]; metatheatre, whose dramatic action consists in revealing the theatrical illusion. (100)

Since these human performers, much like the puppets, are "protagonists," even if in "a metatheatre," they too are controlled, at least to some degree, even as they control the performance (and the puppets directly, in the case of the manipulators): by tradition, by the texts, by the leaders of their company, and so forth.

This metaphorical—indeed, metaphysical—ladder can be extended further still, as it is by American author Conrad Aiken, in the voice of a puppet artist, in the epilogue to his lengthy poetic work, *Punch: The Immortal Liar: Documents in His History*, itself entitled "Mountebank Feels the Strings at His Heart":

> ["]I too am a puppet. And as you are a symbol for me
> [. . . . .]
> So I am a symbol, a puppet drawn out upon strings,
> [. . . . .]
>   [. . .] of some one
>   who leans
> Above me, as I above you. . . . And even this Some one,—
> Who knows what compulsion he suffers, what hands out of
>   darkness
> Play sharp chords upon him! . . . Who knows if those
>   hands are not ours! . . .["] (79)

"The chain of ontological doubt suggested in this poem extends upward from the puppet to the puppet-artist to the 'Some one' above," as Tillis observes, which reflects the conventional metaphorical structure outlined by Tillis and disparaged by Barthes. More interestingly, as Tillis also stresses, this "chain extends downward" as well, as Aiken's character speculates "that the puppet-artist may in some way control the god" and, by extension, implies that "the puppet [may], in some way, control the puppet-artist" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162).

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[76] The shamisen, "often spelled samisen," as Adachi remarks, is "a three[-]stringed, banjo-shaped musical instrument" (189), the type used in the Bunraku tradition being "distinguished . . . by its long, thick neck and its large soundbox . . ." (76).

Tillis offers both a "practical" and a "mystical" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162) interpretation of this sort of argument, and these explanations were examined at length in the second chapter. The main point in the present context is that the metaphorical relationship between the human and the puppet can be more nuanced than the one posited by Barthes. There are further nuances still that he overlooks. As the manipulators working in the Bunraku tradition go through their set performance routines with what he describes as rather workaday efficiency, their contributions to bringing the puppet characters to life are complemented by those of the performers providing the voices for the figures. It is the *tayu* or chanter-narrator who initially appears to be the only site of emotion in these performances. Despite the *tayu*'s range of vocal tones, however, the emotional "excess is only presented in terms of the very code of the excessive: the voice moves only through a few discontinuous signs of fury; expelled from a body that remains motionless, . . . the vocal substance stays written, discontinued, obedient to an irony . . ." ("Lesson" 176).

Barbara C. Adachi explains that the *tayu* "sets the scene, describes the emotions of the characters, recites the narrative, and delivers all the dialogue" (60). This versatile performer is able to enhance the narration through a variety of means, including gestures and changes in facial expression and posture (Adachi 60; Dunn 8); indeed, Charles James Dunn declares that only one action is forbidden: moving about onstage during the performance (8). Consequently, the *tayu* is not necessarily always as "motionless" ("Lesson" 176) as Barthes would have us believe. That said, Dunn is certainly indulging in hyperbole, given that a traditional form of puppet theatre, shaped in large part by conventions that evolve slowly, is our subject here. Thus, one surely can imagine a great number of actions on the part of the *tayu*—or any one of the other performers, for that matter—that would cause a stir if actually executed. Dunn does point out, along with Adachi, that the *tayu* usually remains seated in the appointed position "[t]o the left of the main stage . . . [on] the auxiliary stage, or *yuka*" (Adachi 60), with the shamisen players. Still, Adachi adds that the *tayu* will frequently go so far as to rise "up on his knees . . . when the narrative reaches a crescendo" (60).

The *tayu*'s activities must, of course, be coordinated with those of the puppet operators and musicians.[77] The responsibility for realizing the characters—not to mention the performance as a whole—is therefore explicitly shared by all. That said, as Barthes also seems to suggest—this author has to confess to "squeezing" to some degree the few lines Barthes has written on this connection in order to render his comparison more precise—these practitioners are drawing upon centuries of accumulated traditional knowledge. Moreover, they are not the authors of the texts that they are staging. Consequently, the Bunraku tradition is marked by "the reign of the *quotation*, the pinch of writing, the fragment of code"

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[77] This level of coordination, Adachi reveals, becomes even more difficult during "special scenes" when there are several chanter-narrators, "each one taking a role, or all singing in chorus" (60). On such occasions, "usually . . . dances scenes or the travels of lovers bent on committing suicide together," the "additional tayu and musicians perform on a platform extended onto the main stage" (10).

("Lesson" 177). It is in relation to this collaborative staging and the various forms of citation that the tradition parallels "the modern text," for in both, "what is started by the one is continued by the other, unendingly." In other words, the accelerated intertextuality of "the modern text" has both a synchronic and diachronic equivalent in the Bunraku tradition: the former can be identified in any given performance, while the latter can only be recognized if one has some existing knowledge of the history of the form. The dialogism (to bring Mikhail Bakhtin into the conversation, as it were) of both the tradition and "the modern text . . . multiplies the written line" (178).

The potential for semiotic richness that Barthes outlines cannot be denied. For him, the Bunraku tradition is also to be lauded because it "excludes improvization" (sic), since its practitioners are "doubtless aware that the return to spontaneity is the return to all those stereotypes which go to make up our 'inner depths'" ("Lesson" 177). Thus, to continue the comparison that was first undertaken in the third chapter, Barthes, like Craig, is suspicious of both emotion and spontaneity—the two are intimately linked, according to both authors—in the theatre. The puppet, *über-* or otherwise, is for both of them the most effective means of eradicating anything not premeditated, rather than a suitable conductor for the improvisatory spirit. Although Craig demands a "*new material*" ("Actor" 73) for the stage, which could be shaped and indeed manipulated by the theatre artist as if it were a more traditional medium, it is not to be moulded by the human performers themselves—or anyone else, for that matter—extempore. On the contrary, as Eynat-Confino brings to light, Craig designed "a system of movement notation" (92) to provide his potential future Über-marionette operators with "carefully worked-out plans for all the movements of the über-marionettes onstage," so as eliminate the danger of "the human failings" (89) of his employees. Eynat-Confino likens Craig's approach of formulating "movement notations and patterns designed on the stage floor" to the "way that choreographers use marked floors and notation for ballet" (92). This comparison and its relevance to the puppets' and performers' bodies in devised puppet theatre can be developed further by turning to actual dance scholarship.

Jaana Parviainen, in *Bodies Moving and Moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art*, leaves the door open for the Western dancer to be compared to the puppet in a manner that is not particularly flattering to either. Parviainen explains that "[t]he dancer's position in the hierarchy of the Western art dance institution has been under the dance teacher and the choreographer, the dancers frequently being treated as 'material' by both." The parallel with the *Über-marionette* is probably already obvious, but it quickly becomes even more so: "Dancers' bodies are trained to be disciplined and obedient instruments, skilled at following directions, accustomed to taking correction, working silently to become a vehicle for another person's ideas" (107). The dancer, just like the puppet, is engaged in "a speechless area of interaction, over which one neither verbally nor rationally accounts for oneself" (106).

Unlike the dancer, however, "the puppet has only a limited range of movement," Eynat-Confino tells us. Thus, it "was unsuitable" for Craig's movement experiments, even though he chose it as a focus because of this very characteristic, as "it offered an already simplified, restricted, stylized, and nonrealistic movement." Eynat-Confino further claims that Craig might have been able to develop "a more coherent theory of movement" had he concentrated more on "[e]xperiments carried out with actors, as well as practical work in the theatre." "[E]ven bad improvisation" on the part of the actors, she continues, could have stimulated him, "stirring up a process of assimilation, selection, rejection, transformation, or invention of images" (195). Consequently, as sympathetic to Craig's aims as she appears to be at first, Eynat-Confino ultimately announces that the puppet theatre is no place for someone interested in movement work and collaboration with fellow human theatre artists.

As Parviainen's analysis of the world of dance indicates, however, the presence of other animate bodies does not necessarily result in a more collaborative atmosphere. Still, she does clarify that "the relationship between the dancer and the choreographer may vary from a mere instrumental attitude to the dancer's body to a mutual collaborating process as an intimate embodied dialogue" (162). Intention is what matters most here. Eynat-Confino argues that working with human performers would have allowed Craig to explore his own ideas, not theirs, more effectively. One has to question whether a process led by a central authoritative figure can be truly collaborative or not, and we will be examining that issue further in the next chapter. We already know, however, that Craig, like Barthes, embraced the puppet so as to eschew spontaneity. Indeed, the subject of control comes up repeatedly in discussions of puppetry, and the puppet's metaphorical burden in this regard is impossible to ignore, as we have seen. Nonetheless, several Canadian puppet theatre companies and artists have pressed ahead with attempting to devise work that both explores a broad movement vocabulary and features objects (sometimes only conceptually so) as its "stars," *pace* Eynat-Confino. Mirbt, although always remaining quite conspicuously at the centre of the process, stated at one point that he "insist[ed] upon creative contributions from all of the performers" (Wagner), which would seem to make him a counterpart to one of the more progressive choreographers discussed by Parviainen, such as Pina Bausch (162-64). Even though, as we learnt in the previous chapter, his opinion on actors was inconsistent, perhaps he should therefore be counted among those who advocated a collaborative approach to puppet theatre, which would place him once again in a pioneering role in the Canadian context. As we also know from the preceding chapter, however, verifying with absolute certainty the degree to which this seemingly progressive perspective informed his actual practice is most likely unachievable, given the conflicting accounts of his process with which we have been left.

Analyzing the productions and processes of puppet-theatre companies that are still active is, of course, a more viable option. Consequently, in the sixth chapter, the devising processes employed by Puppetmongers will be considered in greater earnest, as this company, unlike Mirbt and those with whom he worked, has fairly consistently and incontrovertibly adhered to a collaborative ethos as its members,

sometimes in cooperation with other artists (even outside directors) developed new works. In order to provide a more rigorous vocabulary and a richer cultural and historical context for this kind of work, the fifth chapter will address devising itself and its relationship with the Canadian dramatic canon, its various organizational permutations, its emphasis on the body, and so forth. In the remaining section of the present chapter, however, evidence of a more general nature as to the suitability of tandem puppetry to devising (and vice versa) will be presented.

Semiotic and Dramaturgical Collisions: Tandem Puppetry and Devised Theatre

Although we will not yet venture into an analysis of their developmental methods that is more comprehensive than what has been incorporated into this study already, as that must wait until the sixth chapter, a compelling parallel between the semiotic turbulence generated by the Powells (among other tandem puppetry practitioners) and the kind of dramaturgical "turbulence" (103) that Barton examines in "Navigating Turbulence: The Dramaturg in Physical Theatre" needs to be identified. In tandem puppetry, as I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, much of the conceptual space between the puppet and the operator—the Brechtian type of distance that characterizes alienated or presentational puppetry—is collapsed, and the manipulator's role as an actor in her own right is foregrounded. As a result, at least two sign systems collide onstage—as was mentioned near the beginning of this chapter, the sign systems associated with three different performance forms, namely puppet theatre, human theatre, and circus, are simultaneously exploited in *The Brick Bros. Circus*, for example—and the audience is left to sort it out.

In relating and scrutinizing his own experiences working as a dramaturg with the Toronto-based (but since disbanded) devised theatre company Number Eleven Theatre, Barton compares that company's "ongoing process of creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that . . . [were] then, in a very real sense, brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" with "[Sergei] Eisenstein's pursuit of psychological and emotional concepts" ("Navigating" 109), that is, the concepts that are created through the "collision" of "'factors' [that] are material" (108) during the process of montage in film. More on the history and specific processes of Number Eleven (and a few other Canadian devised theatre companies) will be included in the next chapter. What is essential in the present context is the generative power that Barton, by way of Eisenstein, attributes to conflict.

Eisenstein himself writes that "the basis of every art is conflict (an 'imagist' transformation of the dialectical principle)" (38). Eisenstein's preferred art, film, is, of course, no exception. His central technique of montage is in fact distinguished by the forces of "collision" and "conflict" that inhere in it. Conflict can be found at the level of the "montage *cell*," that is, "[t]he shot" (37), and even at the level of the framed image (38-39, 54). The kind of conflict or collision for which Eisenstein is best known—in terms of both his theoretical writing and his films—is at the level of editing together those "cells" of montage, and he goes to considerable lengths to describe the "forms of montage" (72). These will not be

explained here as well, as such specifics lie outside of the purview of this study. That said, the fact that he delineates such methods suggests that, if one were to employ them (or at least some of them) one would create more of this productive type of conflict than one would if one did not. This may seem like overly simplistic analysis, but it gets to the core of the metaphorical link between two different kinds of conflict or turbulence that I am trying to establish here, since practitioners of other arts might intentionally and explicitly make use of equivalent methods and thereby trigger a similar kind of collision or conflict.

I am, of course, only following Barton in making this assertion, but I will soon make an additional, more theoretically precarious leap of my own. Barton prefers this borrowed metaphor of "collision" to that "of 'mixing' or 'fusing' of elements" ("Navigating" 108), which is employed by Eugenio Barba as he presents his interpretation of the dramaturgy—or rather, dramaturgies—of physical theatre more generally. As Barba himself writes of his own process, which inspired the members of Number Eleven, "During the rehearsal stage, when the actors only follow a personal and coherent thread in their scores, the dramaturgy as a whole may remain confused, even chaotic, for a long time." Barba claims that, even though "[c]onfusion, . . . as an *end in itself*, is the art of deception," it need "not necessarily . . . be avoided." Still, he would much rather harness it "as a means," as then it can become part "of an organic creative process" (62). It is, however, the markedly teleological nature of this process that Barton criticizes, given that "it evokes a modernist anticipation of ultimate organic unity." What he sees as governing "narrative progression" is "turbulence—the productive disruptions and facilitating interruptions—between the multiple physical vocabularies in place, and between the physical and textual channels of communication" (108). Thus, he is building on Barba's definition of *turbulence* as "order in motion" as opposed to "a violation of order," in that it productively "upset[s] the current of narrative action" and thereby precludes easy answers: "continuity, rhythm, and narrative" cannot slide "into the obvious, into mere illustration" (61).

The multiple correspondences between the work of Number Eleven and that of Puppetmongers with regard to this kind of dramaturgical turbulence will become more apparent in the next chapter (on devising) and even more so in the sixth chapter (on Puppetmongers specifically). At the moment, the parallel being considered is a more metaphorical one. Just as the members of Number Eleven refuse to smooth over the fault lines resulting from their "ongoing process of creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that are then . . . brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" (Barton, "Navigating" 109), so too do the Powells refuse to mitigate the impact any semiotic "jolts" might have on audience members when they witness discrete—although clearly not unrelated— sign systems coming together in a production like *The Brick Bros. Circus*.

Although the puppet and the human performer can come together as "partner[s]" ("Towards a Theatre" 39) as per Jurkowski's typology of the possible "theatrical functions" (38) of the puppet, the relationship between the two is not always completely harmonious in such situations, at least not in a

facile sense. The two often appear to share equal billing in their performances, and yet, if they are not both being guided by an outside agent—Aiken's poem comes to mind again here—then it is the human performer or performers who are responsible for creating the content of the performances. Indeed, even if they sometimes collaborate with an outside director, playwright, or dramaturg, as the Powells have been known to do, the members of a devised puppet theatre company such as Puppetmongers are usually still generating most of the dramatic material and even making many of the staging decisions. The puppet will always exert its will, so to speak, in that the puppet artists—in fact, everyone involved in the production—must "learn the movement potential of the puppet, and . . . allow for that potential to be realized," to quote again Tillis's understanding of the control ascribed to the puppet by earlier authors such as Aiken and Craig. Still, with due respect to the more poetic and even "mystical" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 162) arguments put forward by Aiken and others, the human participants in a given puppet-theatre production will ultimately always be the ones pulling the strings, literally, in some cases, but figuratively in all cases.

This fact may seem obvious, but it is nonetheless important to point out that, even in the most egalitarian, collectively organized devised puppet theatre troupe, the puppets themselves cannot object if the human performers could be construed as upstaging them at an inappropriate moment. The risk of this happening increases in tandem puppetry, given the visibility of the operators and their often-close proximity to the puppets, which can result in negative perceptions and reviews of their productions, such as some of the published critiques of Burkett's *Billy Twinkle*. Although Burkett, as both a playwright in the conventional sense and a puppet artist who stages his own work, follows a developmental process that certainly merits more rigorous scholarly attention, he is not a practitioner of devising. A few commonalities between his process and that of the Powells will still be discussed in the sixth chapter, but that particular aspect of his work will not be our focus there or anywhere else in this study.

In fact, this would be an appropriate juncture to clarify that tandem puppetry and devised puppetry are not mutually inclusive approaches to puppet theatre: one can practice one and not the other, as is evidenced by Burkett. The two remain highly compatible just the same, due largely to the telescoping of distance that characterizes the tandem style: the puppet is so close to the human performer in terms of aesthetic and (frequently) physical space that the still inevitable delay between a spontaneous creative impulse and the realization of that impulse in some action or sound or both on the part of the puppet is minimized. The idea of this delay was first proposed in the third chapter, and, as was also noted there, intuition, spontaneity, and the other related concepts so fundamental to devising will be analyzed more closely in the next one.

It is in relation to this mitigable but nonetheless unavoidable delay that we find what is perhaps the most unexpected of the similarities between the tandem and alienated styles of puppet theatre. We must recall how More, who worked with Mirbt, emphasizes that "[d]iscovering how to tap one's inner

impulses, how to allow them to flow unimpeded into the puppet and how to keep this path between imagination and action open are the critical elements in the training process for puppet manipulation." He actually pursues this line of argument to the point of advocating the "seeming contradiction" of being "'detached' . . . and totally spontaneous at the same time" (19) as one manipulates puppets onstage. Once again, however, there is a radical difference with regard to intention and context. For More, who takes it upon himself to disseminate and flesh out Mirbt's theories, the puppet operator should "function with the alertness and receptivity of neutral mask" and, by renouncing "self-focus" and "self-concern," allow herself "to be led by the mask of by puppet, by the script (the first mask)." Although spontaneity has a place in this style, it is equated with being "responsive to necessity" (20) and is accordingly subject to this hierarchy of "masks," at the apex of which is the playtext—Mirbt himself or, more generally, a director or some other central authority figure could be said to occupy the same top position as well or even one above it, or so we can infer from what we learnt in the third chapter. The operator is therefore here a medium, a channel, a means, much as she was to be in Craig's Uber-Marionette International Theatre (Eynat-Confino 89), which was supposed to have "opened in May 1906" in Dresden, had "its principal actor," namely, of course, the Über-marionette, "been ready in time for public exposure" (148). Thus, one must look beyond these contexts to find examples of manipulators actively empowered to tell their own stories.

Regardless of how short the distance might be between a given puppet and its operator in a performance in the alienated style, at least as it was practiced by Mirbt and his followers, the human performer is not ordinarily in a position to take advantage of the situation to the extent that the tandem puppetry practitioner is. Rather than a structural metaphor more suited to a style characterized by a strictly defined hierarchy of production elements, such as a pyramid with an apex, a sphere would seem to be more appropriate to tandem puppetry, with both the human performers and the puppets at its centre. Such an organizational framework enables the operators to straddle the roles of performers and creators. As we already know, when this tandem puppetry "sphere" overlaps with that of devising—both of these geometric models are admittedly simplifications, particularly in the latter case, as shall be revealed in the next chapter—the newfound agency of the performers can prove overpowering. The puppet can so easily slide from being a "partner of the actor," to return to Jurkowski's enumeration of the possible functions of the puppet, to being a mere "prop, or accessory for the actor" ("Towards a Theatre" 39).

That said, Jurkowski also offers a shift in perspective that could both help the puppet artist walk this tightrope and keep us from slipping completely into the language of the reviewer. In his analysis "of contemporary puppet theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43) as a whole, he stresses that "[t]he most important element is the creative process," not the puppet artist in her own right, as it "dominat[es] all other elements of theatre." This element does not only hold sway over contemporary puppet theatre, however: it also prevails "in the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" (42). Both theatres "express the same idea: theatre

is a creation, and creation is *statu nascendi*" (43) or "the process of creation" ("In," def. 26). Curiously, given his insistence on its importance, he almost immediately hitches the creation process back to the performer, since "the development from the first impulse to the final effect is executed by its creator — actor or puppetplayer" ("Towards a Theatre" 43).

There can, of course, be neither a production nor a process without the performer, but by adjusting our focus to address more directly just what this process—or rather, processes—might look like, we can begin to understand better how puppet theatre "fits" into the larger context of theatre in general. As Jurkowski himself is careful to clarify, there is not in fact "a unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre." At the time he was writing the article in which he makes this point, however, he did not feel comfortable offering any "answers," as "[t]here . . . [were] only questions" (43). Now, over twenty years later, it might be time to start suggesting some answers, as tentative as some of them may be. As has been the case with tandem puppetry and the alienated style, examining the common ground between these two theatres with regard to creative or developmental processes will prove as instructive as discussing what separates them. Moreover, this attention to process—and to the theoretical vocabulary and historical context that have been cultivated over the previous chapters—will allow us to transcend the largely descriptive and often overly evaluative language of critics like Lyn Gardner. By placing a similar emphasis on process, puppet artists could potentially avoid overwhelming the objects sharing the stage with them, as they would be more conscious of how they and their puppets are generating meaning together and of how each decision they make during the development of a given production affects how both parties are perceived by the audience. The discourse surrounding devising has been the site of repeated re-evaluations and negotiations of process, so analyzing it in the context of both of the theatres mentioned by Jurkowski seems particularly fitting. Consequently, that is the subject to which we will now turn.

Chapter 5:

Devising and the Canadian Canon: New Work Development with (and Even without) Puppets

Processing Process: New Plays, New Works

As was implied at the end of the previous chapter, the path has now been cleared to go beyond discussing forms of puppetry, styles of performance, and so on—as vital as the foregoing theoretical and contextual material has been to getting us to this point—in relative isolation from one another. Process will become the overarching theme for the remainder of this dissertation, one that will facilitate the weaving together of many of these formerly comparatively distinct threads. Of course, indications of such connections have already been found scattered throughout the preceding chapters. The potential for synergy between tandem puppetry and physically based devised theatre, for example, has already been noted several times. In preparation for this conceptual interweaving, some final contextual strands must first be spun, related primarily to the literary tradition in drama and theatre in English-speaking Canada, a tradition that has, since at least the late nineteenth century, recurrently crystallized—in the context of both human and puppet theatre—into an expressed interest in building a dramatic canon. The contemporary Canadian puppetry community is a diverse group, and the respective attitudes of its members towards this text-centred tradition and the idea of a canon are collectively just one aspect of this diversity, albeit an important one.

Indeed, examining some of these relationships with text will eventually enable the argument to progress past this historical framework, so that the topic (and framing) of devising as process can at last be addressed. Although devised theatre companies associated with the theatre of human actors will temporarily enjoy pride of place in this discussion—in part because that is the domain that has heretofore been privileged in devising discourse—we will nonetheless be coming ever closer to answering Jurkowski's "questions" with regard to the "reason the puppet theatre still has a separate existence" ("Towards a Theatre" 43), when "[t]he most important element" in both it (in its contemporary manifestation) and "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde . . . is the creative process" (42).

The English-Canadian Dramatic Canon Reloaded: New Play Development Then and Now

Filewod reveals that, like so many aspects of Canadian theatre, the "obsession" with creating a national dramatic canon that still exerts a powerful influence over contemporary policies and practices is neither a particularly new development nor one unaffected by geographical and historical context: "Since the 1890s theatre critics in Canada have wrestled with what appeared to be a simple problem: if we have a Canadian nation, then a Canadian drama must be one of its proofs; therefore we must have a national theatre to advance the national drama" ("National Theatre" 424). The logic behind this postulate

presupposes that "drama," as the written material out of which "theatre" (here in the sense of "performance") is made, precedes in importance and chronological order its more explicitly performative counterpart in the posited drama-theatre binary. This line of argument, of course, predates 1890s Canadian theatre criticism: in the Western context, it goes right back to Aristotle.

Filewod and the theatre critics he mentions also have another definition of *theatre* in mind, namely a performance space or, more specifically, given the context of the "simple problem" outlined above, "a centralized National Theatre dedicated to the performance of a National Drama." That there is in fact no "specifically designed national theatre" in this country appears to be in little doubt—although the English and French Theatres of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, when considered together, would seem to come closest to that ideal. Filewod's claim that there has not been "a consensual recognition of a national drama," however, is more open to debate, and it is in questioning this assertion that we are forced to grapple with the highly contentious issue of the Canadian dramatic "canon" (or even "canons"). Filewod himself acknowledges the complexity of the situation, even though he clearly has already come up with an answer for himself. He notes "that thousands of Canadian plays have been produced, most of them never published and irretrievably lost," and certainly that total has only increased since his article was first published in 1990. Nonetheless, with only the comparatively few published plays at their disposal, "some critics are attempting to establish a canon; others are questioning not only the concept of one but also . . . the ideological function of anthologies and university courses that canonize particular playwrights and modes of theatrical production" ("National Theatre" 425).

Before such a loaded term—if the reader will excuse the pun—is bandied about any more, we should examine more closely just what *canon* might mean, paying particular attention to the implications for Canadian theatre practice and scholarship. "Selection and ranking, according to one set of values or another, are almost impossible to avoid," Chris Johnson, a Canadian theatre scholar and practitioner, admits. Even if one applies "values . . . [that] are not 'mainstream'" (26) when making one's selections for an anthology or course syllabus, one is still contributing to canonization, Johnson cautions. Although the word, as it is deployed in literary scholarship, is, of course, religious in origin, it came to be "appropriated to give authority to a body of literary work regarded . . . as essential to an understanding of the whole literature from which the works were, and are, selected" (27).

Various such canons and subcanons have been proposed "on the grounds of genre, period, national origin, gender of the author" (27), and so forth, Chris Johnson observes. He cites Donna Bennett, who stresses that "[a] national canon" (134), such as that which might be thought to represent literature in English-speaking Canada as a whole, is therefore "not a two-dimensional, but a multi-dimensional, structure defining a matrix of subdivisions that may (or may not) overlap and that are not necessarily of equal importance in determining canonicity" (135). Our national canon, then, should not be understood as an undifferentiated monolith, and the Canadian dramatic canon more specifically is but one subcanon in

this "matrix of subdivisions." Even if one attempts to focus on this particular subcanon in isolation, there is no single, authoritative explanation available as to what should be included in it and why. Moreover, this subcanon itself can be further subdivided, and "anti-canonical canon[s]" can also be identified: some of the works contained therein, although initially excluded from the dominant canon, can begin to leach into it. This all "contribut[es] . . . to a porosity so extreme that the canonical authority of this 'canon' is called into question" (47), according to Johnson.

Although the drive to build a Canadian dramatic canon first surfaced in the late nineteenth century, the canon itself did not begin to materialize until the 1980s. Prior to then, Richard Paul Knowles writes, "few Canadian scripts received a second production; little scholarly work was devoted to Canadian drama and theatre; and the publishing and teaching of Canadian plays were quixotic and unpredictable" ("Voices" 91). During that decade, however, three significant dramatic anthologies[78] were published, along with several other related texts, and postsecondary programmes and courses on Canadian drama and theatre began to flourish throughout the country. The three major anthologies are not, of course, all identical in terms of content; that said, "examining the plays included [in each] and some of the factors that lie behind their selection" reveals a number of important commonalities, as Knowles states. "The most obvious characteristic of" the plays that have been thus anthologized and canonized, he declares, "is their conservatism," particularly with regard to form. He also highlights the fact that only a very limited range of perspectives is represented within the group of playwrights, editors, and scholars responsible for the aforementioned texts published in the 1980s: almost all of them "are white males" (96). Furthermore, the majority of the anthologized "plays received their first professional production in Central Canada or in one of the 'branch-plant' regional theatres" (97). Since "the anthologies have shaped curricula from the moment they appeared and have heavily influenced subsequent scholarship" (95), we must recognize that, through this educational connection, the canon "perpetuates currently privileged systems of value" (94), Knowles asserts.

Chris Johnson's research indicates, however, that the canon—supposedly ushered in by the publication of a handful of texts and perpetuated by educational and theatrical institutions—may not be nearly as guiding or as stable a construct as Knowles suggests that it is. He surveyed both professional theatres and postsecondary institutions, and judging from the data he collected from those organizations that did respond, "the notion of a Canadian canon" (47) cannot be validated by referring to the plays utilized in various ways by them. With regard to theatres, a wide range replied to Johnson's query as to which Canadian plays they had produced from 1991 to 1994, "from very small, developmentally oriented companies to the big theatres of the so-called regional system" (33). Even with an inclusive interpretation of *Canadian dramatic canon*, the reality remains that slightly under 6% of the 640 productions staged by the 38 theatres that responded could be considered "Canadian 'classics'" (34). Interestingly, Johnson

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[78] See Perkyns, Plant, and Wasserman, respectively.

reports that the "canon is a much stronger presence in campus theatre than it is in . . . professional theatre," and yet, although "roughly a third of the university/college productions of Canadian plays are 'canonical,' two-thirds are not, and should serve to challenge/subvert any hegemonic vision of Canadian drama offered in the classrooms" (41). Indeed, he later proclaims more explicitly that academic "[c]ourse content is the strongest evidence yet that something like a canon . . . is in operation" (43). Nonetheless, he is able to infer from the responses that he received from twenty-six postsecondary drama and theatre programmes that this was not an unqualified embrace of the canon. The three conventional anthologies were no doubt "widely used" (41) but "almost never . . . by themselves" (42). There are several means of supplementation: alternative anthologies, individually published plays, newer texts appearing in journals, and trips to see actual live productions, for example.

Such strategies can definitely bring much needed attention to marginalized voices. Even so, "expanding the canon is still canon-formation" (44), as Chris Johnson warns. Moreover, although plays deemed representative of different regions, genders, and (more rarely) sexualities and cultures can be brought into the classroom—or onto the stage—such annexations can be perceived "either as . . . attempts[s] to make the canon more inclusive, or as what used to be called 'tokenism'" (42). What is generally denied access is "the truly 'ex-centric'" ("Voices" 101), as Knowles argues. He is openly drawing upon Barbara Godard's assertion that "[e]x-centricity implies many things—bizarre, fantastic, unconventional, incomprehensible, other—all subsumed by the concept of difference" (58). More specifically, the canon can in fact easily accommodate relative diversity "on the level of theme and subject matter" (Knowles, "Voices" 101) if given enough time, even if, by incorporating texts "produced by or about groups that have hitherto been excluded," anthologists and educators risk "assimilating and often neutralizing them in a warm but fuzzy soft-core liberal pluralism" ("Otherwise Engaged"), as Knowles notes elsewhere. That said, texts that are also "subversive or 'ex-centric' on a formal or structural level . . . cannot be readily absorbed into the canon" ("Voices" 101), as Knowles clarifies. After all, he explains, a "characteristic of many Canadian canonical plays is their sheer amenability to scholarship": they tend to be "readily classifiable, comparable to 'classics' of their genre, or comfortably literary." This fact strengthens the connection between the construct of the canon and our primary topic in this chapter, new work development, for as Knowles confirms, "the theatrical process itself as it exists in Canada tends to be logocentric and literary" (100).

Indeed, even though some new Canadian plays might eventually be integrated into the canon, a predominantly "literary tradition" is still maintained "because of the ways we develop new work," as director-dramaturg Kathleen Flaherty, who is also cited by Knowles, admits. Although developmental workshops are often fundamental to such processes, Flaherty reveals that "[r]arely are workshops encouraged to explore the use of sound, setting, dramatic image, audience-actor relationship, or space" (22). Writing around the same time in the 1980s, playwright-dramaturg Elliot Hayes coined the humorous

but accurate term "workshopitis" (36) in his analysis of a different dimension of the same issue, one that has "had a profound influence on the Canadian theatrical psyche" (38). "Many Canadian theatres," he explains, "confronting the criticism that they are not producing enough Canadian plays, conduct workshops in order to demonstrate their sensitivity to the problem." Since "the emphasis is on process and not production," as the plays are "often talked about" but rarely produced on the mainstages of this country's theatres, the "Workshop Syndrome" tends to "contribute to a 'masterpiece mentality' in Canadian actors and in our audience": "[t]he 'masterpieces' are worth producing, or watching," while "other plays 'need work'" (36). Hayes does concede that there are a number of small theatre companies— some housed in their own facilities—located throughout the country that "somehow consistently manage to produce Canadian plays," but "the works they develop rarely move beyond their own network," which results in a "ghettoization of indigenous drama." He identifies yet another "vicious circle" relevant to the topics being investigated in this dissertation, in that "large theatres are so dependent on box-office income that they feel they must please audiences with tried-and-true products, rarely taking a risk on the great unknown, the Canadian play." He proposes a solution: the government should, "as part of the operating grants of the major theatres," allocate funds specifically to "the production of Canadian plays," so that the more successful productions staged by the small theatres could be transferred to the larger theatres. While this idea certainly has merit, Hayes still shares the historical Canadian obsession with building a dramatic canon, for he champions the individual playwright. In his opinion, "[a]rt expresses the values of the individual first" (39), so much so, in fact, that he believes that "[c]ollaborative vision . . . can dull an individual voice and flatten a work of art" (36).

In an article published sixteen years after Hayes's piece was, theatre critic Kate Taylor indicates that little has changed since then with regard to new play development in Canada. The number of festivals and other programmes showcasing new work has undoubtedly increased, but that is part of the problem, for according to Lise Ann Johnson, literary manager for the English-language theatre at the NAC and organizer of their festival On the Verge, "with all the various festivals and programs available to them, promising playwrights may be getting too much advice." Some plays "make the rounds" (Johnson qtd. in Taylor, "Shiny New Stuff"), which can result in "formulaic" texts "as scripts are massaged for the umpteenth workshop or writers hurried toward that looming world premiere." Moreover, "the stress on Canadian content by granting bodies, especially the Canada Council, may be encouraging new play development that is more about securing funding than furthering an artistic vision." Just as when Hayes was writing his attack on "workshopitis," very few of these new pieces are being transferred to the larger theatres, and "overall funding cuts then force the theatres to make sure the new plays they do commission will be highly accessible ones."

Thus, there are actually two different ways of understanding what is "wrong" with institutionalized new play development in Canada. Although they may appear to be incompatible with

one another, there is considerable evidence to suggest that each of them is in fact recognizing a significant trend in contemporary developmental dramaturgy. As Taylor puts it, when framed as a unified structure, institutionalized developmental dramaturgy has been criticized as either a "machine that grinds out new scripts" or as "some kind of touchy-feely R&D without any firm commitment to stage what it creates" ("Shiny New Stuff"). Several of the practitioners interviewed by Taylor for her piece offer their own solutions, much as Hayes does—albeit ones that are less hypothetical, if just as generalized. Also like Hayes, these practitioners conflate *theatre* and *drama* to an uncomfortable degree, equating, to quote Hayes again, "Canadian theatre" with "Canadian dramatic literature" (39). For the most part, their solutions have the shared goal of "developing playwrights not plays," as Taylor summarizes. Nonetheless, despite Johnson's confirmation that theatre is "not a literary form" (qtd. in Taylor, "Shiny New Stuff"), Flaherty's attribution of the persistent "literary tradition" (22) in Canadian theatre to conventional new work development processes therefore remains justified even now in the twenty-first century.

Later in this chapter, we will be taking a closer look at a group of companies that break with this tradition by enthusiastically taking up performance, as opposed to textual documentation, as their primary objective. Although they may well produce scripts eventually, the work does not begin or, in many cases, end there. Certainly, this can contribute to the state of affairs that Filewod laments, in that even more "Canadian plays [will] have been produced, most of them never published and irretrievably lost" ("National Theatre" 425). This can be understandably frustrating to researchers and anyone else interested in the work of these companies, and while these troupes do often turn to other means of documentation, such as digital camcorders, the resulting archival material also rarely circulates widely, save perhaps for some photographs and short video clips posted on a website. Thus, one must contact the companies directly if one hopes to access more of this material.

In the meantime, however, we must first determine the degree to which Canadian puppet theatre, particularly with regard to contemporary work, is implicated in the long-standing canonical preoccupation in this country. Burkett may claim that he is "freakish and odd in the puppet world" because he "write[s] plays" (Personal interview), but a few similarly "freakish and odd" puppet artists came before him, and at least one other notable performer with a literary inclination has also come to the fore since Burkett began to write and stage his own plays. Admittedly, the manipulator-playwright is far from the norm, and one who combines technical complexity and textual richness as deftly as Burkett at his best even less so. Still, before we move on to consider those troupes that strain against the Canadian canonical legacy (consciously or otherwise) we should try to gain a more thorough understanding of those that keep it alive (consciously or otherwise). Burkett implies that a text-centred approach is not one that is normally associated with puppet theatre, which makes establishing a connection between Canadian puppetry and the broader domain of Canadian theatre in this respect all the more important. As we shall also see, borrowing from existing texts in order to create new puppet theatre productions is a technique that is often

employed by companies on both sides of the canonical divide. Thus, it will serve as a useful bridge between these two topics.

Text-Based Puppetry: Canon Connection

When endeavouring to ascertain the nature of the relationship between Canadian puppet theatre and the national dramatic canon, Burkett's work makes for an appropriate, if rather predictable, place to start. Burkett's own attitude towards canonization, however, is not nearly as predictable as one might think; indeed, it did not remain consistent even over the course of one particular interview that this author conducted with him. Initially, he seemed quite dismissive with regard to the publication of several—three, at the time of the interview, and others have followed, although none of his work prior to *Tinka's New Dress* has yet been published in print—of his plays, viewing each of them as a mere "record" of something that "did exist" (Personal interview) in a more authentic form onstage. The ephemeral nature of the theatre is, in fact, one of the elements of it he finds most attractive: "Either you see it, or you don't," he proclaims in *Ronnie Burkett: A Line of Balance*, a documentary that covers the production process leading up to the opening night of *Awful Manors* in 1991. On the other hand, he also believes that he is trying to create a "canon of text puppet work" (Personal interview), and there are signs that he might be doing just that. One could, of course, point to the aforementioned individually published plays, but even more pointedly pertinent is his anthologization in four different volumes (and therefore contexts), three of which I will address here.[79]

The first is a collection of some of his own works, entitled *String Quartet: Four Plays by Ronnie Burkett*. Unsurprisingly, the introduction was written by Nicholls, one of Burkett's most vocal supporters. Her writing, some of which was recycled in order to fill out this piece, was evaluated in the first chapter, so only a few of her more significant (and novel) points need be addressed here. Like Burkett himself, albeit with a slightly higher degree of specificity, she associates him with a "marionette canon" (iv). Although she still praises Burkett the performer—and still does so from a largely ahistorical perspective—she emphasizes Burkett the playwright more here, and justifiably so. These two aspects of his work are, in fact, intimately linked, according to Nicholls, for she seems to imply that his strength as a writer is what allows him to get away with breaking "every [supposed] rule in the Puppet Bible": he can even release the puppets from his direct control onstage and they will "continue to live and breathe." Nonetheless, despite his obvious skill as a manipulator, his "technique" can apparently "make us forget about technique altogether." Nicholls does not here explicitly relate this kind of disattendance to Burkett's visibility onstage, but the spectators watching him are thereby ideally positioned to "see the amazing refinements of a technique that has redefined the time-honoured art of the string puller." The reader is asked to overlook the unctuousness of her prose and is reminded that the common assumption that the

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[79] As of 2013, Burkett's play *Street of Blood* has been anthologized in the fifth edition of *Modern Canadian Plays*, edited by Jerry Wasserman.

onstage presence of the operator results in this kind of "forgetfulness" on the part of the audience was interrogated in the fourth chapter. Consequently, that analysis will not be duplicated here. What is more relevant in the present context is Nicholls's reading of performativity into the act of reading—and, in a sense, forgetting—Burkett's works: "As you read the plays in this collection, that virtuosity is something you'll have to imagine, and then forget to imagine as you turn the pages" (vii).

Burkett's plays are not, however, closet dramas: the published versions of the scripts take into consideration cuts and additions made by the stage manager to the prompt book based on what Burkett actually said and did—and did not say or do—during live performances (Personal interview; "Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 114). Thus, the question of whether subsequent iterations of these productions have in fact been staged, either by Burkett himself or by some other company or artist, arises, given Chris Johnson's testing of the more conventional dramatic canon(s) in this regard. Of course, we must look beyond the type of theatre of the mind envisioned by Nicholls. Immediately following my first interview with Burkett in 2003, this question would have been easier to answer. Although he joked about acquiring a home theatre and then presenting "a greatest hits season," he affirmed that his true desire is, for the most part, to keep doing what he is already doing: developing and then touring new puppet theatre productions for adult audiences. He noted, moreover, some practical concerns: the scenery from all of the past shows had been discarded, while some of the puppets from shows staged before *Tinka's New Dress* were sold off to benefit certain charities, and others were "cannibalized" for parts for later creations. Consequently, these shows would have to be built anew, and Burkett had reservations about doing so, when productions that were actually new could be created instead. These were also a "younger man's shows" (Personal interview), since, according to Burkett, the unavoidable changes to his body caused by aging would prevent him from staging them as he originally did.

On the other hand, Burkett also disclosed that he was open to the idea of others remounting his work. His caveat, however, was essentially the opposite of the explanation for his reluctance to restage any of his own past productions: if one of his older plays were to be presented by another company or artist, it would have to be "interpreted in a new way" (Personal interview). During the interview, he primarily considered the possibility of his shows, particularly *Tinka's New Dress* and *Street of Blood*, being adapted for the theatre of human actors or indeed for films starring human actors. At the time, these were strictly hypothetical options—a group had in fact approached him about producing a film version of *Street of Blood*, but it turned out that they merely wanted to film him performing it himself. Nine years later, however, the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts in Toronto staged one of Burkett's past shows, *Provenance* (which originally premièred in 2003), using an all-human cast—or rather, two distinct all-human casts who alternated with one another over the course of the production's brief run at the Academy's Annex Theatre. This was the first time that one of his plays had been revived by others, and there were no puppets to be seen onstage. Given his perspective on the subject of another company taking

on one of his plays as it was expressed just a few years ago, of course, this probably does not actually come as much of a shock.

There is also historical precedent to bear in mind. Although puppet artists, throughout the history of their chosen art, have often been known to draw from texts scavenged from various sources, including the human theatre—and even to splice together multiple versions of the same story or indeed multiple stories, as shall be demonstrated in the next chapter with reference to Puppetmongers—the artists of the human theatre have in fact occasionally turned to the puppet theatre to supply them with dramatic material. This trajectory of influence may not be acknowledged as frequently or analyzed as thoroughly as its opposite; nonetheless, there has long been a bidirectional flow of exchange, just as there has "between popular and elite modes of culture" (3) more generally, as Scott Cutler Shershow, who was mentioned briefly in the first chapter, argues in *Puppets and "Popular" Culture*. To equate, without qualification, puppet theatre with the "popular" and actors' theatre with the "elite" would certainly be oversimplifying both forms of theatre, and Shershow does indeed seem to overgeneralize to a degree. He writes: "I have assumed that most of the actual puppet theater observed by the writers discussed in this book was popular in that it was oral, ephemeral, and itinerant, functioning at the margins of the economic market and accessible to the broadest possible range of spectators . . . in terms of social class . . . [and] age" (3). While this may fairly accurately summarize that part of Western puppetry that is genuinely popular or traditional, contemporary puppetry, which is indeed discussed in Shershow's study, is far too heterogeneous and "atomised" (sic), to use Jurkowski's term—which was introduced in the second chapter—again, for this encapsulation to be especially accurate or useful. As Jurkowski realizes, puppet theatre currently comprises "an unlimited number of 'atoms' just waiting to be introduced as components into new theatrical 'units'" ("Sign Systems" 67). The conceivable permutations of the elements of puppet theatre now seem infinite.

To return to Burkett's work specifically, for example, describing it as "popular" in Shershow's sense would seem to be overreaching. His plays are neither purely "oral" nor completely "ephemeral," in that written scripts both precede and survive the live performances. One could argue that he is "itinerant" (Shershow 3) to an extent, given that he tours nationally and internationally, so much so, in fact, that he admits to being a "road junkie" (Personal interview). Few Canadian theatre companies, puppet or otherwise, share this addiction to a similar degree, no doubt at least in part due to the current funding situation. That said, Burkett, of course, has a studio and residence in Toronto and is therefore hardly "itinerant" in the same way that the travelling puppet artists of the Punch and Judy tradition and the like, whom Shershow seems to have in mind, were. Moreover, Burkett is also not "at the margins of the economic market and accessible to the broadest possible range of spectators" (3). Audience demographics in terms of socioeconomic class must certainly be taken into consideration, given the venues at which Burkett typically performs, such as the Mainspace Theatre at Factory Theatre in Toronto for *Penny Plain*

in 2012. Furthermore, as we already know, his Theatre of Marionettes productions have all been explicitly intended for adult audiences only, with the exception of *Old Friends*.[80]

Burkett's plays have nonetheless had an even greater impact on the human theatre than has already been suggested. Again back in 2003, he noted that his stepdaughter used a monologue from *Happy* in her successful audition for the National Theatre School of Canada (Personal interview). Since then, several other monologues from his plays have been published in two collections, both of which are undoubtedly also regularly used as resources by hopeful auditionees: one appears in *He Speaks: Monologues for Men*, compiled and edited by David Ferry, and an impressive three are in *She Speaks: Monologues for Women*, compiled and edited by Judith Thompson.

Ferry recalls that, in the 1970s, when he was finishing his studies at the National Theatre School of Canada, "it was difficult to find audition pieces from the Canadian Canon." At the time, thanks to the work of Ferry himself and the others who took part in the "alternate" movement, such pieces, extracted from the many plays generated during this period, "began to turn up in the audition rooms across the country." Nevertheless, the "great monologues were limited" in number, according to Ferry, and thus "auditors saw a *lot* of duplication." He expresses relief, however, despite the added labour that it entailed, at the fact that "we have grown so far" since then that he was not able "to review all the plays that . . . [were] out there" (vii) as he was compiling his collection. Although he does not comment on Burkett's work in his introduction, Ferry, at the very least, implicitly allows Burkett entry into "the Canadian Canon" by publishing one of his monologues, along with all the rest.

Thompson, as has already been noted, chose more monologues written by Burkett for inclusion in her volume than Ferry did. She does not, however, refer explicitly to any kind of canon in her introduction, nor does she mention Burkett at all. Still, she does point up a few aspects of the tension between drama and theatre. She is, of course, an acclaimed playwright herself, and she underlines her personal preference for the monologue as a dramatic form, as it is the one she is "happiest writing in" (vii). She also acknowledges that "[t]he monologue can only happen if the speaker has an audience" (viii-ix), for it "is ultimately the electric interaction between the audience and the speaker." Thompson has also worked as a director, but she gives the last word to the world of drama, not that of theatre, as she urges, "Write a monologue: Give voice to the silent, and make the invisible visible" (ix). Thus, if one were determined to read into this sentence as much as possible, Thompson could be understood as issuing a challenge to seek admittance to the Canadian dramatic canon.

Eric Woolfe, who founded the Toronto-based puppet theatre company Eldritch Theatre in 1998, has also been "canonized" to some degree, but he addresses this development with the same wry humour that characterizes his plays. When asked why he chose to pursue publication at all, he replied, "Vanity. . .

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[80] An episodic show first staged in 1996 that was developed in collaboration with the Manitoba Theatre for Young People, *Old Friends* marked two significant departures for Burkett: it was "primarily directed at child audiences" (Nicholls, "World" 35), and it was also free of spoken text.

. I can say, [']Look I have a book on my shelf by me with real printing and everything. I must be a real playwright.[']" As it happens, according to Woolfe, he was not the one who initiated this undertaking: rather, it was Glenda MacFarlane, Series Editor at Scirocco Drama, who offered to publish his work after seeing a performance of *Grendelmaus*. He "suggested she make it a trilogy (because [he]'d written only three plays at that point)" ("Re: One More!"), and she agreed. *The Eldritch Plays*, in which *Sideshow of the Damned*, *The Strange and Eerie Memoirs of Billy Wuthergloom*, and of course, *Grendelmaus*, are included, was the result. Four years after this anthology first appeared in 2004, his play *Dear Boss: A Fortean Chronicle of Jack the Ripper* was also published by Scirocco, this time after an inquiry made by Woolfe ("Re: One More!").

Despite Burkett's international reputation, growing list of awards received, greater number of published volumes, and so on, Woolfe's plays have actually been thus far more frequently reinterpreted and performed by others: *Sideshow of the Damned* has been staged at two postsecondary institutions— Mount Allison University in 2008 and another college—and at a high school in Stratford, Ontario, while *The Strange and Eerie Memoirs of Billy Wuthergloom* was produced by the InterFEAR Arts Festival in Edmonton in 2005.[81] Woolfe also has markedly few objections to restaging his own work, even though doing so is "economically challenging for independent theatre companies," as he himself remarks. In addition to the costs usually associated with mounting and perhaps touring any production and the difficulties surrounding securing funding for a remount, Woolfe cites a problem more specific to his company: he "use[s] live actors and not just puppets" in his productions but has a limited number of "permanent personnel" ("Re: Published Script") in his company. Consequently, other performers must sometimes be sought out, but there are no guarantees that they will be available for subsequent stagings.[82]

When comparing Woolfe and Burkett in this way, we do not want to lose sight of the larger, more essential point: the fact that these puppet artist-playwrights even have scripts in their possession that facilitate their own publication to such a degree is in itself significant. In a word, these plays are "publishable." As Knowles says of "Canadian canonical plays" more generally, they are "comfortably literary" ("Voices" 100). As Chris Johnson, elaborating on an argument made by Knowles, explains, "those plays whose text can be depicted more or less satisfactorily on the printed page, rather than those theatrical works making more extensive use of image, the theatrical event, improvisation, electronic

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[81] Woolfe could not recall any further details regarding the second college mentioned, except that it was probably in Nova Scotia, or the high school, nor could he associate any particular dates with the related productions ("Re: Published Script"). Unfortunately, I was not able to uncover this information through my own research either.

[82] According to Woolfe, this can actually be one of the most significant obstacles to staging a remounted production. From a practical perspective, if one chose to restage an existing work, as opposed to developing a new one, one might expect to require fewer resources, but Woolfe emphasizes that this has not always been his experience: "[U]nless you can get the same cast, and you are close enough to your original production to merit a shorted [sic] rehearsal period, you aren't saving that much money to begin with" ("Re: Published Script"). Moreover, he has found it more difficult to secure grant monies for restagings, which would seem to be symptomatic of the current situation in Canada with regard to new play development as it was outlined earlier in this chapter.

media, soundscape" (31), and so forth, are more easily assimilated into the canon. Of course, they are also that much simpler to publish. This is not intended to be a judgment on the relative value and complexity of these texts when they are compared with those that are less "comfortably literary" (Knowles, "Voices" 100). Moreover, both of these playwrights—albeit to varying and even differing degrees, depending on the respective productions one chooses to consider—most definitely incorporate those less page-friendly elements listed by Johnson above into their productions and then endeavour to assemble the published versions of their scripts in such a way that they reflect the presence of these elements to some extent. Of course, there will always be a significant gap between what readers can gather about a performance from a published script and what the original spectators might have experienced. This tension becomes even more acute in the context of attempting to produce, edit, and publish texts resulting from devising processes, as we shall see more clearly later in this chapter.

Before we fully immerse ourselves in the topic of devising at last, however, the question of how text is used in Canadian puppet theatre needs to be considered more carefully. From the foregoing, one might infer that puppet theatre companies in this country all fall on one side or the other of a divide related to their perspective on text: they either stage completely original plays written by a single author or create works that may well have little to do with text at all through more collaborative devising strategies. The reality of the situation is far more complicated, and its clarification will not only shed light on this issue of text but also reveal more about the nature of the historical relationship between puppet and human theatre, with our particular focus being more contemporary manifestations.

The Politics of Appropriation, Culture, and Festivity: A Question of Accessibility

An old joke among puppet artists—or at least among many of artists based in Ontario whom I have met—is to admit openly that they are a bunch of shameless thieves. When some variation of this jocular remark is uttered, it is usually in reference to a perceived tendency among their colleagues to appropriate specific forms of puppetry or mechanical designs that they have witnessed other artists use effectively and then integrate them into their own productions. With this pattern of artists borrowing and modifying "concepts and techniques" (Morrow 13)—many of which were already borrowed from another artist or tradition—the Canadian tradition of innovative recycling that was explored in the first chapter can become as difficult to parse as the tunnel of images created by two mirrors reflecting back on one another. A sometimes less immediately obvious form of cross-influence or intertextuality in Canadian puppet theatre—and indeed in puppet theatre more generally—is in fact related to *texts* in the most conventional and graphocentric sense of the term. In such cases, puppet artists usually look outside of their own community for sources of inspiration, although the choices made in this regard by their contemporaries and forerunners probably do have an effect on their own decisions. After all, some of these sources crop up again and again, Shakespeare being one of them. We can once again turn to Burkett

for a relatively recent example of this kind of borrowing. In *Billy Twinkle*, the status associated with Sid, Billy's mentor, as a puppet artist whose "heyday" was during "[t]he golden age of American puppetry" (63) is reinforced by his frequent quoting of Shakespeare throughout the play. Given Sid's recount of his extensive touring across the USA during that period, his Shakespearean repertoire, his use of marionettes, and Burkett's dedication of the play to, among others, one of his own mentors, American puppet artist Martin Stevens, this "golden age" can be identified with "the first wave of puppet modernism" (Bell, *Strings* 81) in the US that was mentioned in the first chapter. Burkett is certainly not adapting any one of Shakespeare's plays in the strict sense, although the audience does get to see part of a scene from Billy's reinterpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew* using an "*anthropomorphized*" (57) rooster puppet alongside one of a cow. Linda Hutcheon, a respected authority on the topic, prefers to look at "an adaptation as an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art," which then means that "short intertextual allusions to other works . . . would not be included" (170).

Nonetheless, in view of his citation of Shakespeare—and perhaps even, more stealthily, of his own mentor Stevens—Burkett already cannot properly be considered the sole author of *Billy Twinkle*, and that is without bringing theoretical concepts such as Derrida's citationality and Bakhtin's dialogism to bear upon the matter. He is, of course, the one who performed it, however, and given its intended audience—as well as that for any of his other Theatre of Marionettes productions—it therefore serves as a counter to a generalization made by Shershow concerning puppet theatre that was not examined in the previous section, namely that "across an extended historical period, puppet theater has gradually moved toward its present status as a mode of performance primarily for children as though the diminutive theatrical object recreated its audience in its own image" (3). Puppets are surely not required to be small, for they come in all sizes: neither the Über-marionettes towards which Craig appeared to be working— which, according to his notes, were to range from "four and a half to . . . six and a half feet at least" (Eynat-Confino 89)—nor the much more contemporary processional puppets used by such companies as Clay & Paper Theatre in Toronto could accurately be described as "diminutive," for example. On the other hand, compared with such imposing figures, Burkett's puppets could actually be thus characterized. Regardless, they have hardly "recreated" their spectators "in . . . [their] own image," at least in the way that Shershow means, considering the age range of those spectators. As a puppet artist who now performs exclusively for adult audiences, Burkett is part of a distinct minority within an already marginalized form of theatre, but Shershow overstates the situation when he claims that, in "the present day, . . . almost everyone except puppeteers themselves assumes that all puppet theater is children's theater" (222).

Admittedly, Shershow's "present day" was in 1995, when his book was published, and there has been some progress in this regard since then, thanks largely due to performers such as Burkett. This nonetheless remains a significant problem with a number of ramifications for both puppet artists and spectators. Arnott's earlier and even bleaker presentation of this issue was first mentioned in the second

chapter, and in the next chapter, it will be situated in a context more specifically related to the geographical and processual frames that delimit the theatrical terrain that is of the greatest interest to this study. Indeed, we will see that the "fatally easy" (40) quality that Arnott attributes to puppetry in general has been turned to particular advantage by Puppetmongers and several other Canadian devised puppet theatre companies.

All of these companies, as well as Burkett's Theatre of Marionettes, also implicitly challenge Shershow at a deeper, more ideological level—or rather, they implicitly challenge the type of puppetry that he believes is now dominant, as it has resulted from the "transformation of a low or popular practice into an institutionalized theater for children, a theater which then explodes (by means of new media such as film and television) into a truly mass culture" (223). In this more recent, mediated context, wherein puppetry's "connotations of folklore and festivity are . . . little more than a scholarly memory," the animated objects associated with this form of theatre—or, more accurately, the images of them appearing on television, in film, and on the Internet—now "often exist at once as toy, performer, character, and cartoon" (225). Puppet characters such as Henson's Muppets, Shershow contends, have in fact strayed far from the popular roots of the form. No longer "oral, ephemeral, and itinerant" like the puppet theatre he describes earlier in his book, this mediated and mediatized form of puppetry has moved from "the margins of the economic market" (3) towards the centre, where it has been co-opted (albeit with some degree of complicity on the part of the puppet artists involved) as "a crucial link in an intricate chain of consumption with which society . . . appropriates itself be endlessly constructing 'proper' and 'appropriate' consumers for the representations it simultaneously provides for them." Shershow credits several theorists with laying the groundwork that allowed him to develop his more specific argument, for it is in puppetry in the form of mass media product that he finds the "relentless commodification which Adorno and Horkheimer describe in their critique of the culture industry," together with the "dialectic of ideological manipulation and utopian longing that, by extension, Fredric Jameson discovers in contemporary mass culture" (225).[83]

Even just outlining the entirety of Shershow's argument would be too much of a detour, given the subject of this section. One point is particularly relevant and therefore worth mentioning, however: through the deployment of Muppet and human actors on the television programme *Sesame Street*, for example, all the characters appear to be individualized, and yet they are also rendered homogeneous in very important ways. Shershow observes that while a "careful portrayal of race and ethnicity" is maintained consistently, these apparent differences are levelled markedly by "an essentially bourgeois impulse of pedagogy and cultural acquisition" (238). Analyzing this "impulse" reveals a connection to a more mediatized form of strategic textual borrowing than one might expect to encounter as an example in a dissertation as centred on live performance as the present one. In addition, it demonstrates the

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[83] See my list of works cited for full bibliographic information on the sources cited here by Shershow.

permeability of the boundary between popular and elite culture much more clearly than Burkett's use of Shakespeare, since in the latter case, neither could be classified as "popular" without qualification.

Sesame Street, like the other similar programmes and films with which Henson was involved, "appropriates and repackages not merely the various media of mass culture but also high culture in the old-fashioned sense" (238). These are in fact two parts of the same process. Shershow notes that Henson often incorporated "parodies of and allusions to a variety of other cultural practices" into the films and television shows on which he was working: other "films and television shows, rock music, [and] narrative categories such as 'the western'" (237) are just a few examples. The most frequent and structurally significant intertextual connection, however, is how, "in an obvious and quickly familiar parody of network sponsorship," each episode is announced as having "been 'brought to you' by whatever number of letter was featured in the various pedagogic segments of that program." Thus, through intertextuality that is manifested in both content and form, *Sesame Street* and other popular texts that call both intertextuality and puppetry into play in a comparably readable and entertaining fashion generally "perpetuate" themselves just as they act as "conduit[s] for other modes of cultural consumption." At a very young age, the viewers of such programmes become acquainted with "practices, products, and cultural categories that will eventually be available for their choosing"; moreover, "[t]he Muppets as performers also produce and reproduce the Muppets as tangible commodities" (238) in themselves, which are readily available for purchase in various forms.

As has already been emphasized, however, shows like *Sesame Street* appropriate elements not only from other popular texts but also from those considered as belonging to "high culture in the old-fashioned sense" (Shershow 238). It is this type of appropriation that illustrates the cross-pollination "between popular and elite modes of culture" (3) that Shershow identifies. His own example is the *Sesame Street* special *Don't Eat the Pictures: Sesame Street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, which "introduces children to the idea of cultural 'highness'" and, through its title, seems to reference satirically the significance of presence and immediacy when viewing works of art—that is, the concepts that are tied up with "what Walter Benjamin calls the 'aura' of the artistic object" (238). Both of these connections are particularly explicit during Cookie Monster's song, also entitled "Don't Eat the Pictures."

As was intimated earlier, *Sesame Street* is, in one sense, a much more popular text than any of Burkett's plays, given its widespread appeal; glocalized content, as demonstrated through the various international coproductions of the series; and reliance upon various channels of mass media circulation. In another sense—admittedly a loose one—however, as was also implied earlier, the Canadian puppet theatre companies that have been at the centre of this study, including Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes, are more "popular," in that they provide an alternative to the "relentless commodification" (225) that Shershow associates with mediated puppetry. It is, moreover, a more robust and varied alternative than Shershow suggests that it is, even if "puppetry is generally considered a form of

performance for children" (222). For one thing, as has already been mentioned, such ageist assumptions are currently being challenged (in this country and elsewhere) but not just by big-name performers like Burkett: the cabarets and slams examined in the fourth chapter are introducing puppetry—or at least new ideas about puppetry—to many of the spectators in attendance, and those who work in or support puppet theatre can only hope that at least some of these audience members will come back for more. One might be tempted to interpret this development as a "renaissance" or, more judgmentally, as a "fad." We should recall, however, the "perpetual rebirth" (Bell, *Strings* 8) of puppetry throughout its history, a cyclical trend that was analyzed in the first chapter. Puppetry, of course, has never disappeared completely, but, as was also asserted in that chapter, it evidently has "arrived" here in Canada—once again. The audience demographic that appears to be particularly attracted to the aforementioned cabarets and slams, judging from informal scans of theatre lobbies and seating areas, is worth noting, since it seems to be an auspicious sign. Indeed, this demographic of young theatre practitioners (from other disciplines) and postsecondary students could very well help to sustain the momentum of the current "renaissance" or "revival," in part because of their youth in itself, but also because of their general proclivity for online social networking. If Nicholls could describe puppetry as "hip" ("Puppet State" 37) in 2003, it is certainly now, to use the language of *Twitter*, "trending."

Despite this influx of new audience members and—potentially, at least—advocates, the comment made by an anonymous puppet artist to Shershow that "adult puppetry seems doomed to remain an even smaller and correspondingly subordinate branch of puppetry" (222) still seems justified. Nonetheless, even if most of the puppet theatre performances being staged in this country are indeed openly geared to young and family audiences—a reality that can hardly be denied—this does not mean that this body of work is a uniform mass that can be safely dismissed, as I trust that I have already begun to prove in what the reader has encountered thus far. To revisit one of Arnott's claims again briefly, since, as was indicated earlier, there is some overlap with Shershow's own argument in this context, a number of Canadian puppet theatre companies continue to demonstrate ably that their particular approach to theatre-making can be directed towards something other than promoting "superficial entertainment" (40). Their approach can, in fact, take on an explicitly ideological and oppositional character. The Powells, for example, declare on their website that they "challenge . . . audiences' expectations of puppetry"—which, given the popularity of Henson's televised creations and their descendants, are inevitably tied up with that form of puppetry—"of what they might see at the theatre, and ultimately about what life has to offer." Their professed aspirations therefore go well beyond their desire "to explore and advance the theatrical possibilities of puppetry," as admirable as that is. They wish for no less than to "contribute to a humanist, supportive and accepting society" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "Mission").

It probably goes without saying that this kind of progressive resistance also finds expression among some practitioners of puppet theatre for adult audiences. Burkett's renouncement of Muppet-style

puppetry on the grounds of aesthetic freedom was covered in the first chapter, but the economic reality that he was turning his back on the "hot, lucrative foam-rubber world of television puppetry" (Nicholls, "World" 32) should be emphasized here. He has in fact been very open over the years with regard to his strong but changeable opinions on the economics of theatre in general. For example, he has evinced a sense of frustration at how financial considerations play such an influential role in how the typical evening at the theatre is structured. He refuses to permit an intermission to interrupt any of his performances, not only because he believes that it takes ten to fifteen minutes after such a break to bring the audience back into the world of the play, but also because he is convinced that the intermission exists primarily to allow for the sale of "crap in the lobby" (Personal interview).[84]

Although Burkett and the Powells therefore define themselves in opposition to a more conventional and often more openly commercial branch of theatre in some ways, they have nonetheless been influenced by it in others. In terms of their respective relationships with text, this has already been noted here with reference to Burkett, and in the next chapter, we will take a closer look at the Powells in this regard, making sure not to ignore how their extended developmental activity based around Charles Dickens's *Hard Times: For These Times* must and should interestingly complicate any such analysis.

As we have also seen with reference to Burkett, the impact that Canadian theatre practices and companies outside the puppet-theatre sphere have had on those within that sphere has resulted from the influence of not only "big theatre" but also theatre of a decidedly more alternative variety. This is not to suggest that normally—and, in a way, ironically, given the above examination of *Billy Twinkle*—only companies housed in theatres with the lobbies and intermissions that Burkett attacks stage or borrow from texts by iconic playwrights such as Shakespeare. On the contrary, the generation of alternative theatre in Canada has often "involved re-readings of the classics" ("Alternative and Experimental Theatre"). Indeed, there are examples of more concentrated usages of authors such as Shakespeare in contemporary Canadian puppet theatre, and some of the productions that draw upon source texts in this manner can actually be placed somewhere on the "continuum of fluid relationships between prior works and later— and lateral—revisitations of them" that Hutcheon proposes. The generally playful nature of these productions situates them somewhere in the middle of this continuum, where "stories are both reinterpreted and rerelated." This location on the continuum is also the home of "parodies . . . as ironic adaptations" (171), and these puppet theatre adaptations can certainly approach the domain of parody.

Rovero and Juliet, first presented by the Ottawa-based company The Manipulators (Trish Leeper and Allan Martin) at the Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival in 2011, is a good but complicated example of this type of relationship with a text. As the reader has no doubt already guessed, this

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[84] Although Burkett's points are not to be dismissed, Pavis argues that the intermission "is a psychological necessity for the audience": their minds need a chance to rest and indeed to reflect. Burkett may well be reclaiming some time with a still engaged audience by forgoing an intermission, but Pavis would maintain that he is risking so much more by forbidding the spectators to indulge in "these precious minutes of respite" ("Intermission" 187).

production is based on—or rather, inspired by, to be more precise—Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, but the differences, large and small, between the two are too numerous to list here. The mere fact that Martin and Leeper could perform their version within a forty-five-minute time slot at the festival is revealing in itself. Shakespeare's play was not simply abridged, however: significant changes were made to its structure, including the incorporation of "a happy ending" (Puppets Up!). Only a few lines from the original text are retained, and puns and situational anachronisms abound—some directly related to the characters being represented by anthropomorphized animal mouth-and-rod puppets—despite the characters being dressed in vaguely period costumes. As Pavis writes of parody more generally, this show therefore "initiates a play of comparisons with a commentary on both the play being parodied and on literary or theatrical tradition" ("Parody" 250). Several threads converge in this production. Contrary to Arnott's assumption, "the entertainment offered" by Leeper and Martin did in fact "rise above a certain level" (41), even though it was clearly created to be performed for a family audience—that is, the very type of audience of which Arnott is so suspicious. This parodic reinterpretation might amuse adults and children—at least those young people who had already been introduced to the dramatist through popular culture references or more formal forms of education and socialization—but the innuendos that are included in the script are presumably intended to entertain and even titillate the adults primarily.[85]

As much of a travesty as some might find this production to be, it serves as further evidence of just how porous the supposed boundary "between popular and elite modes of culture" (Shershow 3) is. Moreover, the première performance of *Rovero and Juliet* took place in a context that could be considered more traditionally "popular" than any of the others discussed thus far in this chapter: a public festival. To be sure, this festival interrupts the more usual patterns of life in Almonte, just has it has done since 2005, bringing with it an atmosphere of apparent "carnivalesque festivity" (241), as Shershow would claim of the abstract ideal of the fair itself. However, like "the market fairs of early modern England" (48) that Shershow analyzes, the Puppets Up! International Puppet Festival is far from wholly a "cultural sphere of . . . social marginality" (241). Puppets in any such fairground space might farcify "the subject matter of the human stage"—including the works of Shakespeare, as we have seen—as part of the fair's "discourse or practices that express a general sense of social license and a parodic mockery of accepted authority," to cite Shershow's definition of *carnivalesque* "in its simplest sense" (46). Every one of the puppets being manipulated in such a setting nonetheless remains "a cultural site in which histrionic illusion merge[s] with the commercial power of the marketplace" (48). Shershow appears to have only wholly inanimate puppets in mind—earlier, he admits that he "make[s] no attempt to be precise in his definition of the puppet" (2)—as he argues that "the puppet's social existence as a tangible iconic figure link it to the other unusual, luxurious, or fetishistic objects that exhibited, bartered, and sold at the market fairs of early

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[85] For example, towards the end of the show, Friar "Larry" and Juliet's Nurse (portrayed by a camel and a cow, respectively), who, the audience is informed, had dated in the past, exit together, ostensibly to travel to his place in Mantua, as the Nurse exclaims, "Stop it, Larry! Ooh, start it again!"

modern England" (48). Puppets are literally for sale at such events, and not just in the sense of being placed in performances that are available for consumption for a fee: kiosks and stores offering them for purchase can be found near others stocked with snacks, knickknacks, and the like.

A modern, large-scale festival such as Puppets Up! tends to have an additional, overarching layer of commodification, in that it is promoted, and, with any luck, sold as a whole to sponsors. This would seem to be a further step along the path already discernible in "the seventeenth century[, when] the ancient cultural associations of magic or ritual efficacy that cling to dolls, puppets, and iconic images were in effect being repackaged for bourgeois consumption," to refer again to Shershow's examination of early modern fairs. Then and now, "a sense of magic and social alterity . . . is at once invoked and domesticated" (49) at these fairs and festivals. Interestingly, the theme of Puppets Up! for 2012 just happened to be "It's Magic!" (Wright), and while the website for the festival indicated that "there . . . [would] be plenty of surprises, slights of hand and mysterious goings on in the streets," these would all be contained within the safety of "Almonte, the quirky little community with a thing for puppets, right at the heart of the Town of Mississippi Mills" ("Welcome to Puppets Up!").

Thus, to elaborate on what was asserted earlier, a contemporary technologically mediated puppetry performance, such as might feature the Muppets or some of their derivative descendants, should not be interpreted "as 'appropriating' the performing object from some other hypothetical sphere of carnivalesque festivity or social marginality" (241), according to Shershow, for even the spaces and places most directly associated with this "hypothetical sphere" are produced and governed by specific economic circumstances and relationships. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, in their analysis of a wider range (in terms of both geography and history) of European fairs, provide a detailed—and acknowledged—source from which Shershow draws when developing his own theories. Stallybrass and White posit that "[t]he fair is at the crossroads, situated at the intersection of economic and cultural forces, goods and travellers, commodities and commerce" (28-30). Thus, to think of "the fair purely as the site of communal celebration," as the authors claim that Bakhtin did, would be "a gravely over-simplifying abstraction" (30), for it also "played a crucial part in the formation and transformation of local socio-economic relations and the State" (35).

In fact, Stallybrass and White contend that these "fairs were as much an agent of transformation as of 'popular tradition,' since they brought together the exotic and the familiar, the villager and the townsman, the professional performer and the bourgeois observer." Although Puppets Up! does not have as significant a trade component as these earlier fairs did, as it is, in the end, a theatre festival before anything else, one can see, in the mixing of performance venues and commercial outlets (examples of both can be found under tents of varying sizes), puppet artists and spectators, and locals and outsiders within the borders of Almonte, a similar "conjuncture of discourses and objects favourable to innovation" (36). A more contemporary, more specifically theatrical, and more small-town (in the neutral sense of the

term) context has to be kept in mind when this idea of "innovation" is translated to a setting like Almonte. Puppet artists are provided with an opportunity to exchange techniques, stories, and opinions with their colleagues, however, and spectators young and not-so-young are exposed to forms and styles of puppet theatre that they may have never seen before—assuming they have in fact seen any puppet theatre performances at all. Add to these the aforementioned kiosks and stores selling puppets and other artistic objects (many created by Ontarian artists); the craft tent, at which children can learn to make a puppet; and the workshops that are sometimes offered to puppet artists over the last few days leading up to the festival itself, and one can begin to grasp how such a festival can become "a conjuncture . . . favourable to innovation" (Stallybrass and White 36), not to mention education.

Thus, by remaining cognizant of Stallybrass and White's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of the fair to the development of the economic infrastructure of Europe, one can have the means to temper the "nostalgic perspective" that they attribute to authors such as Bakhtin. If one relies solely upon a theoretical framework centred on concepts such as the carnivalesque, one runs the risk of "see[ing] the fair as simply the festive voice of the community," a perception that "mystifies the conditions which determined the fair's existence." That said, Stallybrass and White never deny the existence of this element of "the festive voice." Indeed, they are careful to point out that, despite championing this "voice," Bakhtin and those allied with him have a tendency to lean "towards an uncritical acceptance of popular festivity as 'traditional'" (37), even though this festivity, along with its associated "voice," is still present in a modern puppet theatre festival, albeit in an attenuated and further "bourgeoisized" condition.

Consequently, a contemporary festival like Puppets Up! (not to mention each of the performances that compose it) can act as a complement or even as a counter—admittedly only to a limited degree, given the qualifications discussed above—to the "truly mass" (223) type of puppetry that Shershow holds up as indicative of the state of the art at the present time. Nonetheless, what Shershow has to say with regard to his seemingly disparate examples of the early modern English fair and the Muppet-centric media text should also be taken into consideration when analyzing the contemporary puppet theatre festival, for they all serve to demonstrate "that the high and low, the elite and the popular have never been more than each other's shadow," given that each side of these supposed divides borrows from the other so extensively. He goes so far as to declare that this type of "appropriation, like culture itself, is always a kind of mirage, an illusion or performance not unlike those more literally histrionic practices in which it so often manifests itself" (241). This performative quality partially masks the degree to which "elite and popular modes . . . interpenetrate each other"; when faced with so instances of this, even when restricting oneself to the history of Western theatre alone, one is compelled to interrogate "the concept of appropriation, and even the larger concept of culture itself, by questioning the autonomy of the latter as in any sense the 'property' or 'possession' of specific social classes or groups" (7).

To reinforce what was claimed earlier, to insist on uncritically and consistently identifying puppet theatre with "popular culture" and actors' theatre with "elite culture" would be perverse, in light of not only Shershow's arguments but also the economic and cultural realities of the status of contemporary Canadian theatre as a whole. That said, the accessibility of a puppet theatre production such as *Rovero and Juliet* cannot be denied. Certainly, Shershow's variables of "social class" and "age" (3)—in reference to audience demographics—are pertinent here; indeed, given the modest admission prices for the festival and the range of ages represented in the audiences (although seeing more teenagers and postsecondary students in attendance would be encouraging with respect to the future of the art) performances by puppet artists such as Leeper and Martin are considerably more accessible in these ways than those by Burkett, whose works were assessed earlier in this regard.

"Perceived Accessibility": Learning the Codes

There are other types of accessibility that must also be taken into account, however. One of these—which can but need not be related to accessibility with regard to the age range of prospective audience members—is comprehensibility with regard to form and content. The reader will recall Jurkowski's remark, first quoted in the fourth chapter, that "[t]he understanding of the message depends not only on the public and its ability to understand, but on the artist and his ability to be understood as well." His particular area of expertise is, of course, puppet theatre, but he emphasizes that any artist "should choose that system of signs that is the best vehicle for the ideas he wants to communicate to the audience." This must be an informed decision, however, as the artist in question "should know the sign systems existing potentially in the minds of the audience," for the "[r]esponsibility for possible misunderstanding of the puppet theatre sign system" ("Sign Systems" 61), for example, must be shouldered by both puppet artists and audience members. Jurkowski, as was also explained in the previous chapter, was responding to Bogatyrëv, who wrote, "The perception of one semiotic system in comparison to another system is an especially interesting problem. Thus someone familiar with only one language often regards a related language as a distorted version of his own native tongue" (47). There is a highly significant overlap with devised theatre here, one that will allow us to bring the two topics around which this study revolves closer together and to reconnect with the concept of borrowing. In this case, however, we will see how the previously mentioned mutual influence between puppet theatre and its human counterpart is indeed mutual, in that the latter also draws upon the former, an aspect of their relationship that has not yet been explored sufficiently, particularly in a more contemporary context.

Ker Wells's pedigree in Canadian devised theatre dates back to the now defunct Winnipeg-based company Primus Theatre, which he cofounded with Richard Fowler in 1989 (Barton, "Making" 5; Brask 79). Although that company is now often mentioned in a reverent tone that seems to ascribe to it a seemingly mythical status, Wells remains pragmatic and down-to-earth with regard to his own

professional history and perspective on devising. Indeed, he confesses, "I didn't appropriate the term devised theatre when I first heard it. In truth I still feel self-conscious when I use it, the same way I do when I wear a hat, but it's the closest thing I've found to a satisfactory name for what I do" (Barton and Wells 5). In the next section and further still in the next chapter, we will delve into why devising might be "a satisfactory name" for this kind of approach to making theatre. For the moment, however, we should note Wells's emphasis on "the immediate appeal" of the term *devised theatre*, with its "suggestion of equal parts ingenuity, spontaneity and improvised solutions." Also significant is the fact that it is "its own term," in that it is not "locating itself in relation to some other, more legitimate practice" (4). Nonetheless, this does not prevent such comparisons from being made, even if only tacitly in some cases, for as Natalie Corbett reveals in her introduction to the textual record of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, a piece created by Wells in collaboration with two other artists and first performed in 2005, all three of these collaborators concurred that, with regard to the devised productions in which each had respectively been involved prior to this production, "criticism from reviewers and audience members alike ha[d] tended to focus on the difficulty of understanding the meaning of physically based devised theatre" (125). This was no doubt due at least in part to the correlative tendency of "the producing infrastructure and the critics, at least in central and eastern English Canada, [to] incline heavily toward the safety and familiarity of script-based, conventionally produced plays" (Barton and Wells 4-5) that Wells himself describes.

Corbett observes, in fact, that the published version of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* "more closely resembles traditional dramatic texts than some of the other scripts in . . . [the] anthology" in which it appears: "the subject matter" may initially seem quite "comprehensible," and even "the physical sequences, described in extensive, detailed stage directions, . . . [are] clearly linked to the spoken text." This apparent recognizability is nonetheless deceptive, and Corbett cautions that "it is dangerous and inaccurate to assume that the text presented here contains, captures, reproduces, or does anything more than gesture toward the performance it records." Both the published text and the performance that Corbett witnessed were constructed in such a way that they appear to have been precoded for "perceived accessibility" (125) in several different ways related to both form and content, and by examining a few of these, we will be able to discern quickly how the devisers responsible for this production drew upon puppet theatre—or, more specifically, the Punch and Judy tradition—during their developmental process.

Corbett attributes a "potential universality" to the thematic territory of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, which focuses on "the twists and turns of heterosexual love and romance." In their exploration "of amorous power dynamics," the collaborators consulted "a number of recognizable sources," the Punch and Judy tradition being "[t]he most obvious intertext." When Wells and Tannis Kowalchuk, the first two of what would become three collaborators, first began to assemble "an initial body of textual material . . . as a starting point for physical improvisations" in 2001, they studied several pairs of "romantic partners whose intimate relationship[s] were paired . . . with the capacity for great cruelty or

violence" (125). Punch and Judy were just one of these couples, all culled from Western "cultural narratives of love and power" (126). Puppet artists have long drawn from similar wells: indeed, *The Creation of the World* was a popular biblical puppet-theatre production title in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Speaight, *History* 325), and even hundreds of years later, the characters of Punch and Judy played by Wells and Kowalchuk respectively are still "offer[ing] retellings of the biblical story of Adam and Eve" (Corbett 125). The kind of "dysfunction" displayed in the typical Punch and Judy show "forms a foundation that is considered throughout" *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, but Corbett explains that there is also a more specific form of borrowing: the characteristically "violent comedy of Punch's abusive relationship with Judy and her nagging retaliation is explicitly referenced in one particular scene" (125). Although Punch's traditional slapstick may have been replaced with a "*rolled up newspaper*" (Bobgan, Kowalchuk, and Wells 137), it serves him just as well as both a weapon and "*a phallus*" (138). Not only are there physical references to the stage business of this tradition, but there are also several textual citations of the more conventional sort, including a variant of Punch's modernized "catch-phrase . . . [that] has been generally adopted as Punch disposes of each of his victims" (Speaight, *Punch* 84): "THAT'S-A-WAY-TA-DO-IT!!" (Bobgan, Kowalchuk, and Wells 139).

Another element that contributes to the "perceived accessibility" (Corbett 125) of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* is related to this intertextual content, although it has more to do with form: it is the system "of cues that signal distinct shifts between the many performance styles and modes in the piece" (126). For example, the scene discussed just above that is so thoroughly informed by the Punch and Judy tradition is bracketed through the nearly simultaneous use of several techniques. The first is a brief verbal exchange between the two characters that expresses exasperation and confusion at "hav[ing] to start this again" (Bobgan, Kowalchuk, and Wells 136), and similar exchanges signal both the beginning and the end of this highly physical scene. There is an obvious lighting change as well: "vaudeville-style footlights" (133) are turned on as the scene commences and off as it finishes. Neither of these techniques originated in the puppet theatre, of course, although the performance style into which the actors abruptly shift clearly did, given its "*heightened, cartoonish*" quality, evoked by "*exaggerated actions and gestures*" coupled with the "*high, squeaky voices*" (137) associated with Punch in particular, although not through the intervention of swazzles.

Thus, the decidedly human Punch and Judy are temporarily transported from "*the 'normal' world*" (Bobgan, Kowalchuk, and Wells 139) of the reality represented onstage and of the human theatre itself to a kind of parallel universe—one that has been "puppetized" to a considerable degree. Despite such radical transitions, Corbett tells us, the piece remains accessible at one level, due to the aforementioned intertextual references and cues. Or does it? Raymond Bobgan, who directed the production, designates this more easily comprehensible level "the mask of the performance," for it may not immediately reveal that the two characters in *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* are "not only

performing for the audience, but in some ways performing in order to communicate to each other" (qtd. in Corbett 127). Once the spectator (or reader) realizes this, it becomes apparent that "[s]ince the play focuses on the dynamics of two people that love each other but are struggling to understand one another, the performance is at some level about the codes that we employ in relationships," according to Corbett. This limited form of identification does not, however, result in "absolute clarity" (127). For one thing, not all spectators and readers—due to gender or sexual orientation, or even limited relevant experience—may be as well versed in "the twists and turns of heterosexual love and romance" as Corbett seems to assume, which calls into question "the potential universality of the subject matter" (125). At a more formal level, Wells posits a reception "spectrum" (qtd. in Corbett 127) related to "the piece's code-switching" (127) and the capacity of individual audience members for following the sudden (if intentionally telegraphed) changes in performance style and mode. Negotiating these shifts "can be like being with a group of people that suddenly starts speaking a language you don't understand," Wells acknowledges. This can understandably leave one "feeling threatened or excluded." That said, a spectator who is somehow "more . . . comfortable with" such shifts can receive them as elements of "a language we can all understand"; at the very least, this type of spectator can recognize "that we're all always speaking in our own languages, and the degree to which we can understand each other, and our assumption or belief that we can all understand each other, is sometimes more accurate and sometimes less accurate" (qtd. in Corbett 127).

Corbett elucidates that this potential for confusion in *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* is at least partially intentional; moreover, it serves a specific purpose, in that the two characters' "active attempts to understand one another, and their failures, at some level mirror the audience's experience." By acting as "surrogate figures" (127) in this way, Punch and Judy exhibit a "lack of understanding [that] simultaneously eases the audience's discomfort and draws attention to the frustration of incomprehension" (128). Thus, the audience is still able to identify with the characters to some extent, in spite of—or rather, because of—their failure to comprehend completely the action before them. Corbett axiomatically captures this fraught communicative space shared by spectators and characters alike: "Recognition . . . is not the same as understanding" (129).

At least some of the reasons why Corbett chose to qualify the term *accessibility* with the past participle *perceived* should be apparent by now. To expand on Wells's point, the relative level of comfort that one experiences when encountering a devised performance like *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* is dependent upon one's willingness and ability to learn the required "language" or "languages" (qtd. in Corbett 127)—that is, the necessary codes and subcodes. This perspective, when considered along with the intertextual references, signalling cues, and other familiarizing elements, would seem to place the onus for reaching some kind of workable communicative practice on both the spectators and the devisers. Even if "absolute clarity" (Corbett 127) proves impossible, each of these groups could be thought of as

"searching blindly for the understanding presence that will meet it half way" (132), as Corbett poetically writes with reference to the publication of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* itself.

For their part, devisers, like the hypothetical puppet artist who Jurkowski criticizes as he examines similar potential communication problems in the puppet theatre, should not surrender themselves to feeling "disappointed that . . . [their] audience misunderstood . . . [their] performance because they applied the wrong decoding system" ("Sign Systems" 61). As we already know, he is really attacking Bogatyrëv here, but even that author recognized that one sign system need not be perceived "as a distorted version of" (47) a related system, particularly when the audience members have already "repeatedly perceived both semiotic systems separately" (64). Consequently, a semiotic education, albeit not necessarily one in the formal sense, can be useful, given that, to turn back to Jurkowski, "both partners (sender and addressee) should do their best to learn the necessary codes, i.e. cultural codes and theatrical and dramatic subcodes" (61). The collaborators responsible for *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* provided some signposts—even if those signposts were ultimately problematized—to give the audience some traction at least, but spectators still needed to approach it with an open mind, an open heart, and, ideally, some degree of familiarity with the types of theatrical codes and subcodes deployed in this production. Some prior exposure to puppet theatre, for example, particularly hand-puppet theatre, would have been advantageous if one had been present at a performance of this production, as one would have had to attempt to decode the previously discussed knockabout scene largely inspired by the English Punch and Judy tradition. Of course, in a very real sense, this scene was in fact "a distorted version of" (47) a puppet theatre performance, to reverse the perceptional formula that Bogatyrëv, seemingly in frustration, outlines: "[T]he adult public . . . always perceives signs in puppetry in comparison to live theater, and therefore often perceives puppetry as something funny" (50). This is not, however, the same restrictive kind of distortion that arises from refusing to receive puppetry (or any other art) on its own terms; rather, it is a more creative and informed kind that is the result of a decision to transpose some of codes and subcodes associated with puppet theatre to the human stage.

That said, when one considers devised theatre, one can quickly apprehend that, in that performance context, there are also certainly plenty of opportunities for the kind of perceptional distortion that is decried by Bogatyrëv. As was noted earlier, "the difficulty of understanding the meaning of physically based devised theatre" (Corbett 125) is a perennial theme in both published and casual oral criticism, even if the criticism concerning *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* specifically proved an exception in this regard. However, as has been repeatedly emphasized here, the apparent accessibility of that production obtained only at the surface level of its meaning: only "the mask of the performance" (qtd. in Corbett 127), to quote Bobgan again, seemed so familiar to those spectators who "got" it. Once that surface level is breached, however, "the frustration of incomprehension" can all too easily set in, even if it is mitigated somewhat by the characters onstage being represented as encountering the same problem.

Corbett remarks that this particular type of identification in the midst of confusion "reminds us that watching a play is an exchange or contract, as well as a state of vulnerability and potential misunderstanding" (128). Although this certainly does not make for signification that is easy to "crack," we should be remaining vigilant anyway with regard to meanings too easily and readily understood. Barton makes a similar point, but it has less to do with what has been devised, and more to do with *how* it was been devised. Indeed, *devising* and some closely related terms have already been used in this study without clear definitions having been provided. As Barton observes, it is not unusual for a text on devising, even a new one such as this, to "wrestle with issues of nomenclature" ("Introduction" xvi). That said, Barton cautions, "it is the perpetual negotiation between and navigation of these distinct yet related terms that is, in effect, *definitive*, rather than any fixed understanding of each term in isolation." When using terms such as *devising*, *collective creation*, and *collaboration* in close proximity to one another, one can initially take advantage of their "apparent accessibility and familiarity," as I have admittedly been doing here, but then push against these ostensible qualities by "revisiting and troubling . . . these impressions and the responses they evoke." Consequently, rather than vainly struggling to uncover "the" definition of each of these terms, we should embrace the idea that "'definitions' [can] become sites for multiplicity, for (even, enjoyably) contestation, and (following Jon McKenzie's proposal for the study of performance, in general), for *creation*" (ix). Barton clearly supports McKenzie's position that scholars should "not only use different concepts, nor only contest and critique them . . . [but] also *create* concepts, *initiate* models, *launch* movements of generalization" (qtd. in Barton, "Introduction" ix). As the number of authors addressing the subject of theatrical devising in some way rises, however, the field may increasingly come to resemble the body of spectators who are also trying to make sense of these performances, or at least those who, to quote Wells again, believe "that we're all always speaking in our own languages, and the degree to which we can understand each other, and our assumption or belief that we can all understand each other, is sometimes more accurate and sometimes less accurate" (qtd. in Corbett 127).

This author is hoping, of course, that we will indeed understand each other, even as, following Barton's lead, we allow and even encourage "'definitions' [to] become sites for multiplicity, . . . contestation, and . . . *creation*" ("Introduction" ix) in this context, just as they have done throughout this study in other contexts, particularly that of puppet theatre. We will therefore now also turn from the *what* to the *how* as we backtrack somewhat in order to review with a critical eye the contested ground of the fundamentals of theatrical devising.

An Exploration of Terms: (Re)introducing Devised Theatre

As should already be evident from the foregoing, there is no single, universally accepted definition of—or, therefore, approach to—*devising*, just as there is no such definition of or approach to

puppetry. Nonetheless, most of the available sources, as well as the practitioners themselves, agree that "intuition," "instinct," and "spontaneity" are important elements, which is probably not particularly surprising, given that this developmental method generally relies heavily upon improvisation during the creation process. As Barton, a leading Canadian authority on devised, explains, "[p]hysically-based devised theatre is, in a sense, an *opportunistic* form of theatrical creation, in which precisely trained performers rely to an uncommon degree on coincidence" ("Making" 2-3). Devised theatre is therefore a theatrical form "that requires its practitioners to be highly sensitive to the unpredicted, and to be able to seize and capitalize on the unexpected" (3). While one should note, as Barton points out, that "'physical theatre' and 'devised theatre' are neither synonymous nor mutually inclusive" (1), these two forms nonetheless intersect quite frequently. They intersect most conspicuously in physically-based devised theatre, so that will be our chief subject of interest here, for it is the focus on the human body in that approach to performance creation that, according to Barton, allows collaborators to take advantage of each "'insight,'" or "what is sometimes called an 'explanatory gap,'" that "which cannot be explained or predicted based on the available evidence" ("Making" 3). We must tease out this argument further here, and we must also account for the puppet body's place in this developmental context.

Before that, however, physical and then devised theatre should be outlined more carefully, as their overlaps with regard to the body and its relationship with process are illuminating. Dymphna Callery proclaims that "[p]hysical theatre is not codifiable," and the reader is by now no doubt familiar with this type of argument. Indeed, Callery goes so far as to describe it as "virtually undefinable." That said, she does concede that "some significant parallels emerge from any investigation of those working in this field," and these include an "emphasis . . . on the actor-as-creator rather than the actor-as-interpreter," a "working process [that] is collaborative," a "working practice [that] is somatic," a "stage-spectator relationship [that] is open," and a foregrounding of "the live-ness of the theatre medium." On the whole, physical theatre hinges upon "the idea that theatre is about craft, celebration and play, rooted in collaboration, and made by an ensemble dedicated to discovering a collective imagination" (5).

Without at all wishing to question Callery's expertise in this field, which derives from a rich body of research and praxis, we cannot help but notice the problematic nature of some of the terms that are already being brought into service in the introduction to her book *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre*. Two of them, *collaborative* and *collective*, are among the three main concepts exposed by Barton with regard to their "apparent accessibility and familiarity" ("Introduction" ix). The third concept or term is *devising*, which Callery does address, but not in earnest until much later in her book. Like Barton, we should therefore scrutinize these terms, but with an eye to eventually ascertaining how the interposition of the puppet body affects this constellation of terms.

It is, in fact, all too easy to slip into using such terms imprecisely, regardless of the context in which one is using them. Wells, writing from the perspective of a practitioner, describes, with some

frustration—but also with good humour—the "perennial challenge" (Barton and Wells 3) that "[m]any of us working outside the mainstream of script-based Canadian theatre face . . . in defining our work: defining it for the purpose of grant applications, of publicity, or in answer to queries from people sitting next to us on long train rides" (3-4). "All too often," he laments, "the terms we settle on are unsatisfactory, either because they are vague, or limiting, or pretentious-sounding, or because they describe what we do entirely in terms of its difference from an established norm." He then goes on to distance himself from "the term 'physical theatre,'" which was once regularly used to describe the type of work in which he was involved, since he "was never entirely comfortable with the suggestion that the work we did was in some sense physical to the exclusion of emotional, textual or intellectual content"; moreover, it was another example of attempting to define solely through "difference" (4) and opposition.

Wells would come to opt for the term *devised theatre*, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, because, among other things, "[i]t suggested an intelligence and alacrity both physical and intellectual . . ." (Barton and Wells 4). This term, however, has proved to be anything but a nomenclatural panacea. At the 2012 Canadian Association for Theatre Research Conference, as part of a round table entitled Acting Training in English Speaking Canada: Questions of Diversity, Wells himself expressed his growing distaste for the term, and his explanation echoed his prior one related to physical theatre at several points.

The situation is hardly any better in the academic world. As Barton indicates, "theatrical devising . . . [is] an aspect of performance creation surprisingly underexposed to both academic and practitioner examination." When it does undergo such analysis, "issues of nomenclature," as we already know, are among the first difficulties encountered, and "[t]he result is regularly, though not always intentionally, a conflation of issues relating to ideological context and questions of processual strategies" ("Introduction" xvi). Indeed, Barton admits that "[t]he first obstacle" to assembling a "collection of essays on such a broad and diverse combination of subject matter as collective creation, collaboration and devising"—such as the volume that Barton is introducing in the piece from which I am quoting here—is this "all-too-common conflation of collective creation" (viii), that is, "ideological context" (xvi), "and devising." Beyond this problem, an even broader and more significant one awaits: "the insurmountable challenge of effectively representing collaboration in relation to what is ostensibly the most collaborative of all cultural activities" (viii).

That said, the use of these terms in juxtaposition to one another may be a way forward. By authorizing "the potentially vast expanse of 'collaboration'" to intervene "literally *between* the magnetic poles of 'collective creation' and 'devising,'" we can make room for "a welcome and effective *caesura*, a practical and theoretical pause (for inquiry, for reflection, for breath) in assessing the relationship between these latter two concept so often understood as interchangeable," Barton advises. We would also benefit from a clearer understanding of this intervening term, and this arrangement allows for that as well, in that "the strong common association . . . between collective and devised activity equally provides a productive

level of alienation to the theatrical 'given' of collaboration." After all, we are considering various conceptions of collaboration "beyond or outside (or simply other than) the dominant conventions of hierarchal, vertically organized theatrical cooperation in the service of doing a playwright's play 'properly'" ("Introduction" viii). Barton is here quoting American playwright Edward Albee, who wrote, "I dislike the term 'collaboration.' . . . Let us call it 'having my play done properly' rather than collaboration'" (qtd. in Barton, "Introduction" vii). Barton interprets Albee's bombastic declaration as "a delightfully explicit caution against unexamined presumptions about collaboration as a, if not *the*, central tenet of theatrical activity" (vii-viii). While that is indeed a prudent warning, it should be added that there is still space for individuality, albeit perhaps not as strident and unmitigated as that which is embodied in Albee's statement, in even the most explicitly collaborative contexts. Barton is careful to stress that "what seems to beat emphatically at the heart of most of the collective and collaborative theatre models explored" within the pages of the collection of essays on such subjects that he edited, entitled *Collective Creation, Collaboration and Devising*, is, in fact, "an insistent, animated individuality" (vii).

Barton's claim may come as something of a surprise, given the baggage that burdens terms such as *collaboration*, *collective creation*, and *devising*. With regard to the last term in particular, Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, in *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, "construct something of a 'soundbite' of those qualities frequently assumed to be implicit in devising which serve to give it an almost mythical status" (4). In doing so, they demonstrate that devising has historically tended to be defined along progressive and collectivist lines, having been understood as, among other related interpretations:

> . . . a social expression of non-hierarchical possibilities; a model of cooperative and non-hierarchical collaboration; an ensemble; a collective; a practical expression of political and ideological commitment; a means of taking control of work and operating autonomously; . . . a commitment to total community; . . . the embodiment of the death of the author; a means to reflect contemporary social reality; a means to incite social change; an escape from theatrical conventions; . . . an expressive, creative language; innovative; risky; inventive; spontaneous; experimental; non-literary. (4-5)

Other characteristics listed in this "soundbite" will be cited elsewhere as appropriate. Oddey would argue that such assessments of devised theatre might have been accurate "[i]n the 1970s[, when] devising companies chose artistic democracy in favour of the hierarchical structures of power linked to text-based theatre" (*Devising* 9). By the time her book was published in 1994, however, Oddey could claim that "the term 'devising' ha[d] less radical implications, placing greater emphasis on skill sharing, specialisation, specific roles, increasing division of responsibilities, such as the role of the director/deviser or the administrator, and more hierarchical company structures" (9). As productive as these developments can be, they are essentially the results of compromises between two different ways of creating—although the reach of such philosophies can extend far beyond one's choice of new work development methods.

Heddon and Milling go further still, questioning whether, in our present era, it is still "necessarily the case that devising companies should be non-hierarchical"; moreover, they ask, "Were they ever?" They enumerate a number of "leading directors within . . . ensembles or companies," ranging from artists associated with the heady heyday of collectivity in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Judith Malina and Julian Beck, cofounders of The Living Theatre, to others who began their theatrical careers more recently, such as James Yarker, who cofounded the English company Stan's Cafe in 1991. Heddon and Milling enjoin the reader to consider whether the presence of "a director, who ultimately has the last word, who accepts final responsibility, complicate[s] the notion of non-hierarchical work or democratic participation." Beyond this issue related to process lies one related more closely to ideology: "[D]oes the fact that many companies now operate as umbrella organizations, often run by one or two key figures, challenge the assumption of ensemble practice?" (5).

Oddey herself asserts that the apparent changes in the sphere of devising that she identifies were due to "an ever-changing economic and artistic climate" (*Devising* 9); that is to say, "economic need, as well as artistic vision, is held accountable," to quote Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson, and Katie Normington's paraphrase of Oddey's remark. They put a decidedly positive spin on this new reality, contending that it is responsible for "bringing together diverse creativities and different specialist skills," which has in turn created "rich artistic opportunities." Furthermore, more hierarchical models of collaboration have contributed to "the commercial viability of companies," in that they often now "employ specialised freelance practitioners on a project-by-project basis to support their core teams rather than offering expensive permanent contracts" (5).

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington apparently share Heddon and Milling's cynicism with regard to "the rhetoric of equality and equity that has sometimes accompanied accounts of devising" (6), but they also agree that collaboration—the term that allows for the "welcome and effective *caesura*," the "practical and theoretical pause" ("Introduction" viii) advocated by Barton—remains "one of the distinguishing features of devising" (6). In other words, there is a perceptible shift here away from ideological overgeneralizations, particularly those that are almost completely unsubstantiated, and towards a greater focus on frameworks and processes. In inferring this distinction, I am following Barton's tripartite analysis of a quotation from Oddey that appears in both her 1994 book on devising specifically and her 2007 volume *Re-Framing the Theatrical: Interdisciplinary Landscapes for Performance*: "A devised theatre product is work that has emerged from and been generated by a group of people working in collaboration" (*Devising* 1; *Re-Framing* 24). Barton criticizes Oddey and this sentence, as they appear "to intentionally and irrevocably interweave collectivity, collaboration and devising practice" ("Introduction" viii). His subsequent parsing of this aphoristic quotation from Oddey is worth citing at length:

> For Oddey, collaboration is the structure—the processual framework—that governs devising: a devised "product is work" (as opposed to *a* work) that "emerge(s) from and [is] generated by" (as opposed to *written* or *composed*) through "group" (not *individual*) authorship operating "in (as opposed to *through*) collaboration." If we push on this: collective = shared purpose and motivation, *ideology*; collaboration = self-imposed framework and structure, *context*; devising = adopted strategies and rules, *process*. (viii-ix)

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington insist, in fact, that "devising is most accurately described in the plural – as *processes* of experimentation and sets of creative *strategies*." Improvisation typically remains at the heart of any particular matrix of such processes and strategies as employed by a given company in the pursuit of new collaboratively generated work. However, "the processes of working are also likely to include an eclectic and experimental mix of playing, editing, rehearsing, researching, designing, writing, scoring, choreographing, discussion and debate" (7). The now often more specialized functions of at least some of the members of a group of devisers can further stimulate this kind of eclecticism. All of the scholars cited thus far would no doubt permit *directing* to be added to the above list of working methods, although, as with the other activities mentioned there—such as choreographing—that are tied to specific sets of skills, not all group members would necessarily take part in it. After all, taking into consideration factors such as training, disposition, practical experience, and so forth, one cannot always judge all members of a company to be absolute equals in every respect.

Despite the potential for accommodating specific creative roles in devising, however, one must remain flexible, as one must generally do, in every possible sense, when working within this approach to new work development. Barton confirms from his own experience that "rigid role designations weather assault" ("Navigating" 115) in this context, with especial emphasis on the qualifier *rigid*, presumably. He revealingly expands on this assertion in his analysis of his work with the no longer active devised theatre company Number Eleven Theatre in an article entitled "Navigating Turbulence: The Dramaturg in Physical Theatre." With reference to his own role in relation to the company, for example, he writes, "My presence did not seem to introduce a heretofore absent function into their process, but rather afforded a localization (and thus, perhaps, stabilization) of an element of self-examination operative within each stage of their development process" (114). In fact, he repeatedly emphasizes just how fundamental this self-reflective orientation is to the work of a company like Number Eleven, for "the function of the dramaturg—to question habit, to complicate unreflective expediency, to dig beneath the surface of unearned presumption—is . . . inextricably woven into the company's understanding of creation" (112). The artists formerly associated with Number Eleven are certainly not the only devised theatre practitioners to be so "dramaturgically-minded," however; as a matter of fact, largely because devised work "is regularly developed without the central plan of a pre-existing playtext, [it] enforces a heightened degree of self-reflection and self-evaluation upon practitioners" (115) in general.

The foregoing was not intended to suggest that the dramaturg active in devised theatre is somehow "losing out." On the contrary, the seepage that tends to occur among seemingly discrete roles in devised theatre affects everyone involved, and if some of the responsibilities traditionally associated with one's assigned position end up being shared with others, then some of their own responsibilities may well also become part of one's own portfolio. In the case of the dramaturg, for instance, she might find herself "drawn directly into the site of creative collision, and thus toward the status of 'creator'" ("Navigating" 115), as Barton writes of his own experience collaborating with Number Eleven. Adjusting to this context (from that of text-based dramaturgy) requires "a consciously altered orientation to the work." This change in perspective is, in fact, more important than any "radical new strategies" that might be adopted; the primary result of this refocusing is, however, that it "more accurately focuses and accentuates a dramaturgical function that is, arguably, inherent in much physically-based creation" (114) already, as we learnt above.

As Barton outlines it, there are two phases to this reorientation: "[t]he first . . . involves scrutinizing and problematizing the distinction between developmental and production dramaturgy" ("Navigating" 114), while "[t]he second . . . calls for a heightened sensitivity to the inherent tension between critical objectivity and personal investment . . ." (115). Both of these steps challenge us to re-examine much of what we might take for granted with regard to dramaturgy. As Barton remarks, "it is a familiar observation that few theatrical terms are more fluidly evocative or problematic than 'dramaturgy,'" and yet, two commonly held guiding principles related to its practice are that one should endeavour both "to establish and maintain a degree of critical objectivity" and to cultivate "a deep commitment to the creator(s) involved, the project, and the art and craft of theatre" (103). This would be a perilous tightrope to walk in any dramaturgical context, but it requires a particularly delicate sense of balance—and play, as a matter of fact—in the arena, so to speak, of devised theatre, in which "the dramaturg must relocate herself much closer to the turbulent center of the creative act and to the sites—actual and potential—of the productive collisions of the montage-based process's raw materials" (115). Thus, in leaping ahead to deal first with the second of the two phases of the dramaturgical reorientation that Barton analyzes, we find a link not only to the first phase but also to what might be described (only somewhat facetiously and hyperbolically) as an obsession with process among devised theatre scholars and practitioners, not to mention, as it happens, a number of contemporary Canadian puppet artists. The body—human, puppet, or both—is, moreover, a thread that runs through all of these topics.

Barton avers that the "practical, yet limiting and lamented, divide exhibited in most text-based dramaturgy in North America" ("Navigating" 114), namely that between developmental and production dramaturgy, collapses when faced with "an approach to performance in which issues of structure and characterization are not 'translated' or 'embodied' but rather discovered through physicalization," for in the constructively "turbulent" atmosphere of devising, "the acts of creation and realization—and, by

extension, development and production—are inseparable." There can be little doubt that an approach to creating work that is characterized by the erosion of boundaries—between production roles, between perceived types of dramaturgy, and so on—could justifiably be considered unpredictable. It is the very bodies of the collaborating performers, the most essential of the "process's raw materials" (115), that, as Barton states elsewhere, that enable them to take advantage of each creative "'insight'"—or "what is sometimes called an 'explanatory gap[,]' . . . which cannot be explained or predicted based on the available evidence" ("Making" 3).

These same bodies are unpredictable in their own ways, however. As we already know, "we are 'always on the same side of the body'—that is, within it—so that our perspective on our own bodies is always partial and always unique." Consequently, "the lived body—the body in space—is something we can never fully know or control" ("Making" 4), as we learnt from Barton. One potential means of mitigating this situation—as this is one boundary that is impossible to breach—is actually tied up with the tendency towards specialization that, as was discussed above, has become more apparent in devised theatre practice. Indeed, it is a more specific example of the "bringing together [of] diverse creativities and different specialist skills" (5) that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington identify. Again we can turn to Number Eleven for an illustration. Barton's role as dramaturg has already been mentioned, but their process could accommodate another outside eye, one that had in fact been a part of the company since its inception and that therefore had a more established place in what can only be described as its hierarchy: a director.

The question of the place of the director in a devised theatre company has proven to be a tricky one, largely due to "the rhetoric of equality and equity that has sometimes accompanied accounts of devising" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 6). Chris Baldwin, a director who has participated in many devised productions, maintains that, even within groups of collaborators that permit the kind of "specialisation" that Oddey sees as on the rise, there need not be "more hierarchical company structures" (*Devising* 9), despite Oddey's hitching together of these two supposed developments. Baldwin writes, "Rather than being at the top of a hierarchical structure, the director is at the centre of the rehearsal fulcrum, ensuring that everyone is working together and . . . making sure that the project remains conceptually consistent and elegant" (13). Encouraging as this might be in one way, Baldwin's insistence on apparently uninterrupted coherence, efficiency, and neatness contrasts markedly with Barton's use of a processual metaphor of "collision" ("Navigating" 108). This metaphor was introduced in fourth chapter of this study in a context that was itself metaphorical. Now, however, it will be restored to its original context, and despite the chaotic quality of the approach to devising that Barton's metaphor represents—indeed, perhaps at least in part because of it—room can be made for a director without necessarily flattening out the process so as to foster the uniformly harmonious atmosphere and "consistent and elegant" (13) structure that Baldwin craves. The nature of the role of this breed of director actually comes

to resemble that of the role of the puppet operator in several significant and revealing ways. Consequently, we can begin to weave these two distinct but connected theatres together to some degree.

Outside Eyes in Devised Theatre and the Puppet Operator: Spontaneity and Control

Number Eleven's "ongoing process of creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that are then, in a very real sense, brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" ("Navigating" 109), as described by Barton, was first mentioned in the previous chapter, but just how is the creative energy unleashed by this "collision" harnessed? Barton notes that each of the performers formerly associated with this company began to work on a given "project in isolation," as each was responsible for "conduct[ing] his or her own research and creat[ing] initial scenes or, more accurately, patterns of movement and voice," which could "be inspired by any combination of personal reflection and memory, works of visual art and music, and found or created text" ("Making" 5). Although this preliminary solo work may seem incongruous with what would appear to be a highly collaborative environment, Number Eleven seems to have been inspired in this regard by Barba and his company, the Odin Teatret, founded in Oslo, Norway in 1964 but based in Holstebro, Denmark since 1966. Barba too has the performers who are collaborating with him on a given production commence "their improvisations alone," for "their particular response[s] to the material that has been presented" are what should be emphasized at this stage, "not . . . how they might work with the other actor(s) in the space" (Turner 33). Focus, depth of the work generated, and efficiency are the principal motivations: "Barba comments that when improvising with a partner you have to work in real time and the work can often be merely illustrative. When working alone, time and reactions often appear to work differently; the actor can go much further alone as he or she inhabits what Barba calls the realm of 'dreaming awake'" (Turner 33). This shared strategy is probably explicable through the fact that Wells studied under Fowler—who, as has been mentioned already, would come to found Primus with Wells—at the National Theatre School, while Fowler himself "had studied extensively" at the Odin Teatret and had "maintained an ongoing professional and training relationship" (Barton, "Making" 5) with Barba.

Eventually, however, Number Eleven had to begin "the long collaborative process of establishing connections and conversations among the individual sequences" ("Making" 5), and this, Barton reveals, was when Wells's perspective as a director located, perforce, outside of the bodies of the performers collaborating with him became particularly invaluable. His "separation from the individual, physical acts of creation—his ability to see the 'other sides' of the performer's bodies" enabled him "to assume central authority over their manipulation in space." Barton's decision to use the word *manipulation* here is intriguing, to say the least, given our interest in puppetry in the present context, a point to which we shall soon return. All the same, Wells, as director—or rather, manipulator—relied "almost entirely . . . on the material generated by the performers," who, within this kind of creative framework, whether or not it

includes a director, "*are* the space in which and *from* which the work is sculpted" (6). More specifically, in terms of process, Wells, after a period of close observation, started "to orchestrate two or more of the sequences simultaneously," gradually "encourage[ing] greater and greater degrees of intrusion and interaction" (5) among them. As one might expect, considering Barton's deployment of concepts such as *collision*, *conflict*, and *montage* in describing this company's process, "the resistance between these recontextualized fragments"—that is, those brought into contact with one another by Wells—"remains a conspicuous characteristic of both the formal and narrative structures of the eventual performance" (6). In other words, not all gaps are bridged, not all edges are smoothed.

It does not seem that much of an associative leap to relate this examination of the director in devised theatre back to the comparison of the human body with its puppet counterpart in the third chapter. A director like Wells becomes a means of productively transgressing, to a qualified degree, the seemingly impenetrable boundary that Merleau-Ponty acknowledged when he declared that one is "always on the same side of the body" (qtd. in Barton, "Making" 4). The director cannot literally empower the performers to see (much less control) themselves from the outside, but she can ensure that this point of view is taken into consideration by becoming something of a metaphorical puppet operator. This is not to suggest that a devised theatre company *needs* a director. Indeed, the incorporation of a director into the structure of a group of devisers would not necessarily "introduce a heretofore absent function into their process," to quote Barton again on his own role as a different but not entirely unrelated type of outside eye. It could, however, provide "a localization (and thus, perhaps, stabilization) of an element of self-examination operative within each stage of their development process" ("Navigating" 114).

Not only can a devised theatre company flourish without a director, but it can also do so without the forced harmony (in terms of both process and product) advocated by Baldwin. We have already seen how Number Eleven eschewed such harmony with regard to their developmental methods and productions, characterized as they were by "collision" (Barton, "Navigating" 108). This renouncement of a facile sense of unity can be taken further still. More recently, Barton has pointed to bluemouth inc., "the most defiantly 'collective' company working in Canada," according to him, as an example of a troupe "[d]etermined to generate and perform without a designated director" ("Introduction" xiv). Not subject to the authority of a director—even authority that has allegedly been relocated, judging from Baldwin's spatial metaphor, from "the top" to "the centre" (13)—the members of bluemouth instead elect to position themselves within "a creative space of constant internal persuasion, coercion, argument, and absolute generosity, one in which they must perpetually explore, negotiate, revise and reinvent the collaborative framework" (Barton, "Introduction" xiv). This is not a collaborative framework that merely permits each voice to be heard; rather, it epitomizes the "insistent, animated individuality" that Barton finds "at the heart of" many of the more progressive "collective and collaborative models" (vii) that have been employed by companies in this country.

Furthermore, the framework that bluemouth repeatedly revisits, even as they continue to be guided by it, gives the lie to the assumption that the idea of the collective is inescapably mired in idealism and nostalgia or, when expressed with more insight and greater nuance, the discourse of consensus. Barton cites several authors who have helped to construct the latter, more refined understanding, such as Theodore Shank, who wrote in 1972 that, "[i]n reaction to the fragmentation of the established society, which for many has become disorienting, the alternative society has sought wholeness" (3). The theatre practice associated with this "alternative society" is indicative of this yearning, he argues, since it "is based on the cooperation of a creative collective" (4). In *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States*, published twenty years after Shank's article, Mark S. Weinberg, building on this concept of "cooperation," enumerates "[t]he principles of collective organization," which include "nonexploitative structures" and "democratic decision making." Perhaps most importantly of all, however, Weinberg adds that these "principles . . . lead to a process by which each group can create a particular working methodology that is likely to be responsive to the needs of its members and to the task and that maximizes both freedom and responsibility" (16). Barton stresses that, while the ideological motivations behind bluemouth's collectivity align to a considerable degree with those outlined by Shank and Weinberg, among others, "their collaborative *structure* requires a democracy predicated on the ability to sustain and thrive in the tension of passionate and volatile exchange (including conflict and difference), in addition to (and, at times, rather than) the equilibrium of consensus" ("Introduction" xv).

Not all disagreements can, of course, be "talked out," even in a collective. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that ironing out differences through discussion can be especially difficult, even impossible, in such a context. This is not meant to be a slight against collectives. On the contrary, the reality is that any apparent state of unanimous, harmonious consensus can in fact simply be the result of the tyranny of the majority. Barton collates several critical sources as he charts how collaboration, particularly when propelled by a collectivist ideology, is less about agreement and compromise and more about creative and respectful confrontation ("Introduction" xv-xvi). The refusal to ignore or gloss over difference should be considered an intrinsically justified end, but such a stance also brings with it several very practical benefits, even if it is rarely the easiest path to take. For example, the critical attitude— towards others and, by forcing one to express and even defend one's opinions and interpretations, towards oneself—that it fosters can further promote the kind of group-based dramaturgy that Barton analyzes with reference to Number Eleven, whether or not the company in question is actually working with an external dramaturg. Given the authority frequently accorded to both the body and intuition in the devising process, however, this can become a dramaturgy beyond words, for "practitioners who have developed deep trust and familiarity with one another's lived bodies engage in intuitive 'pre-reflective' dialogues." "Bypassing both the time delay of intellectual exchange and the restricting logic of verbal expression," these performer-creators, when engaged in "theatrical situations that have been explored repeatedly, over

extended periods of time," may "suddenly recognize, scrutinize, and reflect back one another's rich physical abstraction" ("Making" 11). Such inspired moments are a large part of what "makes collaborative performance fundamentally unpredictable (and, thus, engrossing)" ("Introduction" xvi), as Barton writes elsewhere. Such instances of collaborative synergy are, moreover, what allows the practitioners involved to "Make Change" ("Making" 11).

The change towards which such companies strive is not only dramaturgical in nature. In focusing on the group and the individual, on the process and the production, they share an "image of theatre as not merely a force but, literally, a 'forge' for 'change'—personal *and* social change—where the *work* of the performer-creator produces not merely affect but *affect*[,] . . ." as Barton proclaims. Such a conception of theatre is integral to what Barton refers to as "a 'dramaturgy of agency'" ("Introduction" vii). From what was mentioned earlier in this chapter with regard to the humanistic leanings of the Powells, it would seem that Puppetmongers also shares this conception of theatre and is therefore another troupe labouring to keep both process and product aligned with a dramaturgy of agency.

At the centre of such a process, whatever form it takes, is the performer-creator, which brings us back to Jurkowski and his comparison of "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) and the "contemporary puppet theatre" (43) as he saw it in the 1980s. Within both of these theatres, Jurkowski found what could designated an obsession with process, since, in both, "[t]he most important element is the creative process, dominating all other elements of theatre" (42). The creative practice of the devised theatre companies that we have begun to examine here could be characterized in the same way. Performer-creators are, of course, human, and therefore not infallible, no matter how self-reflective their respective companies might be, no matter how many outside eyes might be incorporated into their collaborative structures in order "to see the 'other sides' of the performer's bodies" (Barton, "Making" 6). Process cannot offer any guarantee of overcoming any and all shortcomings; it can, however, bring more perspective—or at least new perspectives—to "a context where intuition has been granted uncommon authority." This can be particularly helpful within collaborative frameworks that, for all their progressive qualities and the unexpected moments of creative insight that they are capable of generating, can also make "it . . . difficult to differentiate between revelation and resignation," especially when "performers . . . find themselves short on time, energy, imagination." After all, as Barton acknowledges, arriving at "[p]roven, pre-fabricated solutions to familiar problems" by taking "intellectual and bodily 'short cuts'" is among the fundamental strategies "of individual intuition and bodily knowledge" (11).

Drawing upon theories now circulating in the world of cognitive psychology, Barton concisely dissects "the workings of 'implicit' consciousness." He explains that one's "conscious thoughts, feelings, and actions are directly influenced by the undetected, 'implicit' memory of only apparently forgotten past experience, as well as by the present but undetected stimulus accessed by 'implicit' perception." Through these related ongoing processes, one "experiences implicit learning, basically generating knowledge one

doesn't know one knows." This cognitive model—which posits that we are all continuously recalling, perceiving, and learning at an unconscious level, even as these "implicit" mental processes affect our conscious consideration of them, for example—"potentially explains the 'explanatory gap' of intuition," according to Barton. In fact, the "gap" in each insight "is only apparent" ("Making" 3), given that one can actually account for so much of the associated cognitive activity, even if only hypothetically.

Barton presents a phenomenological understanding of "bodily awareness" as complementary to the above analysis of intuition, borrowed from cognitive psychology. Much like implicit consciousness, this "corporeal intellect" has a profound but largely imperceptible impact on individual consciousness, albeit one emanating more clearly from the body, as the terms used to refer to it would suggest. A body-centred epistemology holds that "body memory" is in fact "the most fundamental type of memory . . . [and] a precondition for all other memory." Body memory is cultivated "when the body experiences and 'understands' a perception or movement—an experience that precedes conscious understanding." One can therefore intentionally develop "'bodily sensitivity' to a particular subject matter through repetition or training," thereby gradually adding to a reservoir of "bodily knowledge" that can be drawn upon to "provide proven, effective responses to familiar situations" and can also be modified in order to cope with "new and/or evolving circumstances" ("Making" 4).

Thus, although both intuition and bodily knowledge are constantly evolving, they are firmly rooted in what has come before, and therein lies the basis of both their effectiveness and their riskiness. To quote Barton's explanation again, "the function of the dramaturg . . . [is] to question habit, to complicate unreflective expediency, to dig beneath the surface of unearned presumption" ("Navigating" 112), and it is in this capacity that a dramaturg can help a troupe to "foster and facilitate the intuitive 'jumps' of innovation while revealing and challenging the intuitive 'short cuts' of habitual response." As with so many aspects of the dramaturg's position, there is a difficult line to walk here, one that is made all the more challenging by the fact that, as she proceeds with her work within a collaborative framework, she must also be "sharing the prereflective space and intuitive field of the composition while at the same time establishing a separate, reflective dialogue with the performance's collective body" ("Making" 11).

As has already been stressed, the function of the dramaturg in devised theatre need not be abstracted from the group and reconcretized in a specific individual; indeed, judging from what Barton has to say on the subject, a total extraction is not even a viable possibility. Similarly, a collective can operate quite successfully without a designated director, as we have also seen. Nonetheless, embodying the functions associated with these positions in individuals situated outside of the performers' bodies can bring some degree of permeability to the corporeal boundary identified by Merleau-Ponty. So, if this constraint inherent in the human body can, in a way, be overcome, then we must ask whether or not the restrictions likewise related to the body but intrinsic to puppetry can also be mitigated. As we know from the third chapter, these restrictions stem from the puppet's particular physical nature, which is the obverse

of that of the human body in several important respects. Quite unlike the human performer in devised theatre, the puppet operator is trapped outside of the body—albeit sometimes only conceptually—that is usually supposed to be the focal point of the performance, namely that of the puppet itself, of course. This situation would seem to become especially problematic when both puppet and operator find themselves in a creative context in which so much (including the puppet's own body, as well as the way in which the operator's body is configured at any given point in a rehearsal or performance) is shaped by forces related to intuition and the exploration of bodies and space—indeed, of bodies in and of space. In the next chapter, we will concentrate on how one particular Canadian puppet theatre company, Puppetmongers Theatre, has confronted this state of affairs by exploiting both the "flexibility" of the live human body and the degree of control that is offered by the puppet.

Chapter 6:
Puppets and/in/at Play: Process(es) at Puppetmongers Theatre

The Powells and the Five "Flexibilities" of Devised (Puppet) Theatre

It would now be appropriate to shift our focus to a specific model of new work development in puppet theatre that has been infused with as much of the spontaneous spirit of devising as is possible, given its focus on the object. Through exploring the options opened up to them by puppetry, the artists employing this model have also sought to find new access points to spontaneity. Thus, this chapter will be, for the most part, a case study of sorts, as we will analyze the developmental methods employed by Puppetmongers Theatre when creating new works. Naturally, doing so will also require an analysis of certain aspects of some of these works themselves, several of which have already been mentioned in other contexts. The Powells' sense of play will be evident, and it is by no means my intention to suppress it with my own analysis; on the contrary, I can only hope to do justice to it. Still, in order to maintain some sense of organization, this case study will be structured around five "flexibilities" that I have identified as characteristic of both their works and the methods used to develop them: collaborative flexibility, narrative flexibility, design flexibility, movement flexibility, and space flexibility. As we will see, these flexibilities are in fact characteristics of devised theatre in general, but the focus on the perceived object in puppetry necessitates their transformation in significant ways.

Collaborative Flexibility

If one wanted to judge the company "by the numbers," Puppetmongers Theatre would seem to have a creation process that "works": since the troupe was founded in 1974, this process has been utilized to develop twelve full productions, often in collaboration with other theatre artists, and to participate in a number of smaller-scale developmental projects. They have received seven awards from puppetry organizations and been nominated for both the Chalmers Canadian Play Awards and the Dora Mavor Moore Awards several times. That said, fixing their process in words does not do justice to what is actually a dynamic approach to creating new works that is able to change depending on the disciplines of the artists with whom they choose to work for a given project. In fact, as Heddon and Milling point out with reference to devised theatre more generally, this approach employed by the Powells is actually "best understood as a set of strategies" (2); that is, it is best "described in the plural," as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington put it: rather than being a single, uniform process, it is a nexus of "*processes* of experimentation and sets of creative *strategies*." Devising, on the whole, "defies neat definition or categorization" (7), Govan, Nicholson, and Normington admit, and the Powells' particular developmental model is no exception in this regard.

The fluidity of their process has allowed them to include other collaborators for certain projects, including directors and dramaturgs, although because of their "humongously ridiculous history together" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006), David Powell asserts that including a third permanent member would almost literally be a kind of adoption. No such adoption is looming on the horizon, which is probably for the best, as they are that much freer to marshal "diverse creativities and different specialist skills" by "employ[ing] specialised freelance practitioners on a project-by-project basis" (5), to cite a central advantage identified by Govan, Nicholson, and Normington with reference to a larger tendency that they find in contemporary devising. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, this kind of flexible collaborative structure allows for considerable creative and financial freedom.

As was also demonstrated in the last chapter, however, an agreement among theatre artists to collaborate is not a guarantee against conflict arising in the rehearsal space. This assertion is not meant to be a warning, dismissal, or condemnation; indeed, as we discovered when examining bluemouth's approach to collaboration, "conflict and difference" (Barton, "Introduction" xv) can be healthy and fruitful components of a collaborative structure. That said, I do not think it would be fair to depict the atmosphere at a typical Puppetmongers rehearsal as being consistently quite that charged. I believe that I can speak with some authority on such matters: in addition to more conventional, graphocentric forms of research, I have seen the Powells' devising strategies in action—and even participated in them—in several different contexts. My first and still most formative experience collaborating with them was during the development of the exploratory workshop production *Terror*, a Puppetmongers production based on the short story of the same title by Junichiro Tanizaki, in June 2003.

This is not to suggest, however, that disagreements do not arise. Indeed, I can recall one brief argument in which I myself was involved. It happened during a rehearsal for a workshop production of *Hard Times* in October 2008. Although this production was obviously staged more recently than the aforementioned show *Terror*, I participated less directly in it; indeed, I was largely just documenting the devising process for research purposes, usually offering my own opinion on a given matter only when asked. Since I could hardly be counted among the collaborators this time, I had less of an opportunity to gain practical insight into the devising strategies that were employed. On the other hand, I was able to take advantage of increased critical distance, not to mention such conveniences as a desk on which to place my laptop and camera, since I did not need to be on my feet with the performers at all times.

The argument in which I became embroiled was short but revealing; it cut to the very heart of what *collaboration* can mean in such a context. "For a process that takes such a long time," Ker Wells once declared with reference to devising in general, "things happen fast" (qtd. in Barton, "Making" 9). As I struggled through my documentation process just to keep up with the collaborators working on *Hard Times*, I was frequently reminded of the truth of this statement. On more than a few occasions, when there was an appropriate break in the flow of their own process, I had to ask for clarification as to who had

proposed a given staging idea or change to the script. To be honest, I had not been especially self-reflective with regard to the motives behind my compulsion to seek such specific elucidations, and it was on these that I was challenged by Anand Rajaram, a performer who had become an integral part of the temporary collaborative framework that had been shaping the progression of the work. Although this organizational structure made room for a director (who was also the playwright), Chris Earle, it had been defined largely by the Powells themselves, who, as one would expect, ensured that they would be able to leave their own aesthetic mark upon the piece. Rajaram also retained a considerable degree of agency as an independent theatre artist ostensibly affiliated with Puppetmongers only for the duration of this specific project. As it happened, he would return to collaborate with the Powells and Earle on the very different production of *Hard Times* that was given a more substantial staging in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille in the fall of 2010.

Rajaram's remark to me, however, had less to do with collaborative structure and more to do with ideology: he questioned the need to make such specific attributions in my notes, since they were supposed to be engaged in collaboration. Certainly, that much could not be denied, and yet, were they a "creative collective" (Shank 4)? Rajaram's brief interrogation, at least, seemed to reflect the spirit behind Shank's description of the impetus for collective creation:

> The group, rather than the individual, is the typical focus of the alternative society, and this is reflected in the structure of the new theatre organizations, their manner of working, and their theatre pieces. . . . Society has become increasingly specialized and competitive. This is reflected in an established theatre based on competition and a theatrical method that focuses on individual specialists. . . . In reaction to the fragmentation of the established society, which for many has become disorienting, the alternative society has sought wholeness. This is evident in many ways, including . . . its theatre, which is based on the cooperation of a creative collective. (Shank 3-4)

On the one hand, Rajaram's admittedly passing comment could be seen as evidence of "a conflation of issues relating to ideological context and questions of processual strategies" ("Introduction" xvi), a conflation not unlike the one Barton finds in much of the scholarship related to these topics. On the other hand, Rajaram's inquiry was conducted briefly, as has already been emphasized, and in the heat of the devising process. It did spark a short debate—on which, ironically enough, I took a few notes—with Ann Powell, for example, echoing Rajaram's concern to a degree as she pointed out the synchronicity she had just experienced when she was about to make a staging suggestion, but her brother beat her to it when he voiced the same idea aloud first. The implication was, of course, that determining who was responsible for *thinking* of the idea first in such instances is, practically speaking, impossible, at least without an extended argument, the utility with regard to the group as a whole one would justifiably have to question.

Earle, however, tacitly defended my ascriptions by referring to what I was creating as a "narrative of the rehearsal." Whatever Earle's opinion as to the potential value of my documentation might have been, his apparent need to weigh in on the conversation and, in fact, to hasten it towards a conclusion, is

as notable as Rajaram's to open the discussion in the first place. At this point, we may be reminded of Baldwin's claim that the director of a devised production, "[r]ather than being at the top of a hierarchical structure, . . . is at the centre of the rehearsal fulcrum, ensuring that everyone is working together and . . . making sure that the project remains conceptually consistent and elegant" (13). In fact, Earle's position would seem to have been even more consolidated than that, given that he was also the playwright. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it is difficult to capture in words, the strength of the Powells' presence in the rehearsal space could not be denied. Their aesthetic, methods, and indeed personalities—the reader was introduced to these factors earlier in this study, but this chapter will do much to flesh them out further—imposed themselves upon the production, which was, it is worth mentioning, devised in a space that was leased and therefore controlled (albeit only in a limited way, since they did not own it outright) exclusively by the Powells themselves.

Barton advises that one might find it more productive "to consider the issues of motivation and self-identification that serve as the grounds and impetus for collectively and collaboratively created theatrical works," as opposed to "seek[ing] to fix and delimit their formal or thematic characteristics or their precise location on the continuum between 'director-lead' [sic] and 'fully democratic'" ("Introduction" x). Thus far in this study, "thematic characteristics" have indeed generally only been mentioned when they were related to concerns more central to it, whether they be semiotic, historical, phenomenological, processual, or, in fact, formal in nature. Consequently, I must differ with Barton on one point, as I have indeed been attempting "to fix and delimit . . . formal . . . characteristics" at several levels: those that are unique to puppet theatre as an art in itself; those that, arguably, are distinctively Canadian; and those that are associated with a particular form or style of puppetry. The temporarily expanded company collaborating on *Hard Times* together would have to be located considerably closer to the "director-led" end of the continuum posited by Barton than the core duo normally would be. Nonetheless, they all, not just Rajaram, would most likely applaud Shank's analysis of collectivity. Several years earlier, I asked David Powell whether, when considering the corpus of Puppetmongers works staged thus far, he thought "collective creation" would be an appropriate label for their developmental approach, to which he replied simply, "Sure 'collective creation' sound[s] right" ("Re: Sources/Creation"). At that early stage in my research, I was clearly guilty of making the kind of "conflation of issues relating to ideological context and questions of processual strategies" ("Introduction" xvi) that Barton criticizes so fervently. I also failed to give Powell much of an explanation or context for the term *collective creation*, but when I followed that first nomenclatural question with two more queries related to the collaborative model to which he and his sister adhered, he had a bit more into which he could sink his teeth: "Ann and I brainstorm design and mechanics, then I usually do most of the construction in wood and metal and Ann does that in fabric (though this has been known to reverse). Directors, designers, musicians, choreographers, dramaturges etc[.] all get involved as they wish" ("Re:

Sources/Creation"). Interestingly, processes related to designing and physically creating the puppets were as important as those related to developing productions more generally, often in collaboration with other artists. These two sets of processes are indeed intimately related for the Powells, an assertion on which I will elaborate over the next two sections on narrative and design flexibility, respectively.

Narrative Flexibility

Hard Times was an exception to just about any "rule" one could have proposed in an attempt to pin down what exactly a "Puppetmongers production" was. In fact, when working on their own productions, the Powells rarely stage a received playtext; that said, text often serves as a source of inspiration for their productions, as they regularly adapt folk tales, ballads, and other related traditional and popular textual forms for the puppet theatre. Greater precision with regard to word choice is needed here, however, as the relationship between Puppetmongers and the aforementioned texts is indeed normally much more about inspiration than it is about adaptation proper. Some of the elusive criteria as to what does and does not constitute an adaptation were overviewed in the fifth chapter, and, as is the case with the other typological issues explored in this study, one eventually realizes that a "continuum of fluid relationships" (171), as Hutcheon puts it, rather than a set of absolute categories. According to her, "an adaptation . . . [is] an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" (170), so it would seem that the Powells effectively sidestep this potential definitional quagmire for the most part, as they have repeatedly spliced together multiple versions of a particular story or even multiple stories, with little concern for fidelity to any of them.

For example, for their 1995 production *The Ballad of Tamlin*, the Powells "read about six versions" of the eponymous traditional Scottish ballad "and then edited . . . [their] way to a version . . . [they] liked" ("Re: Sources/Creation"), David Powell recalls. His account makes the developmental process sound so easy, while in another description of the show, the Powells hint at the labour that was really involved, which, far from being glossed over in the production itself, became part of its thematic and indeed metatheatrical structure, for "the struggle" that the play depicted was "not only of the characters within the story, it . . . [was] also of the story-tellers['] quest to find the real version and tell it" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Ballad*"). Of course, there is no "real" version in any substantive sense; thus, in a way, David Powell's explanation that the final version of the tale that they actually staged existed as such because they "liked" it is probably more accurate. Still, in their retrospective pamphlet *So Far So Good: 30 Years of Puppetmongery*, the Powells emphasize that in this production, which "was based on an ancient sung hero-tale of forbidden love and teen pregnancy," they and the other theatre artists collaborating with them at the time "deconstructed the chauvinism inherent in the many text versions of the song" (Puppetmongers Theatre).

Consequently, we find here a more specific example of the type of progressive, oppositional perspective that was attributed to Puppetmongers in the last chapter. Despite their use of the traditional title of the ballad, the Powells insist that their production primarily concerned "Lady Janet, a teenaged girl, daring to adventure and falling in love with a wee-wee man from the world of faerie," that is, Tamlin himself. In order "[t]o rescue him and bring him back to the mortal world, the now[-]pregnant Janet must confront the awesome primeval power of the faerie Queen" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Ballad*"). However, as the play initially seemed to be drawing towards its conclusion, the audience still had not actually "see[n] Janet being the hero," having "only hear[d] her being told what to do" (Weisbaum, A. Powell, D. Powell, and Koziol 15) by Tamlin, as Andrea Koziol—who sang, performed as a human actor, and manipulated puppets in the production, as well having collaborated in the writing of the script— exclaimed to David Powell, apparently having dropped out of character. Notwithstanding humorous protestations from the Powells, who also appeared to have dropped out of character by this point, related to how all the versions of the ballad that they had read ended in the same way, namely the way they claimed to have been rehearsing it. All of these remarks were, of course, scripted as well, so as alienating as this sequence was, it was more a matter of layers of representation, as opposed to a complete break with representation: the performer "in a double role" ("Short Organum" 194), as Brecht would say. Perhaps "triple role" would be more accurate, given that one has to account for the additional "role" of puppet operator, although these three roles (performer as human character, performer as puppet character, and performer as performer) were not presented simultaneously, as that would have been a semiotic juggling act that would have been as challenging for any performer to execute as it would have been for any spectator to interpret. Still, this jarring interruption in the action, made all the more startling by the fact that the dénouement seemed so close at hand, was at least as Brechtian as any of the estranging techniques employed by Mirbt.

Koziol and the Powells, along with their director, Sharon Weisbaum, who also collaborated on the script, did not stop at merely pointing out the sexist omission in the earlier, published versions of the ballad, as well as their own dramatization of it thus far: they set about correcting it, right in front of the audience. This sequence was largely scripted as well, although comparing a video recording of *The Ballad of Tamlin* with the extant script reveals that a handful of lines were evidently added impromptu, an example being David Powell's direct address to the audience: "We'll be back on track in just a moment." The "new" ending that the collaborators played at devising while huddled together onstage had undoubtedly been decided upon in rehearsal, but their feigned discussion, followed by their onstage preparations for the new scene, all carried out under work lights in full view of the audience, not only continued to be alienating nonetheless, it also served as a thumbnail illustration of their process. Although this was the most pronounced and prolonged interruption, there were several others, for, notwithstanding

that the Powells and their collaborators finally arrived at a version of the ballad that they "liked," the "struggle" to wade through all of those different versions was still represented in the production itself.

The parallel between the struggle of the characters in *The Ballad of Tamlin* and that of the theatre artists who collaborated on that production was perhaps made the most explicit by Ann Powell, when, in another instance of falling out of her role, she spoke to the puppet representing Janet (then being controlled by Koziol), expressing empathy for her plight—her mother is attempting to force her into a marriage with a knight whom she does not love to avoid the scandal of being associated with "an unwed pregnant daughter"—by admitting that "this is life not a fairy tale" (Weisbaum, A. Powell, D. Powell, and Koziol 10). Both of the Powells had only just been presenting some fashion ideas to Janet—in order to help her change her appearance so as to attract a suitor—in a fantasy sequence that had already broken with the medieval setting that they had established for the play. A few obvious staging changes signalled this shift: a silver cloth "moonbeam" (9) was pulled down to be used as a catwalk, and this was accompanied by suggestive red lighting and the kind of electronic music that one would associate with a modern fashion show. Such anachronisms and rapid transitions are in themselves already alienating, so that Ann Powell dropping her presentational role at the time only augments this effect. Indeed, to be more precise, this was less an outright falling out of character than a sudden reversal in intention: the Powells immediately ceased their demonstration upon hearing Janet's objection to it, with David Powell echoing the sentiments expressed by his sister as he declared supportively, "That's right, don't let anyone tell you how to look" (10). This abrupt transition—more of a leap, in fact—into and out of a fantasy sequence was not only alienating but also metatheatrical, in that they were, of course, telling their own version of "a fairy tale." That said, the Powells' interactions with Janet, and Koziol's intervention on her behalf even more so, reflect their determination "to find the real version and tell it" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Ballad*") and stand as evidence to support their claim that "the script deconstructed the chauvinism inherent in the many text versions of the song" (Puppetmongers Theatre, *So Far*) by remaining grounded to some extent in the realities of "life," as Ann Powell put it, in spite of the fantastic elements of the production.

Corbett's analysis of the "perceived accessibility" (125) of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* by Bobgan, Kowalchuk, and Wells is again pertinent in this new context. As discussed in the previous chapter, the published script for that devised production "provides a number of cues that signal distinct shifts between the many performance styles and modes in the piece" (126). While the playtext for *The Ballad of Tamlin* does not contain nearly as many such transitions, the previously mentioned lighting, sound, and scenic changes bracket off the primary world created in the play, much as some comparable changes do in *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*.

There is a correspondence at a deeper level as well, however. The reader will recall Bobgan, the director of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, referring to the accessible surface layer of that production

as "the mask of the performance." If we delve below this layer, we discover that the characters are "not only performing for the audience, but in some ways performing in order to communicate to each other" (qtd. in Corbett 127). Although both of the Powells report that there were no actual in-rehearsal equivalents of the onstage confrontations between Koziol and themselves, or at least not any on the same scale, all of the collaborators were dramatizing their confrontation with all of the different versions of the ballad, thereby sharing their thoughts on these textual negotiations with each other and with the audience. Ann Powell, making a possibly unintentional pun related to the primary form of theatre deployed in this production, asserts that they were trying to give Janet greater agency, both as a character within the story and as a medium through which to tell that story: "We felt she deserved to tell it herself, what really happened, after being manipulated through other people's sometimes silly versions of her story" ("Re: *Tamlin*"). David Powell, on the other hand, emphasizes the collaborators' collective "discomfort with the ballad" ("Re: *Tamlin*"), citing Brecht as an influence in this regard.

Corbett argues that, in performance, "Punch and Judy's active attempts to understand one another, and their failures, at some level mirror the audience's experience" when faced with *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*. Since "they become surrogate figures" (127) for the spectators present, their "own lack of understanding simultaneously eases the audience's discomfort and draws attention to the frustration of incomprehension" (128). Similarly, Koziol and the Powells highlighted sections of the story behind *The Ballad of Tamlin* that a contemporary spectator might question, even going so far as to provide a kind of spoken footnote when one version of the ballad (Walter Scott's, as it happened) differed from the others on a particular point. Thus, they did not stop at providing considerable scope for spectators to apply their critical faculties; they drew attention to their own "discomfort," to use Corbett's and David Powell's term again, actively encouraging the audience to adopt a critical perspective as well. Their debt to Brecht in this regard, as Powell himself acknowledges, is clear. Their production, much like *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, "reminds us that watching a play is an exchange or contract, as well as a state of vulnerability and potential misunderstanding" (128), to quote Corbett once more.

The Ballad of Tamlin points up a still further connection to the broader world of devised theatre more generally. Developing this production involved sifting through multiple versions of the same ballad and juxtaposing them in order to uncover the similarities and differences among them and the significance thereof, and illustrating this through the performance itself "was an idea and direction from very early on" ("Re: *Tamlin*"), as Ann Powell reveals. Although this does not mean that it can therefore be equated with a performance resulting from Number Eleven Theatre's "ongoing process of creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that are then . . . brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" ("Navigating" 109), Barton's processual metaphor of "collision" therefore once again seems relevant here, albeit in an attenuated form.

The Powells and their collaborators did not all begin to create dramatic material for *The Ballad of Tamlin* "in isolation" and then proceed to commence "the long collaborative process of establishing connections and conversations among the individual sequences" ("Making" 5), as the members of Number Eleven did, according to Barton. Nevertheless, there is still a point of comparison between these respective processes, and another between the performances that they ultimately produced. Barton maintains that Number Eleven's intention was never to create "a self-consciously postmodern 'pastiche'" (6), nor was it to harness "confusion" in Barba's sense of "one of the components of an organic creative process," as Barba himself writes: "the moment in which material, prospects, contiguous stories, and diverse intentions become con-fused, i.e., fuse together, mixing with one another, each becoming the other face of the other" (62). As we well know, Barton opts instead for a metaphor of "collision" ("Making" 7), a fitting choice, given that, even long after the process of bringing the individually created "patterns of movement and voice" (5) had begun—indeed, even after public performances of a given work had begun—"the resistance between these recontextualized fragments remain[ed] a conspicuous characteristic of both the formal and narrative structures. . . ." Consequently, this "resistance" furnished both "a record of the company's process" and "a reflection of the similarly composite quality of perceptual experience" (6).

Likewise, as was described in greater detail above, as the Powells and their collaborators devised and then presented *The Ballad of Tamlin*, they allowed the various versions of the story to "collide" with one another and with their own perspectives. Written texts such as these retellings of a traditional ballad only provide a starting point, however, and the Powells employ a number of tactics in order to make them their own. After all, as was emphasized at the beginning of this section, we are dealing here with texts as sources of inspiration, as opposed to texts as works to be adapted faithfully for the stage. Hutcheon has even dismissed the idea "that proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should be the criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis" (6)—an assumption once central to "the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies" (7)—when considering cases of adaptation in which only one text has been transposed to another medium.

One of the techniques upon which the Powells often rely when seeking to establish—to borrow Barton's phrase again and indeed transpose it, as it were, to another context—"connections and conversations among" ("Making" 5) any texts that might have stimulated their imaginations and collective creativity and between themselves and these texts is the use of keywords. Ann Powell's earliest memory of pressing this technique into service was in fact during the development of *The Ballad of Tamlin*: "I think I recall doing things like thinking of different scenes in term of weather. And characters as emotions. Elements. Colours. Textures." This sort of text-based brainstorming has therefore been "part of the mix," as Powell describes the dynamic set of developmental processes that she and her brother share, for some time. Powell further reveals that she and her brother, along with any other theatre artists

with whom they might be collaborating on a particular project, can have recourse to such tactics at almost any stage in the creation of a new work, especially when they feel "stuck" or need "to explore things from a different angle" ("Re: Keyword").

Mark Cassidy, however, was responsible for bringing a specific methodology to the Powells' use of keywords when he directed the fifth incarnation of their production *The Pirate Widow Cheng*, staged at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space in Toronto in 2002.[86] Cassidy (who is also a cofounder of Threshold Theatre, another Toronto-based theatre company) led them in a kind of structured brainstorming that involved drawing up lists of thematic and conceptual keywords that emerged either directly from textual analysis or from guiding questions posed by Cassidy. Preliminary ideas for staging and dramatic structure can be generated using this generally very text-centred activity, which is only "used to grasp a sense of the overall feel of the piece or of the character keyworded" ("Re: Written"), as David Powell clarifies. I myself was introduced to this technique when working with the Powells, Cassidy, and other collaborators on *Terror*. On the first day of rehearsal, Cassidy asked us to complete in writing several sentences related to the central theme (for example, "When I think of fear, I smell . . . ") and to provide multiple answers to a question interrogating the setting: "What is Japanese?" We had in fact not yet begun to study the core text (the short story by Tanizaki) itself at this point, but the connections soon became apparent, as it concerned a Japanese man terrified of travelling by train.[87] As Ann Powell indicates, however, such exercises can be brought into the rehearsal space whenever it might seem useful to do so, which need not be at the beginning of a new project ("Re: Keyword").

Such a text-based approach to generating a new work—not only in terms of the written text or texts being mined for dramatic material, but also in terms of the methods being employed in order to undertake that mining—might initially seem foreign to a discussion concerning devised theatre, particularly, perhaps, devised puppet theatre, given its characteristic emphasis on the visual aspects of a production. Devising is, on the whole, "an approach to theatrical creation and performance for which text is not accorded primary or 'sacred' status," after all, as Barton reminds us. It is, in truth, an approach "in which text may be secondary in terms of its 'authority' within the developmental process and secondary in terms of the order in which the performance elements may be selected and incorporated into the final production" ("Evoking" 1). That said, a technique like "keywording," seemingly in spite of the aforementioned tendency, addresses text before all else. Barton clarifies, however, that, while the

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[86] The programme for this production lists the previous versions of it: "a workshop at the Toronto School of Puppetry in 1998, a short version at the Tarragon Spring Arts Fair in May 2000[,] . . . a workshop in June 2000 at the [O'Neill] National Puppetry Conference in Connecticut[,] . . . [and] a co-production with the prestigious Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta in June 2001" (Puppetmongers Theatre, *Pirate*).

[87] The man, known only as "T" (Tanizaki 93), actually notes that his "phobia . . . is not limited to trains," as he can be seized with terror "in streetcars, automobiles, theaters—anywhere that movement and color and the noise and bustle of crowds seem to threaten . . . [his] morbidly excitable nerves." He adds, however, that because he "can easily escape" from these other situations, they "have never . . . brought [him] so close to the brink of madness" (87).

inversion in devising of the more conventional hierarchy of production elements must be acknowledged, "[i]t would be a mistake . . . to decide that devised theatre diminishes the value of spoken (or sung) language in performance." Rather, "language in theatrical devising is often 'recast,' so to speak, and given a different, broader, more poetic set of duties to fulfill" (2), and surely we can see evidence of this in the keywording exercises that were incorporated into the developmental strategies for *Terror* and *The Ballad of Tamlin*, among others.

Of course, the visual elements of such productions cannot be ignored either. In fact, the Powells' approach to developing a story is usually at least as visual in nature as it is textual. "Keywording," if used at the beginning of a project, quickly leads to doodling and then to storyboarding. Contrary to a common conception of the storyboard, however, a storyboard for a Puppetmongers production does not resemble a comic strip, for rather than filling each page with a sequence of drawings, the Powells draw a sketch of each important stage image on a separate piece of paper. That way, they can spread them out on a table or tape them up on a wall, so that they can easily insert a scene, cut a scene, or rearrange the existing scenes.

Interestingly, there is a parallel with Burkett's developmental methodology here. Much like the Powells, when he first begins to generate material for a new production, he "doodle-writes"—his expression—for two or three years while he is on the road touring another show, jotting down notes or sketching rough images. Eventually, however, he feels compelled to start creating physical incarnations of the characters in order to continue writing the play proper. Plasticine heads therefore soon begin to appear on his sculpting desk, so that he can look over from his writing desk when he needs a reminder of what the marionettes are going to look like. Burkett stresses the importance of this need "to see the whole world starting" (Personal interview), which also drives him to begin designing the set and the costumes too as he progresses with writing the text and sculpting the models for his puppets.

Burkett's methodology, which I have only begun to outline, clearly does not neatly divide into distinct stages, nor does that to which the Powells adhere. They place a greater emphasis on ensuring that their developmental processes always allow for productions to be changed, even years after they have premièred. Maintaining design flexibility is consequently just as crucial as maintaining narrative flexibility, and indeed, the two frequently overlap, as we shall soon see.

Design Flexibility

The Powells' reliance upon storyboarding from early on in any developmental project demonstrates not only the fluidity of their approach to determining exactly what story they want to tell but also the intertwinement of textual and both visual and mechanical planning in their creative process. Rough doodles and storyboard sketches allow for visualization only to a limited degree: regardless of whether a devised production is going to feature human or puppet actors—or, in fact, both—eventually, some of those ideas have to make the leap from page to stage, or at least from page to rehearsal space.

Devising is, in the end, just as much about throwing out ideas that do not work as it about coming up with new ones. In other words, one must have the freedom to experiment, but one cannot let the results become overly precious in themselves, as it is the project as a whole that must be the priority.

In devised puppet theatre, however, this common process of testing out ideas can be complicated by the fact that these ideas often require the presence of some puppets even to be only partially realized; in addition, these puppets frequently need to be constructed. In fact, Martin Stevens, although neither a practitioner nor a theorist of devising, emphasized in his correspondence course on puppetry that "A Puppet is the Shape of an Idea in Motion" (14).[88] Undoubtedly at least in part due to this sort of "birthing," these ostensibly experimental models can easily become particularly precious. The formation of such emotional attachments, even to inanimate objects, is not always completely subject to conscious control; nonetheless, several measures can be put in place to check the development of such potentially distracting material relationships.

"Maquette puppets," as the Powells refer to them, can be useful in this regard. These temporary "maquette puppets" can be as simple as "pieces of fabric, colour[-]coded to represent the characters," or as complex as "mechanical models, often smaller than the final [versions], to check out a possible movement" (D. Powell, "Re: 'Maquette'"). Moreover, maquette puppets are as varied in terms of function as they are in terms of form, and as one might expect, these two aspects are often related. "Sometimes the maquette . . . puppets come along during brainstorming" ("Re: 'Maquette'") stage of devising a new production, Ann Powell explains; that is, they presumably should also be considered "part of the mix" ("Re: Keyword"), along with keywords, doodles, storyboards, and so on, for "it's not particularly a linear process." Simple "cutouts" can be used "to represent puppets when . . . working with a maquette of the set, nothing to do with how they'll eventually be made and worked," for example. Although Powell claims that she and her brother "don't have the patience to make models before the real thing" ("Re: 'Maquette'"), assumedly in the sense of test puppets more complex than the "mechanical models" and "mechanical sketch[es]" ("Re: 'Maquette'") mentioned by her brother, they sometimes need to experiment with their own movements, as well as those of the puppets. For this, maquette puppets that of sufficient size and complexity to accommodate at least some manipulation in the rehearsal space are necessary. Still, there is no need to invest a considerable amount of time and possibly money in figures that, for whatever reason, might have to be altered or even cut altogether, for they can be "jerryrigged from stuff around the studio just to get the feel of puppet when working out staging" ("Re: 'Maquette'"), Ann Powell states further.

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[88] Stevens's entire curriculum has been republished by Charlemagne Press with several helpful additions, including supplementary suggestions by puppet artists Rick Morse, Ronnie Burkett, and Luman Coad and letters of advice from Martin Stevens and his second wife Margi (*née* Marge Kelly), as for the final lesson, students were to submit their own questions.

However elaborate these maquette puppets might therefore become, they should not be regarded as "intermediate versions," David Powell cautions. Less of a prototype to be duplicated with greater refinement if it proves successful, a maquette puppet is typically more of "a stab at a different approach to the character or the stageing [sic], or a better version of the mechanics" ("Re: 'Maquette'"), Powell elucidates. Even so, there are always exceptions. Even in the context of projects for which—when the developmental arc is considered from a theoretical distance—maquette puppets are indeed used only provisionally at a certain stage, they can still move from the rehearsal to the performance space and become the stars of a production. Sometimes, this shift can simply be one of perspective. For the previously mentioned 2008 workshop production of *Hard Times*, for example, maquette or stand-in puppets were assembled from found objects and materials in the Puppetmongers studio or pulled from the Powells' existing stock of puppets and masks. There was no intention of using the same makeshift puppets in the fuller treatment that the still-evolving script was to receive in the fall of 2010 in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille—a performance run that was still being negotiated at the time. These puppets, which were as improvised as some of the sequences of the stage action initially were in rehearsal, were nonetheless featured in the workshop production, which was presented in the very space in which it had been developed: the Puppetmongers studio. The company's flexible relationship with such spaces will be analyzed more closely towards the end of this chapter. What must be underscored at the moment is that maquette puppets—even when cobbled together out of objects regarded as anything but precious, such as the bricks, vice, and flap cap that were assembled to represent the millworker Stephen Blackpool—need not be relegated only to the "process" of a given project: they can be a prominent part of the "product" as well, if only an interim one in the case of *Hard Times*.

Techniques such as the use of maquette puppets in fact allow for a more permeable boundary between the "stages" of process and product: the Powells can prolong their experimentation "phase," which can last not merely up to but past the opening night of a given production. Puppet characters, for example, can be added, cut, or altered as they see fit, even after a production has entered their regular repertoire. One of the main characters in *Tea at the Palace*, a production based on two Russian folk tales that was first staged in 1989, for example, had his gender changed approximately two years after the show premièred, as the Powells had concluded that a mother figure "would be a much stronger character for the story than the father ("Re: 'Maquette' Puppets") that they had been using, Ann Powell recollects. Her brother David opts for stronger language in describing the original father character as "a wimp." He also adds that "there were too few female characters in the show" ("Re: Last-Minute").

Such changes to a production, particularly those made after it has been staged for the first time, reveal a commitment to not only design but also narrative flexibility: indeed, the two are particularly closely linked in devised puppet theatre. Moreover, the specific types of changes of which examples were given above cannot easily be achieved outside the puppet theatre. As we know from the third chapter of

this study, Arnott discusses how marionettes can be employed—as emphasized previously, his argument can be generalized so as to cover puppets of all varieties—in order to facilitate the realization of character metamorphoses and other similar effects onstage. Human actors can certainly "perform such non-human actions as flying, vanishing, and changing their shape" (65), Arnott clarifies, but, for the most part, "only with difficulty and with the aid of mechanical apparatus, and then only half-convincingly" (65-66). This remains a significant observation, but what Arnott does not highlight is how this degree of control over the design and movement of a puppet can actually serve as an access point to spontaneity and effective collaboration. In fact, he echoes the sentiments of authors such as Craig as he drives home his version of the trope—which should be very familiar to us by now—of the puppet as the ideal conduit for the communication of a singular artistic vision: "I have always felt the need to carry through into the performance the unity of conception that I have been able to give to the design of the play, and have found, in practice, that this unity could be best achieved by controlling all the manipulation myself" (97). Obviously, as he himself readily acknowledges, in both his practical and theoretical work, he "clung to the idea of one-man performance" (96). For him, the puppet is so tied up with the individual that it actually becomes an extension of the self. Much like Craig's "*new material*" ("Actor" 73), "the marionette stage," according to Arnott, "is an instrument on which" he, as an artist, "may play"; it is, in fact, "the extension and diversification of . . . [his] own personality as an actor" (97). Here, perhaps, Craig would object, given Arnott's insistence on the importance of "personality" in performance, which contrasts with Craig's interest in deploying the Über-marionette in order to transcend any potential employee's "personality as an actor" within the confines of his imagined theatre.

Arnott does admit that his emphasis on "unity" and centralized control "will have no appeal for some," although his only example is "educators who see the production of a marionette play as an ideal group project calling on the skills and imagination of a whole community" (97). Furthermore, he does leave a little room for spontaneity, but only to the extent of "modifying the details of . . . [a] performance to respond to each audience's mood." These should be merely "subtle modifications" (103), such as altering the speed or tone of the vocal delivery (104), for "the main lines of each production are worked out and set in rehearsal," and these "must remain constant," lest one risk "damage to the concept of the work as a whole" (103), just as one risks damage to the whole by collaborating with others, or so he claims.

Although Arnott therefore did not welcome collaboration or much spontaneity into his own praxis, he did have some understanding of several of the cruxes that one must face in doing so. For example, it is certainly true that "[i]n live production the rapport between performers is a very delicate thing, achieved at the cost of long rehearsal, and difficult to adjust on the spur of the moment." "Difficult," however, is not the same as *impossible*, which Arnott himself recognizes, for he concedes that "companies that have worked together for a long while" may be able to "sense the attitude of . . . [their]

audience within a few minutes of stepping onto the stage" and then "adjust to it" accordingly. He seems to imply that such adjustments are initiated by a single performer, as he attests that an experienced company "can react instinctively and corporately to any change of pace or emphasis." His own example of this kind of company is a historical one: a *commedia dell'arte* troupe. As a general rule, however, he recommends "that the number involved in a marionette company"—again, we can presume that he would say the same of any type of puppet theatre company—"be kept as small as possible, to facilitate communication both among themselves and between them and their audience" (105).

The smallest company possible is, of course, the "solo performer" (105), Arnott's proposed ideal. Despite the compelling advantages that Arnott presents, the solo performer must forgo a number of opportunities for creative "collisions" of various sorts: of opinions, of "fragments," and of bodies. In his analysis of how Number Eleven Theatre began to transform the "fragments" that they had inherited into a production, Wells implies that the "collisions" that characterized their process were not limited to those among "disconnected and unrelated sections of movement of text" (Barton, "Navigating" 109). With regard to both "story and character," he stresses that "the real emergence is often fraught and occurs not in the simple magpie's act of theft or salvage, but from the struggle and rupture and wild leaps that follow." Here we already have a revealing parallel with Canadian puppetry, given its tradition of innovative recycling, which has already been examined at length, albeit more in the context of particular techniques and forms of puppetry. Still, those techniques and forms are also historical "fragments," and Wells's assessment applies equally to this other context: "The real emergence is the new use, the new action, born glowing from the unpredictable crucible of collision (as Bruce Barton has so aptly called it) between the fragments, and between the fragments and us" (87). "[S]truggle and rupture" related to both differing opinions among collaborators and fragments of "story and character" in the context of devising have already been addressed, as have those qualities as they have manifested in the creative borrowing that has typified so much Canadian puppetry practice. The collision of bodies, both human and puppet, in tandem puppetry has also been noted, but more must be said of how this makes this style of puppetry particularly compatible with theatrical devising. To do so, we must look more closely at a "flexibility" that has only been touched upon thus far in this chapter: movement flexibility.

Movement Flexibility

Given what David Powell describes as the "humongously ridiculous history" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006) of Puppetmongers, since its only permanent members are his sister and himself, the troupe undoubtedly qualifies as an example of one that has, to quote Arnott again, "worked together for a long while," so long, in fact, that its members have established a solid "rapport." Consequently, they are able "to adjust on the spur of the moment" and "react instinctively and corporately to any change of pace or emphasis" (105). Their rich sibling relationship, however, can also contribute to

the kind of conflict that sometimes has to be accommodated in order for a devised project to proceed. "Of course we argue—we're brother and sister. Everybody argues," Ann Powell confesses. She further admits that they can find themselves "at loggerheads about something" to do with a piece being developed, only to "come back the next day . . . [having] completely changed . . . [their] points of view" and therefore able to "find the middle" (qtd. in Oppenheim).

Conflict among the human devisers collaborating on a given puppet theatre production is not, however, the only type possible. As was suggested in the fourth chapter, there is another, more metaphorical—or, as Tillis puts it, even "mystical" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162)—type: that which can arise between the manipulators and the manipulated. I am not here referring to "the puppet as a puppet character in the hand of its creator and/or companion which becomes a magical creature in revolt against its master" ("Towards a Theatre" 39), another of "the puppets' theatrical functions" (38) that Jurkowski identifies. This function is closely related to a common motif in puppet theatre: "puppet mutiny" (Blumenthal 80). Confrontations of this sort can be carried to an extreme, with "[p]uppet insurrectionists even assault[ing] their handler[s]" (83). Although this tension can result in the apparent demise of a puppet operator, it does not need to in order to be dramatically effective, as was demonstrated in the fourth chapter with the conflict between Sid and Burkett as Billy in *Billy Twinkle: Requiem for a Golden Boy*.

The aforementioned function and motif will only be encountered in certain puppet theatre productions, since they are content-dependent elements. The type of conflict on which I wish to focus here, however, can be found in every puppetry performance that has been staged, not to mention every performance that ever will be staged, because it is intrinsic to puppet theatre itself. This type of conflict, which has already been analyzed in the second and fourth chapters, centres on movement, for permitting or frustrating attempts to move it in this or that way is the chief manner in which a puppet can exercise its "authority." As has been stated previously, Tillis explains that those authors that touch upon this conflict—such as Craig, Aiken, Jurkowski, and, in the Canadian context, Mirbt, among others—can be understood in two ways. "In the practical sense," he elaborates, one must "learn the movement potential of the puppet, and . . . allow for that potential to be realized," while "[i]n a more mystical sense, . . . [one must] show humility in the presence of his or her creation" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162).

It would seem that, when tandem puppetry and theatrical devising intersect, an ideal environment for exploring this "movement potential" is created. One might be surprised to learn that this exploration can begin squarely in the bodies of the human manipulators. This can prove doubly effective, as not only does it take advantage of the relative flexibility of the human body, but, paradoxically, it also ultimately reminds the manipulators that they should still "show humility in the presence of" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 162) the figures under their control. Puppetmongers remains a strong example to use to

illustrate these complementary features of one way of plumbing the potential for movement flexibility in devised puppet theatre.

The earliest instance in the company history of Puppetmongers of such an exclusive initial focus on the bodies of the human performers themselves dates back to the rehearsal leading up to the 2002 run of *The Pirate Widow Cheng* at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space in Toronto. Under the supervision of collaborating choreographer Yvonne Ng, the Powells performed a dance sequence themselves that they would have two characters in the production perform, so that they would "understand what she [Ng] was asking the puppets to do," and so that they would become "part of the dance too," Ann Powell recalls. She adds in a more confessional tone that she and her brother "aren't dancers so [they] had to understand - and remember - the moves that way"; normally, however, "it's not something . . . [they] do" ("Re: *Tales*"). That said, in a session on movement led by Ng as part of a week-long course organized by the Powells as part of their Toronto School of Puppetry programme for that year, the students (including myself) were also taught to perform a movement sequence before they were instructed to make their puppets perform the same routine. The course of which Ng's session was but a part was intensive and varied, as the Powells and the guest instructors strove to introduce their students to many of the artistic, technical, and even financial aspects of puppet theatre. Although students were not obligated to continue in the programme—indeed, there was also another week-long course before the one just described, which I, for one, did not take—this course served as a useful primer to prepare participants for the week that would follow, for the final "course" in this particular educational package was actually the exploratory workshop production *Terror* that has already been mentioned several times.

Although much of the Toronto School of Puppetry course that included Ng's movement workshop addressed various tactics related to creating one's own work, Ng provided the sequence of movements that participants were to execute using just their own bodies at first, and then again using their puppets. Students brought their own ideas for shows into the course, but Ng did not take these into consideration when choreographing the routine. She was nonetheless offering what could be put to use as a powerful tool for creating new devised puppet theatre productions, particularly when the sign-system of movement is being highlighted. Works that were developed with a heavy reliance upon this technique might even be referred to as physically-based devised puppet theatre pieces, to adapt a term often employed by Barton, in that practitioners who transformed their own bodies into what amounts to wholly animate maquette puppets would be—much like the members of Number Eleven and other devising troupes working predominantly in the human theatre—tapping into the "corporeal intellect" and "bodily awareness" that Barton, drawing on phenomenological theory, argues can be honed "through repetition or training" ("Making" 4).

As we well know by now, the human body, with its capacity for movement, could be said to form the core of theatrical devising. Interestingly, Tillis similarly declares, "Most puppet-artists have little

doubt that the sign-system of movement is the most important of the puppet's three sign-systems." Practitioners are granted far greater license with respect to the other two sign-systems, design and speech, for "[t]he design of a puppet may be radically unlifelike, presenting the audience with signs so unrepresentative of a given character as to be unintelligible by themselves," while "the speech of a puppet may be radically modified" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 133) or in fact forgone altogether. The burden of ensuring that the puppet continues to be comprehensible as a stage character, despite the representational latitude that the other sign-systems enjoy, rests with the movement sign-system, according to Tillis. Indeed, the puppet as a collection of signs would collapse if its movement did not remain "intelligible as character movement," since its "design and speech, whatever their representational quality," would degrade into "nothing more than plastic art and oratory" (134) as a result.

The still common tendency to place undue emphasis on the supposed need to retain consistent, unified stage characters can be found in Tillis's argument regarding the significance (and signification) of the movement sign-system in puppet theatre. This tendency was examined and criticized in the second and third chapters of this study, but to those judgments should be appended Stevens' more specifically relevant objection to the claim made "by some no doubt sincere people who inform us that 'Puppets have to have lots of action. Jump 'em around! Keep 'em lively! If you don't, you'll lose your audience.'" On the contrary, "[o]ne of the best things a puppet can do is stop stock-still and 'give it a good think,'" although even then, the puppet should appear to be "DOING something" (7). Burkett, perhaps Stevens's most famous protégé, clearly took this lesson to heart. Nicholls notes, for example, "a tense confrontation scene" between two characters in *Tinka's New Dress* during which "Burkett the puppeteer could crouch centre-stage, empty-handed, merely turning his head toward one, then the other" ("World" 35). Unfortunately, however, the ahistorical quality of much of her writing—discussed at greater length in the first chapter—is again here exhibited, for she asserts that, by sometimes leaving his marionettes "silent and still" (34) onstage, Burkett is breaking "another of the sacred puppetry commandments, the one that says 'never hang a marionette on stage and expect the audience to continue believing it's alive'" (34-35).

Nicholls nonetheless provides an arresting illustration of just how powerful experiencing a moment in a performance when the puppet artist is truly able to give way to the puppets can be. Burkett has demonstrated on multiple occasions that, despite some criticism to the contrary, he is definitely capable of "show[ing] humility in the presence of his . . . creations[s]" and respecting their "movement potential" as well (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 162), even when—or perhaps rather, especially when—they are not "moving" in the strict sense at all. As Stevens points out, however, regardless of how important the movement sign-system is to puppetry, the audience can still be encouraged to imagine that a motionless puppet is doing something (7). In her MA thesis entitled "Puppet Theatre and Social Debate Personified in Ronnie Burkett's *Memory Dress Trilogy*," Krista Marie Charbonneau builds on Tillis's observation that "lighting and scenery can be used to generate 'implicit' movement in the puppet in the

absence of actual movement" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 141)—in Javanese shadow puppet performances, for example, implicit movement can be produced by moving "the light source itself" (141)—by claiming that Burkett can also generate this "more conceptual" type of movement but "through acting and text" (58). This can be a useful technique in a variety of situations, such as when Burkett is already occupied manipulating a puppet or two but an additional character needs to speak in a given scene (58). Burkett surely must have confidence in his abilities in order to believe that he can sustain the audience's belief in the life of the stationary puppet in such instances, but he must also have confidence in—and therefore respect for—the puppet's intrinsic ability to serve as his "partner" in this endeavour, even when it ceases to be "the mobile picture of this character" ("Towards a Theatre" 38), with the emphasis on *mobile*, if only temporarily, to quote again from Jurkowski's definition of this function of the puppet.

Consequently, Burkett must even account for immobile puppets in his "movement vocabulary," which embraces "both the puppeteer and the puppet" ("Civil Disobedience" 12). He is not known for using his own body to work out the movements of both of these parties, as Ng persuaded the Powells to do, at least for the previously mentioned dance sequence in *The Pirate Widow Cheng*. Formulating and (as necessary) reformulating such a comprehensive "movement vocabulary" nevertheless also requires engaging the "corporeal intellect" ("Making" 4) to which Barton refers. On the other hand, the Powells clearly do not rely solely upon their own bodies when experimenting with their own movement vocabulary or the story for a given production, since, as explained in greater detail above with regard to design flexibility, maquette puppets can prove exceedingly helpful in either context. Of course, as is no doubt already apparent, all of these aspects of new work development in devised puppet theatre overlap, as do their associated flexibilities. Thus, one need not wonder why the admittedly artificial boundaries that have been drawn around these flexibilities in this chapter for the sake of more focused analysis begin to break down upon closer examination.

However much "'bodily knowledge'" a given performer can generate "through repetition and training" (Barton, "Making" 4), each human body has its own physical limitations. A puppet is no different in this regard. Arnott's argument concerning the superiority of the puppet over the human actor in the domain of seemingly magical effects and fantastic actions has been foregrounded thus far, but he is also careful to call attention to how each type of puppet has its own peculiar limitations (58-62). Indeed, he even addresses the disadvantages of his favoured type of puppet, the marionette, which, due to "the necessary strings stretching up to the operator's hand, . . . cannot go through doors or arches or under tables" (61), unless one modifies them accordingly by cutting a slot through the top of them, for example, one should add. For the same reason, the marionette also "cannot change its clothes except with great difficulty" (61-62). The length of the strings themselves, given that the manipulator must control the puppet from a greater distance than one operating a hand puppet or a puppet controlled through direct contact, as is often found in Puppetmongers productions, "also makes problems in performing tiny

gestures." This challenge is compounded by the fact that, "[u]nless one is prepared to have large figures, with the consequent difficulties of weight and portability, anything small or subtle will be lost on the greater part of the audience," and this applies to matters of gesture, movement, design, and even "characterization" (62), according to Arnott.

One could definitely make a convincing argument that a marionettist as talented and inventive as Burkett, for example, may be capable of working around or with most if not all of these limitations. That said, the reality remains that there are some things that a given puppet will simply not be able to do. The consequences of this, along with those related to the different but equally significant limitations of the human body, were underlined by David Powell when he remarked during a workshop on puppet manipulation that he and his sister gave at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto in September 2003 that, if one were asked to "act like a puppet," one would probably relax all of one's muscles and droop in a parodic imitation of a marionette. Although this would in fact be an approximation of what a loosely controlled marionette can look like, workshop participants (again including myself) were pushed to try to mimic various types of puppets while keeping each type's movement limitations in mind and restricting their own movements accordingly. Each participant's own physical limitations came into play as well during the exercise, which resulted in an enlightening but delicate balancing act between testing the limits of one's own body in order to represent accurately the movement possibilities of a certain type of puppet and accidentally allowing the (in some ways) greater flexibility of that same human body to compromise the imitation. If one were to imitate a hand puppet, for example, one could not bend an arm at the elbow.

Ng's workshop similarly juxtaposed the comparative flexibility and inflexibility of the human body by requiring each participant, regardless of physical condition, to perform the same movement routine. Of course, each participant then had to perform that routine again using a puppet chosen from a diverse selection provided by the Powells, and just as not every human body is equally well suited to perform such a routine, so too is not every puppet. Moreover, a supple and responsive human body might execute such a routine more easily and gracefully, but that does not guarantee that that same body will be adept at puppet manipulation. Further kinesiological investigation might yield an analytical matrix that would express how various types of bodies (human and puppet) compare with one another, taking into consideration their respective sets of movement limitations, and perhaps even reveal how a particular choice of puppet type might be especially appropriate for a certain human body type.

For the moment, however, it will have to suffice to note more generally that exercises such as those conceived by Ng and the Powells can help to reinforce not only the "practical" idea "that the role of the puppet-operator is to learn the movement potential of the puppet" but also the more "mystical" proposition that, to quote Tillis once more, the manipulator's "role is to show humility in the presence of his or her creation" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162). Still, one should not overlook the fact that the operator

would concurrently be gaining more knowledge about and—assuming that at least some progress were being made with regard to devising or learning and then executing a movement routine, using only her own body at first—confidence in that body and its own intrinsic movement potential.

While the puppet might appear to "possess the virtue of being immune to gravity's force," according to Kleist (speaking through Herr C. in "On the Marionette Theatre"), this is overstating the case, for in reality, the manipulator is responsible for the divine gracefulness that Kleist attributes to the puppet, and that all-too-human performer is, of course, subject "to gravity's force." Certainly, the operator should try, in Burkett's words, "to get out of . . . [her] own way, and let the characters breathe" (qtd. in Nicholls, "World" 33), when appropriate. Moments such as the "tense confrontation scene" ("World" 35) from *Tinka's New Dress* that Nicholls mentions are perhaps the most deserving of a reverent attitude on the part of the operator. By now, the reader is already aware that there have been a number of practitioners and theorists—Jurkowski and, in the Canadian context, Mirbt being among the most vocal of them—who have advocated that the operator "submit to the puppet" at all times, for it is only then that "[s]he serves its magic" ("Towards a Theatre" 42), as Jurkowski himself puts it. As the reader also knows, however, there are several Canadian puppet artists, including Burkett and the Powells, who have opted for a very different relationship with the puppet through their practice of what I have identified as *tandem puppetry*. Even so, they still manage to "believe in the life of the puppet" and to persuade at least some members of their audiences to do the same. Contrary to Jurkowski's declaration, these artists have not yet completely "laid aside magic" (41), as was demonstrated in the third chapter with reference to the Powells briefly leaving Brikko the Clown to his own devices in *The Brick Bros. Circus* and in this chapter with reference to Burkett simply watching the face-off in *Tinka's New Dress*. We can find evidence of "magic" in both cases in the artists' utilization of what Jurkowski calls "animisation": "the ritual way of making a figure live," even if only for a beat or two, by behaving towards it as if it were "a live person" (37).

Thus, in both *The Brick Bros. Circus* and *Tinka's New Dress*, we also find evidence of both of the "cycle[s] of the puppet's history" that Jurkowski posits: one that "deals with magic, rites, religious and similar sorts of puppets, all based on animism and the supernatural," and another that "deals with profane and secular puppets, wherein all interest lies in the process of creation." During specific segments of the action in both productions, these two cycles "touch and even penetrate each other" ("Towards a Theatre" 40), just as Jurkowski contends that they can. At the centre of both cycles is, of course, the puppet, but this figure has to share that space with the puppet artist; even that is not a complete topography, however.

Notwithstanding that, in both the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) and the "contemporary puppet theatre," a production's "development from the first impulse to the final effect is executed by its creator — actor or puppetplayer" (43), again according to Jurkowski, "[t]he most important element is the creative process, dominating all other elements of theatre" (42). I concluded the

fourth chapter by proposing that puppet artists might be able to check any tendency to overpower the stage objects under their control—a problem to which tandem puppetry practitioners are especially susceptible, in light of their active presence onstage and the usually short distance between their puppets and themselves—by paying more conscious attention to process. In the fifth chapter, a related point was made: "[i]n a context where intuition has been granted uncommon authority" ("Making" 11), that is, the context of devised theatre as described by Barton, "a heightened degree of self-reflection and self-evaluation" ("Navigating" 115) with regard to *what* is being created and *how* (that is, product and process) becomes essential. Elsewhere, Barton in fact equates "devising" with "adopted strategies and rules, *process*" ("Introduction" ix), as was also noted in the fifth chapter. Consequently, a devised puppet theatre company that has embraced tandem puppetry must be doubly concerned with matters related to process, just as Puppetmongers has proven to be.

Puppetry scholars, as I hope I have also shown from the fifth chapter on through this one, can also benefit from scrutinizing process, since doing so—when in conjunction with viewing the subject of puppetry through the kinds of theoretical and historical lenses that have been deployed throughout this study—means we can rely upon more than just "[t]he simplest method of description," which, to revisit Tillis's criticism of it, offers "little more than an efflorescence of adjectives applied to specific puppets or puppet-shows" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 89). As we have seen, this sort of language has dominated much of the existing writing on Canadian puppetry. Even though it can provide "detailed and useful information for the reader's re-creation of a particular puppet" or performance, "its vocabulary is not especially suited for comparing and contrasting" (90).

There is a further benefit to considering process carefully, however, as it can keep puppetry scholars from allowing—as Kleist does, for example—the puppet to eclipse the operator completely in their writings: that is, given what was asserted just above in relation to puppetry praxis, it can prevent either party from totally dominating the other. To expand briefly upon the analysis of Kleist's essay that has been presented thus far in this dissertation, one of the central claims therein is that, since "human beings think, reason, act consciously, they can never hope to achieve the perfection of movement of which puppets and marionettes are capable," as Segel summarizes. This is but the logical extension of the argument implied in the accounts exchanged by the two characters in the piece—the dancer Herr C. and the narrator: "[T]he perfection achieved by an unconscious act, gesture, or movement cannot be consciously duplicated" (17). Indeed, this argument is extended further still by Herr C., to the point of eschatology:

> We can see the degree to which contemplation becomes darker and weaker in the organic [natural] world, so that the grace that is there emerges all the more shining and triumphant. Just as the intersection of two lines from the same side of a point after passing through the infinite suddenly finds itself again on the other side-or as the image from a concave mirror, after having gone off into the infinite, suddenly appears before us again-so grace returns after knowledge has gone through the world of the infinite, in that

it appears to best advantage in that human bodily structure that has no consciousness at all-or has infinite consciousness-that is, in the mechanical puppet, or in the God.

As Taxidou explains, Kleist (and after him Craig) "derived a 'grand theory' from the theatre and in particular from the marionette," for the particular type of puppet becomes for him "the new idol of this quasi-religious art form, endowed not only with artistic qualities but also with metaphysical ones" (168). This seemingly humble stage object "will somehow re-connect man with his divine creator and restore truth and order in the universe" (169). It will accomplish this, I believe Kleist is suggesting, primarily through what Tillis refers to as "the sign-system of movement," which, as we know, "is the most important of the puppet's three sign-systems" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 133), according to most of Tillis's sources and, presumably, himself, although he fails to take a firm stand on the issue. For Kleist, the source of the puppet's power—or "magic," as Jurkowski would say—is its "grace," in the motional and, ultimately, theological senses.

Thus, we return to the chief subject of this section, movement, but with this added context, for grace, which the puppet shares with its obverse (not a human being, but a god), will lead us into a state in which, Kleist's narrator suspects, "we would have to eat again of the tree of knowledge to fall back again into a state of innocence." Herr C. confirms this, concluding the dialogue with the prediction that this return to Eden would be "the last chapter of the history of the world." Although the human operator has now disappeared entirely from Kleist's apocalyptic vision, the "grace" his "highly idealized puppet" (Taxidou 167) exhibits cannot be realized without at least one manipulator, as was pointed out above, as well as a designer and, if necessary, a builder. These are production roles, of course, not necessarily individual people: one person could take them all on, one person could assume responsibility for each of them, or each member of a company could tackle some aspects of each of them, depending on where her strengths lie. That last option has proven particularly appealing to devised puppet theatre companies such as Puppetmongers, since "rigid role designations weather assault" (Barton, "Navigating" 115) when a troupe is engaged in that kind of creative work. In all cases, human intervention is required to capitalize on not only the "grace" latent in the puppet but also its lack of consciousness. Moreover, the puppet needs assistance from other individuals in addition to the performers: it requires the presence of spectators. In the end, only they can bring the puppet to life by witnessing its "grace" and imagining that this is an indication of life. Only they can, rhetorically at least, elevate the puppet to the status of being an actual equal—as opposed to a counterpart in a lower realm, as Kleist posits—to a god. After quoting Kleist himself, Tillis clarifies, "Because the only consciousness the puppet can have is that consciousness invested in it by an anonymous and potentially infinite audience, it may be imagined to bear the consciousness of an anonymous and infinite world" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 83).

Consequently, it would not be hyperbole to propose that the audience is in fact the most significant faction, if you will, in the domain of puppet theatre, for it is the primary locus of signification,

and its members ultimately decide what is and is not a puppet. However, that same audience—its members perhaps unaware of the extent of their influence—must also be held accountable for its part in the "vicious circle" Arnott outlines. He implies that the slightest movement can be all that is needed to capture the attention of spectators; even figures following preprogrammed movement sequences, such as "marionettes mechanically controlled and jigging aimlessly in a store window" (40), are able to fascinate onlookers, despite actually being automata and not puppets proper, as we can infer from the relevant criteria provided in the second chapter.

Puppet operators themselves are not completely immune to the puppet's charms, however. Stevens, with his characteristic humour, sheds light on how what Kleist would call the puppet's "grace" can become distracting, even when no spectators are present at all: "When we make our first puppet and it comes alive in our hands, it is an entrancing experience. . . . The trouble is that some of us never come out of our trance. It is quite true, that some people when they work puppets are playing with dolls. . . . But here we are studying Puppetry, which is showmanship, and quite a different thing." Actual dolls could certainly be used as puppets, but this would require them to be manipulated in front of an audience imagining them to be alive. More conventional "doll-play," however, Stevens stresses, "is an individual doing a 'let's pretend' between himself and a toy" (7). Baird (13) makes much the same point, as has been noted in two different contexts (in the second and third chapters, respectively) in this dissertation already. Stevens builds on this, arguing that simply allowing an audience to witness "doll-play" is not enough to transmute it into a genuine "show." For one thing, the puppets used in a given show must be more than the "means to a 'jiggle-show.'" Stevens's interrogation of the assumption that puppets have to keep moving was discussed earlier in this chapter, but this criticism of his is actually part of a larger argument: to get to the heart of a puppet theatre production that one is creating, before all else, one must ask oneself, "[W]hat is your puppet doing? What is the play?" (7), Stevens advises.

Thus, the play—or more generally, the story or action, since, as Stevens remarks, "the structure of a play is important to you whether you are a ventriloquist, a variety artiste, a night club performer, or a maker of TV commercials" (8)—is, for Stevens, more important than matters of movement or design (7). Indeed, the section heading for the part of the lesson "The Play's the Thing" in which Stevens makes this deceptively simple point is Motion Isn't Enough (7). Spectators and puppet artists alike, then, must beware of the "irresistible attraction" (40) of the puppet, which, according to Arnott, derives from its potential for movement. This is not meant to suggest that puppet artists should banish the sign-system of movement from their productions, of course; even seemingly frivolous movements like the ones ridiculed by Stevens—"Jump 'em around! Keep 'em lively!" (7)—could be justified in certain circumstances. What is essential is to bear in mind the tension in the audience's imagination between the operator and the puppet with regard to where they believe their focus should be. This tension becomes particularly taut when the operators are visibly present onstage. Proschan offers the Bunraku tradition of Japan as a

compelling example, claiming that "audience members . . . constantly oscillate between seeing only the puppets and seeing them juxtaposed with living human beings" ("Puppet Voices" 548). Green and Pepicello also identify a "tension arising from the audience's alternate perception of the puppet as an independent 'actor' and as a manipulated object" (155). This contention of theirs was analyzed more thoroughly in the second and fourth chapters.

Tillis's rejoinder that spectators have always tacitly acknowledged both of these conceptual sides to the puppet at the same time (*Towards an Aesthetics* 63-64) was also mentioned in the fourth chapter. Tillis's emendation entails that this tension in the minds of the spectators is actually all the tauter, as the mental oscillation between the two ontological aspects of the puppet as postulated by Proschan, Green and Pepicello, and several other theorists cited thus far in this study does not in fact occur, as both are recognized simultaneously, even if one might temporarily pull focus from the other. Neither component "of the puppet's dual nature" (Tillis, *Towards an Aesthetics* 62) can be eclipsed entirely in reality if the puppet is to continue being perceived as a puppet, and not as a mere object or as an actual living thing, for as Proschan admits, even while proposing his concept of perceptual oscillation, "[t]o perceive one to the exclusion of the other would result in the destruction of the performance. . . ." Proschan himself supplies two examples of this sort of "destruction," but in both cases, puppets become too real for at least one of the spectators present, "Don Quixote's attack on the puppet stage" ("Puppet Voices" 548) being one of these instances. As we are already aware, however, a puppet can instead become "a sort of prop, or accessory for the actor" ("Towards a Theatre" 39), as Jurkowski laments, or more regrettable still, "an object as such, deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public." As we are also aware, tandem puppetry performances are particularly in danger of being compromised by this very form of "degeneration" (40), to use Jurkowski's term for it.

And yet, tandem puppetry also provides access to processual tactics that can give artists the means to steer clear of both of the aforementioned extremities, all stemming from a strategy rooted in a—theoretically, at least—balanced approach to movement. Of course, the twin tensions that were revisited above—that which exists between the manipulator and the manipulated, and that which exists between the puppet as object and the puppet as imagined living being—obtain in every form and style of puppetry. Indeed, if we are to judge from the remarks—quoted in the fourth chapter—made by puppet artists who prefer to remain visible while manipulating their figures, attempting to hide from the audience may only pique their curiosity as to how the puppets are being controlled, how many operators are responsible for their movements, and so on. Thus, regardless of whether operators are visibly present onstage or not, they will inevitably share focus with the objects under their control, even if only in the imaginations of the spectators.

Tandem puppetry practitioners most definitely do not consistently seek to be invisible, either by actually disappearing (into a booth stage, for example, or up onto a catwalk) or by vanishing in a more

conceptual sense by performing in front of the audience, under the assumption that they themselves "will become dull" to watch as they manipulate their puppets, while those stage objects, through an inverse correlation, become "more interesting" (106), as Schwartz, one of the onstage operators cited in the fourth chapter, asserts. Tillis's counter should also be recalled: the "on-stage presence" of these operators "must be recognized as a vital aspect of their performances in general," for their "obvious concentration on . . . [their] puppets also encourages the audience to accord them imaginary life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 132).

Tandem puppetry practitioners go further, as is evidenced by Burkett's "movement vocabulary," which takes into account "both the puppeteer and the puppet" (Burkett, "Civil Disobedience" 12). Tandem puppetry practitioners engaged in theatrical devising go further still. They too want to be "part of the dance" ("Re: *Tales*") with their stage objects, as Ann Powell states with specific reference to the previously discussed collaboration between the Powells and their choreographer for the 2002 staging of *The Pirate Widow Cheng*, Ng. They go beyond simply supplementing their manipulation of the puppets with whom they share the stage with "obvious concentration on" those objects and with a coordinated movement plan like Burkett's. In their workshops and courses, they and collaborators such as Ng explicitly teach others that commencing work on a puppet theatre project by focusing on the bodies of the manipulators—not on the objects to be manipulated, or at least not in an obvious, direct way—is a humbling but versatile choice.

Aspiring operators need training in manipulation from the outside, to be sure, but they would also profit from the complementary experience of *being* a puppet, to the extent that that is possible. Such a proposition admittedly encroaches upon the "threshold for . . . mysticism" that Tillis believes "might easily be transgressed," in that it encourages each participant "to show humility in the presence of his or her creation" or adopted puppet. In spite of that, it also promises pragmatic benefits, since manipulators must "learn the movement potential of" each puppet they encounter and "allow for that potential to be realized" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162). These two strands came together during the Puppetmongers workshop at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto in 2003. Ann Powell offers some background on the exercise for which participants were instructed to "act like a puppet": "[W]e're always trying to think of ways to help people understand/feel puppet manipulation, and that exercise does seem to help puppeteer hopefuls. For us[,] it's just something we've done for so long, without studying it, without thinking too much about it; it's hard to describe to others" ("Re: *Tales*"). Thus, learning puppetry can be as much a matter of working from the inside out as it is of working from the outside in.

As for the Powells themselves, as was underscored earlier in this section, they do not ordinarily incorporate such body-centred exercises into their own developmental processes. In fact, Ann Powell specifies that the only instance of foregrounding the human body in rehearsal in this matter and to this extent was when practicing the dance sequence in *The Pirate Widow Cheng* with choreographer Ng. That

said, on at least one occasion, fate seemed to intervene, forcing them to leave their puppets aside, albeit only temporarily. The unplanned rehearsal activity in question demonstrated not only the Powells' readiness to adapt spontaneously to unforeseen circumstances but also the atypical nature of their reimagining of Dickens's *Hard Times*, particularly the 2008 workshop production.

As should be evident from what has already been expressed here with regard to Puppetmongers, it is difficult to generalize about the company's developmental processes, and *Hard Times* complicates matters even further. From the very first rehearsal for the 2008 workshop production, the Powells, along with fellow performer Rajaram and director Earle, had been experimenting with creating character representations through various mergings of animate and inanimate elements. Not all of these qualified as puppets, however, or at least not consistently so; after all, a sense of stasis rarely, if ever, characterizes a Puppetmongers project. To take one example, the character of Thomas Gradgrind, the utilitarian founder and headmaster of his eponymous school, was at times represented by Rajaram wearing a traditional Javanese mask (D. Powell, "Re: Fact-Checking"), but at other times, such as when Rajaram had to control two characters simultaneously, that mask migrated to one of his hands. It is an intriguing side note that Rajaram unintentionally concretized part of Baird's questionable history of what he identifies as the "progression from masks to puppet masks to marionettes" (34), which was analyzed in the second chapter of this study. What is more important, however, is that this was another Canadian puppet theatre production that implicitly probed the boundary between "the actor subsumed in the puppet and the actor wearing a mask or costume" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 20) that Tillis posits. As with the other problematic Canadian examples examined in the third chapter, it was up to the audience to decide which of the mergings in *Hard Times* were puppets and which were not. We must keep in mind Tillis's guideline: "if the audience perceives the mask or costume to be nothing more than an object of dress worn by a living actor, then that is all it is; but if the audience perceives the actor in the mask or costume to be but a part of the object, then it must be recognized as a puppet" (20-1).

As has also been previously pointed out, however, Tillis is not sufficiently specific here, for it is actually up to each individual spectator to come to her own determination as to what constitutes a puppet in every puppet theatre production. Even so, similar criteria are applied by these individual spectators when making such judgments. As we have seen over the preceding chapters, many of these criteria are related to the manipulators' own degree of focus, the relationship between the bodies of the manipulators and those of the puppets, and the relationship between the movements of those two respective sorts of bodies.

These theoretically separate bodies of the operators and of the puppets can in fact coincide partly or wholly in physical space. Rajaram portraying Gradgrind in *Hard Times* in conjunction with a mask, at least when holding it instead of wearing it, illustrated bodies coinciding partly. The mask served as an extension of both the performer's body and the character being represented, and in such cases, as Kaplin

observes, "a new threshold is crossed and the performing object has become detached from the actor's body, developing its own center of gravity, its own structure, its own presence," indeed, its own life. Kaplin argues that when even this minimal distance is realized, "the term 'puppet' can be used." Judging from one of his own examples, however, not even as much distance as is achieved by holding a mask is necessary for the aforementioned "threshold" to be "crossed": the mask need only "be shifted away from the face entirely, to the top of the head, for example." In substantiation of this, he adduces "the lion mask/headdresses in *The Lion King*" (33).[89] Rajaram and Earle likewise experimented with the idea of a mask "shifted away from the face entirely," but in their case, they agreed Rajaram would wear the mask representing Gradgrind on the back of his head during a scene in which he also had to double as the narrator.

But what if the bodies of the humans performers and those of the "puppets"—perhaps they should simply be referred to as characters at this point—coincide wholly, without even masks worn normally to conceal or alter their faces? Such cases depart from the more common convention of composing wholly animate puppets out of isolated parts of the performers' bodies. When dealing with the human body "puppetized" onstage *in toto*, we risk straying into metaphorical territory, as perhaps Arnott was when he proclaimed "that whenever an actor dons a mask—either literally, as in Greek and Roman plays, or figuratively, as when he plays a strongly typed part—he is abnegating his individuality and making of himself a puppet" (77). Craig himself would come to insist in his 1924 preface to *On the Art of the Theatre* that the Über-marionette was indeed nothing more than a symbol for "the actor plus fire, minus egoism" (ix-x), or more precisely, possibly "a metaphor for a type of stylized, highly Romantic and expressionist acting" (Taxidou 172), with Henry Irving having been the chief inspiration. The controversial nature of this identification was addressed in the second chapter, and considerable space in that chapter and elsewhere in this study has already been devoted to establishing boundaries—as tentative as some might be when actual practical examples are taken into consideration—between the human actor in her various manifestations (especially those associated with particular styles of acting or relationships with stage objects or both) and the puppet. Consequently, to indulge in equating the human performer employing some form of stylized acting with the puppet as a rhetorical conceit would be counterproductive and confusing at this point.

Thus, such potentially misleading flourishes will be avoided here. Nevertheless, in order to gain a fuller appreciation of how puppet artists can work from the inside out, we must turn back to the Powells and Rajaram having to rely upon nothing other than their own bodies during one rehearsal for *Hard Times* in 2008. Although executing exaggerated and stylized movements and gestures in such a context did not

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[89] *The Lion King*, clearly an influential production, was also cited by Miller—whom I in turn cited in the third chapter—as he explained his understanding of the body puppet ("Body Puppets"), a type of puppet that also can be difficult to differentiate from the actor who is merely augmented with some additional signifiers, be they elements of costume, mask, or both.

"puppetize" them in a metaphorical or facile sense in itself, exploring the characters from their adaptation corporeally in this fashion did seem to grant them insight into not only how they might represent them more effectively but also how they might further refine these representations in subsequent activities.

As has been made clear by now, the human performers' own bodies were a conspicuous part of the 2008 *Hard Times* workshop production from the outset. Toward the end of the second of three weeks of rehearsal, however, the characteristic physicality of this production intensified significantly. The day began with a series of warm-up exercises, including one for which the performers were asked, seemingly prophetically, by Earle to walk around the rehearsal space with a particular part of their body leading. Earle would specify a different body part after a brief interval, and this led into each performer demonstrating an exaggerated walk for each of the characters that s/he played, but this time without the mediation of any inanimate elements that could be perceived to be puppets in themselves or "puppetizing" factors. This experimentation with gaits led in turn into mime work, which was undertaken in order to clarify certain character relationships.

For much of the above, a fire alarm test was being conducted. The intermittent but piercing noise soon proved too distracting and exasperating, so everyone departed for a nearby park to carry on with the rehearsal outdoors. Once there, the performers, firmly directed by Earle, continued to rehearse their amplified physicalizations of their respective characters. At this stage, however, the text was introduced, as they began to run the first three scenes of the second act of *Hard Times*—that is, as much of the second act as had been devised by that point—still without any puppets or masks, since they were all back in the Powells' studio, of course. The fact that the rehearsal process had taken this turn was ironic, given the text-based nature of both the process and the production. Even though maquette puppets (and masks) were being used, which eliminated the need to build them from scratch, time still had to be made throughout the already limited number of rehearsals for matters related to characterization, manipulation, design, and staging, not to mention more purely textual matters, such as script work. By challenging themselves, even if only for a few hours, to represent the characters in *Hard Times* with only their own bodies at their disposal—even the text itself was neglected for a short while—the performers possibly reaped the same benefits as older schoolchildren (in sixth through eighth grade) do, according to Ann Powell, when participating in a comparable activity as part of a puppetry workshop. A similar kind of graduated structure, Powell attested, can prevent students from merely acting as themselves (with puppets) onstage—what she has subsequently designated "the talking heads effect of inexperienced puppetry"—by requiring them to stage a story using only their own bodies at first, then again using puppets, and then one final time using both puppets and text, if time allows for such gradual progress. Powell herself, when asked if she found the outdoor rehearsal exercises or any of the similarly body-centred ones that preceded them that day to be useful, could not point to any specific lessons learnt. That said, she did note more generally that "any different kinds of exercises and approaches contribute to

developing . . . [her and her brother's] acting and puppeteering skills." Moreover, surely they profited from the opportunity to "go through the piece being the characters themselves (trying to think about how they're moving, where their focus is[,] etc[.]" ("Re: *Hard Times* Questions"), as Powell wrote of older schoolchildren in a workshop, even if only as something of a refresher.

Earle did, for a short time, follow through on the trajectory that had been established by the markedly physical activities examined above. Once the scheduled time for the end of the fire alarm testing had arrived, everyone returned to the studio. Earle pondered how best to resume the rehearsal and eventually decided that he especially wanted to see the performers (still as actors, not as manipulators) "reacting to each other" once they had recommenced their run-through of the second act as it existed at that stage. The performers' bodies—and thus their movements and gestures—were to be particularly emphasized, even to the relative exclusion of their facial expressions, as Earle instructed them to imagine that they were masked as they rehearsed. One of the collaborators (Ann Powell, I believe) revised the directive in order to express its intent in language more appropriate to puppet theatre, suggesting that they instead imagine that their bodies were being isolated onstage by what Baird describes as "curtain[s] of light" (23). Blumenthal explains that "[h]andlers in 'black theater,'" the form of puppetry to which Baird is also referring in the passage just quoted, "remain invisible by wearing black and keeping clear of the corridor of light where the puppets play" (68).

This largely conceptual objectification (still in a neutral sense, as in the third chapter) of the performers' bodies in a rehearsal for *Hard Times* remained an internal matter of motivation: it did elicit some pronounced physicalizations as the actors attempted to take into account Earle's command and Ann Powell's rewording of it, but nothing that could have led to a spectator perceiving them to be objects. Earle himself did not seem to think that the exercise went far enough, and he called for a more literalized "masking" or framing, as he requested that a particular scene be staged using only the actors' torsos. David Powell[90] then set up a structure composed of bamboo screens and wooden beams and panels— which was already to be used in the following scene to support a scrim obscuring the action behind it—in order to provide the concrete framing necessary for Earle's vision to be realized. This bracketing of the action constrained the movements and gestures of the performers, but it also guided the focus of the spectator: by highlighting certain parts of the performers' bodies and abstracting them to some degree from the larger contexts of those bodies as organic—in both the pertinent senses of the word—this kind of framing is likely to encourage the spectator to perceive these parts to be objects in their own right. Of course, given the movements, gestures, and dialogue associated with these body parts, the spectator is still

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[90] In my rehearsal observation notes, I typed "I think" next to Powell's name in the relevant entry, since, as I hope that I brought home earlier in the section on collaborative flexibility, "things happen fast" (qtd. in Barton, "Making" 9), to quote Wells again, in such contexts. Thus, I could not always record with complete accuracy every idea or development and the name of the collaborator responsible for it. Furthermore, memory, whether my own or that of any given collaborator, is often even less reliable.

presented with more than enough signs to imagine that they are living characters. Thus, these framed body parts in *Hard Times* met Tillis's requirements for onstage entities to be considered puppets proper.

The performers thus framed by wood and bamboo therefore went beyond the stylized acting of Irving and other metaphorical puppets to become both the manipulators and the manipulated. Despite this level of control, Earle was a strong shaping force, as was implied several times in the foregoing. Even so, the performers continued to offer their own ideas and interpretations, whether or not they had been explicitly asked to do so. This fact helpfully hinders any facile identification of a director in such a context with a metaphorical puppet operator, an analogy that was first proposed in the fifth chapter. Moreover, Earle had other factors that had to be taken into consideration in addition to the performers' refusal to be silent partners (or puppets, as it were), the most controlling, in its own way, probably being the source text itself. Earle encapsulated his position quite accurately shortly after the first rehearsal began, when he declared that, although he had been responsible for the initial dramatization of *Hard Times*, it was at that moment to be "taken up by the company" once again.

This relationship between Earle and the performers may make us think back to Aiken's poem "Mountebank Feels the Strings at His Heart" and Tillis's interpretation thereof. An additional plane needs to be inserted into the cosmology that Aiken sketches out, however, so that the director can be accommodated in what Tillis refers to as Aiken's "chain of ontological doubt," which both "extends upward from the puppet to the puppet-artist to the 'Some one' above" and "extends downward" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162). Just as the puppet artist in the poem wonders of the vague divine "Some one," with whom he identifies in this regard, in the same way that he identifies with his puppets, one might wonder of Earle or in fact any one of the other collaborators, "Who knows what compulsion he suffers, what hands out of darkness / Play sharp chords upon him! . . . Who knows if those hands are not ours! . . ." (79). To put it more prosaically, puppet artists control their puppets, of course, but their puppets also control them in both "the practical sense" and the "more mystical sense" (162) that Tillis outlines, as should be equally evident by now. A director is likewise able to exert some authority over the aforementioned two parties but also must submit to them in certain circumstances, and the shadow of the source text hangs over all of them, even as they abridge and alter it to make it suit their own purposes. Puppetry has proven fertile ground for metaphors related to control, as was argued in greater detail in the fourth chapter. Now, even more than then, we must acknowledge, along with Tillis, that "the metaphor of the puppet is richer and more complex than it might first appear to be" (164).

Given the central place of the audience in many of the theories related to puppet theatre that have been cited or advanced throughout this study, overlooking the power they exerted over the workshop production of *Hard Times*, even before they were physically present, would be careless to say the least: they too can be located along "[t]he chain of ontological doubt" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 162) and control analyzed above, a "chain" that quickly reveals itself to be more of a matrix. Indeed, on several

occasions, the collaborators wondered whether a given puppet would "read" to the audience—that is, whether spectators would accept it as an object with imagined life. We should call to mind here Tillis's insistence that a "puppet . . . exists only as a particular process of performance" (64). Thus, if the audience ceases to believe in a puppet, it would effectively cease to exist and would revert to being a mere "thing."

Notwithstanding Tillis's assurance that the "demands" entailed by "the ontological paradox" that inheres in the puppet "can easily be met by any audience of kindergarten children" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 66), we saw in the third chapter that imbuing some objects with life can require concentration and physical and mental exertion of particularly high intensity. *The Brick Bros. Circus* was cited then as an example of a production that relies upon this level of commitment from the manipulators performing in it, but *Hard Times* serves nearly as well, as for it, some puppets were composed of nothing more than a few quotidian objects, as was the case with the puppet representing Stephen Blackpool, or even just one object, such as the children in one of the classes at Gradgrind's school, most of whom were represented by sections of dowelling when the class appeared as a whole. Although most of the puppets were admittedly not as physically demanding to manipulate as the bricks in *The Brick Bros. Circus*, some of the bricks themselves were repurposed (along with two other objects, as was noted earlier in this chapter) to form the millworker Blackpool, and Rajaram's own hands had to switch between controlling the puppet itself and functioning as its hands. Moreover, a similar degree of concentration was exhibited by the Powells (as well as Rajaram) as they manipulated and spoke for these objects and "living" bricolages of objects, "spurring their audiences to canyon-spanning feats of disbelief suspension" (71), as Blumenthal wrote with reference to *The Brick Bros. Circus*. They also had to encourage the audience to accept stand-in or maquette puppets that had been recast from their sometimes easily recognizable original roles into entirely different ones specific to *Hard Times*, such as the hand puppet representing Pierre Elliott Trudeau—which David Powell had constructed for a modernized Punch and Judy show that was part of a demonstration at Nathan Phillips Square in 1975 organized by a group of women protesting in an effort to win wages for housework (D. Powell, "Re: A Crazy Idea"; D. Powell, "Re: Fact-Checking"; D. Powell, "Re: Wages"; D. Powell, "Re: Your Punch")—that was used to portray Gradgrind's son Thomas instead.

Thus, just as they had done in *The Brick Bros. Circus*, the Powells, along with their collaborators, implicitly challenged Jurkowski in *Hard Times* on two fronts: the repurposed conventional puppets gave the lie to his assumption that a "puppet . . . is only a pictorial representation of the character" and necessarily "remains the same thing," and the focused and imaginative use of everyday objects demonstrated that object theatre practitioners have not tacitly "laid aside magic" ("Towards a Theatre" 41), despite the fact that "even the human body . . . or some part of it . . . and all sorts of objects . . . taken from everyday life" (40-41) were transformed into puppet characters. All of the objects employed in this

production, constructed puppets and ordinary objects alike, however, did indeed serve "the imagination of the performer[s]," since "[t]he most important element . . . [was] the creative process" (42), as is the case with "contemporary puppet theatre" (43) more generally, according to Jurkowski.

Consequently, in the experimental atmosphere of this workshop production of *Hard Times*, there was a marked lack of preciousness with regard to testing various puppet designs and other staging ideas and incorporating, revising, or dropping them, as deemed appropriate. That said, each time a puppet was put through its paces, there was also a tendency for the manipulator in question "to submit to" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) to it, as Jurkowski would say, in order "to learn the movement potential of the puppet, and to allow for that potential to be realized"—to return to Tillis's twofold interpretation of this stance on manipulation—as well as "to show humility in the presence of" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162) the puppet. The Powells and their collaborators thereby prevented the slippage that Jurkowski claims can result in "the function of the puppet . . . degenerating" until it becomes "a sort of prop, or accessory for the actor" (39). As we know, the puppet can fall still further from grace, until it is quite simply "an object as such, deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public" (40).

I trust I have convinced the reader by this point, particularly now that we are reaching the end of the section on movement flexibility, that Puppetmongers and other companies that adhere to the tandem-puppetry style generally still succeed in maintaining this "attendant belief in" the "theatrical life" of the puppets in their productions, even when they are but "actual objects taken from everyday life" ("Towards a Theatre" 40), despite Jurkowski's trepidation about such developments in contemporary puppetry, and that their attention to movement is a crucial factor in ensuring their success in this respect. Such companies, even if not always at a fully conscious level, must have a broad understanding of movement, one takes into account all of the bodies onstage: animate, inanimate, and hybrid. Generating and refining a movement vocabulary that capitalizes on the movement possibilities of all these different types of bodies can be demanding and even exhausting, but doing so is essential if both manipulators and spectators are to invest their energy in bringing the puppet bodies onstage to life through an often unspoken agreement to work together towards this end.

I also trust that the reader will take into consideration the paramountcy of movement within the semiotics of puppet theatre in general, and therefore of movement flexibility within the methodological framework of devised puppet theatre more specifically, when comparing this section of the present to the others with regard to length. Even though Ann Powell downplayed the likelihood of there having been any particular benefits to having begun even just one rehearsal for *Hard Times* with work on characterization using only the performers' own bodies, there very likely were indeed benefits, as was explained above. The tight rehearsal schedule for this stage in the development of the project has already been noted, but a greater amount of time set aside for experimental play with the puppets, temporarily free of the exigencies that text brings with it, would have also been of advantage to the performers and the

performance as a whole. Powell herself emphasized the usefulness of these complementary approaches to creating new productions—working from the inside out, and then from the outside in—when teaching puppetry to older schoolchildren ("Re: *Hard Times* Questions").

Perhaps the collaborators could in fact have elected to move to a different location altogether for the duration of some kind of manipulation exercise, just as they eventually did for their work on bodily movement and characterization—although in this case, it would have been more of an intentional choice and less of a decision forced upon them due to circumstances outside of their control. Furthermore, perhaps a location could have been chosen that, much as the park did, would have obliged them to concentrate on certain elements of the production, since they would have distanced themselves from reminders of the other elements. An analogous example is elusive, since achieving any distance from any thought of the script for an extended period of time would probably have been impossible. Still, they could have tried returning to the park; alternatively, they might have adopted the opposite strategy and sought out a more confined space with fewer potential distractions, in the interest of taking the scale of most of the puppets into consideration as well. Still, transporting even just a few puppets would have required some time for preparation, but more importantly, it would have also taken the collaborators away from the space that they had clearly found so inspiring.

Admittedly, it would be more accurate to say that it was the *contents* of that space that the collaborators had found so inspiring, given the collection of building materials, constructed puppets (from past Puppetmongers productions and elsewhere), masks, tools, and other objects that had accumulated there and that could now be mined for possible staging solutions. Nonetheless, thus far in this chapter, and indeed in this study as a whole, much has been made of the *what*, the *how*, the *when*, and even the *why*, but the *where* needs to be addressed with greater specificity. We should therefore now go beyond such fundamental but obviously (and intentionally) general questions such as what might make Canadian puppetry uniquely Canadian and fly considerably "closer to the ground." In that spirit, we shall in the next section examine more closely the relationship between Puppetmongers (as a devised puppet theatre company) and rehearsal and performance spaces and the ways in which that relationship affects repertoire, developmental processes, and other aspects of the company's identity.

Space Flexibility

As was first observed in the section of this chapter on narrative flexibility, *Hard Times* was an unusual Puppetmongers production in several respects; it did, however, stand as evidence of at least one consistent aspect of the Powells' approach to creating new puppet theatre works: their overall adaptability or indeed flexibility. Even if we restrict ourselves to considering only the rehearsal that was conducted outdoors, we can find indications of flexible bodies (although the age of the brother-and-sister team must

be taken into account, since they have been active in puppet theatre since the 1970s), adaptable attitudes towards process, and adaptable relationships with space.

Even so, Ann Powell has confessed that she, at least, was not entirely comfortable rehearsing in the park, for although their concentration and peace of mind were aided by having moved "away from the noise" generated by the fire alarm test, she felt that it was "a bit public in the park" ("Re: *Hard Times* Questions"). They did not, after all, normally open up their rehearsals to uninvited guests, especially at such a relatively early stage in the development of a new or extensively revised piece. The park therefore proved to be a distraction—as well as a boon—in its own way.

Whatever awkwardness Ann Powell may have experienced while rehearsing in the park, she did not betray her unease in any especially conspicuous way; she remained in control of the space inside her body and her use of the space outside it, or at least she retained the same degree of control that she possessed in the Puppetmongers studio. In fact, space in general was the chief means by which the Powells exerted their authority during the development of the workshop production of *Hard Times*. This is a more nuanced assertion than it might appear to be at first glance. Certainly, they exerted spatial authority in an obvious (but still important) sense by being the lessees of the primary rehearsal space. In addition to this, they carved out their own more conceptual authoritative and authorial "space" and carried it with them, and from that sphere of control other methods of exercising their influence—such as their sometimes impulsive decisions with regard to movement and design—were derived.

Knowles reminds us that there are in fact a number of different ways of understanding space when considering theatre more generally, ranging from the "common-sensical understanding of space . . . [as] the physical location of performance" to the space of "the performing body" ("Survival" 1) itself. All of the various types of spaces that he lists have already been addressed over the course of this study, some at greater length than others, but what might not yet be clear is that, as Knowles elucidates, "all of these physical and metaphorical locations are inextricably connected in any meaningful constitution of theatrical space" (1-2). Moreover, each of these spaces, even the most spartan of rehearsal studios, is always already "full" in several senses of the word: "full of histories, ghosts, pressures, opportunities, and constraints, of course, but mostly they are full of ideology." Indeed, we have already seen some evidence of the link between space and power or "social control" in the Powells' manipulation of the spaces used in the development of the workshop production of *Hard Times*. Thus, in a very real sense, "there's no such thing as an empty space" (2), as Knowles declares.

With regard to devised theatre more specifically, Barton emphasizes that "an immediate and integrated relationship to the space(s) in which the work is developed and performed" ("Making" 2) is one of the "very few defining characteristics for devised theatre" (1) upon which at least some practitioners and authors have agreed. He goes considerably further, however, proclaiming that both "devised and physical theatre . . . are theatres in and of 'space'": "Space is key to their creative processes.

Space is key in their performance. Space is key to their reception. And in the centre of all these spaces is the performing body. As such, a dramaturgy of physically-based devised theatre can be seen as a dramaturgy of the composing body in space" (2).

Many of the ramifications for devising of the phenomenological contention, as summarized by Barton, "that the body is 'spatial matter'—that we are not merely 'in' space, but actually made 'of' space" ("Making" 4)—have already been reviewed in this dissertation, particularly in the third and fifth chapters. That said, the assertion that spaces larger—literally and conceptually—than the human body seem to have a kind of agency of their own has not been evaluated thus far. According to Knowles, these spaces can give the impression that they are imposing their will on companies and their work in a manner that cannot always be effectively predicted or countered ("Survival" 3). In this respect, they are not unlike the stage objects that have been at the centre of this investigation: despite the fact that they are not sentient in themselves (although, like puppets, they can be partly or conceivably even wholly composed of animate elements, such as the trees in the park to which the *Hard Times* rehearsal discussed earlier in this chapter was moved), these spaces may still compel theatre artists "to show humility in . . . [their] presence," just as puppets do when the control they bring to bear on the ways in which they can be moved is understood "[i]n a more mystical sense" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 162).

We must delve deeper into this metaphorical—and spatial in itself—conception of theatrical space as a composite of overlapping and indeed interlocking layers in order to comprehend just where Puppetmongers is situated. That company's workshop production of *Hard Times* has already been mentioned several times in this context, and we will return to it repeatedly throughout this section as the last of the flexibilities posited at the beginning of this chapter is examined. The overall objective, however, is to undertake a more comprehensive spatial analysis, so to speak, of Puppetmongers that will, I hope, complement the other analytical perspectives that have been adopted thus far.

As was noted just above as this section was introduced, Knowles presents a generalized but nonetheless complex model of where—and, by extension, how—theatre happens. He makes some specific references to the Canadian context also under consideration in this study, although, as one might expect, given what was demonstrated in the first chapter, puppetry does not figure prominently—indeed, at all—in his explanation. Even so, the original circumstances surrounding Knowles's article remain directly relevant to our present concerns. His article, "Survival Spaces: Space and the Politics of Dislocation," was originally delivered as an address at the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium, which took place 1-5 May 1996 in Winnipeg. It had been organized by Fowler and the other members of the then very active Primus Theatre, which was based in that city. Penny Farfan, in an article included in the same issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* as the published version of Knowles's address, provides a retrospective overview and evaluation of the event. The very first item on her agenda in the article is to make explicit the analogy implied in the title of the festival and symposium:

> An ice age is a period of prolonged climatic extremity with enormous geographical and biological consequences, including the radical transformation of terrain and the extinction of living species. As the members of PRIMUS Theatre see it, something like an ice age is currently wreaking havoc on our cultural landscape, as such chilling forces as electronic media, funding cutbacks, and censorship erode the status of the performing arts and threaten to lay waste to whatever is caught up in the glacial drift. (1)

Seventeen years later, we may still appear to be locked in the same elemental struggle. Nevertheless, if we look at our current situation more closely, as we soon will, we can see that, to extend the above metaphorical comparison further, our own versions of ice-age theatrical "life forms" have emerged that do not merely weather such conditions but rather thrive in them. The size and ponderousness of a creature like the woolly mammoth would make it a clumsy, as it were, choice of vehicle for a more specific metaphor; a sabre-toothed cat would be an equally inappropriate choice, given its predatory nature. Still, in a sense, neither of these would be too wide of the mark.

There were signs of hope even then, however, for as Farfan observes, the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium "brought together a range of theatre companies that have developed alternative artistic practices and organizational models that have enabled them to maintain their creative vitality despite adverse conditions" (1). Fowler emphasizes that Primus's "flexible" structure had been the key to its success up until that point: "Our organization is small enough, and its administrative infrastructure and responsibilities adaptable enough, that we can adjust quickly and without stress to changing circumstances" (3). Space flexibility was essential to this adaptability, as Fowler reveals in his problematization of the definition of *theatre*. He queries, "Is theatre a building or is it an action? Is it a place in which a certain kind of human activity occurs or is it the people who carry out that activity? Is it a what or is it a how?" He concludes that it can be either a "what" or a "how," with his own company clearly falling into the latter category. He implies that a conscious choice was made not to be contained or defined by the type of theatre that is a building, because regardless of whether one is ranked among "the Employers (the Directors, the Managers)" or "the Employees (everyone else)" associated with such a building, one must inevitably be "in the service of the building" (2).

Fowler's wording might put us in mind of Jurkowski's, even though they were addressing very different topics. A more significant difference is that, while Jurkowski's insistence that the effective puppet manipulator, one who "serves its magic," is necessarily one who "serves the puppet" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) has been questioned frequently and thoroughly in this dissertation, it has not been suggested that those who adhere to this school of manipulation are part of "a sterile theatre, a theatre which is not producing progeny, new company, new initiatives, new audiences" (3), a charge Fowler levels at those who labour "in the service of the [theatre] building" (2). Moreover, the presentational style of puppet manipulation with which Jurkowski is affiliated cannot be criticized as a whole—in the global or Canadian context—along the materialist lines of Fowler's reassessment of "landed" theatre. It is, after all, simply a style of manipulation, and the fact that a given company practices it does not in itself reflect on

the aesthetic quality of the work produced, nor does it necessitate a particular relationship with space—*space* being used here to denote what Knowles refers to as "a more common-sensical understanding of space, having to do with the physical location of performance" ("Survival" 1).

The same goes, of course, for other styles of puppet manipulation, including tandem puppetry, the style that has been identified for the first time in this study, that has been one of the two styles—the other indeed being presentational puppetry—repeatedly used here as frames of reference, and, not coincidentally, that has been the primary style employed by Puppetmongers. One can find tandem puppetry performances at many different types of venues, even in theatres stylish enough to match those described by Fowler (with a hint of sarcasm) as "beautiful architectural constructions, with spacious lobbies equipped with bar service, and plush seats and conditioned air, warm or cool" (2). Given the marginalization of Canadian puppetry in general, however, such houses present the work of puppet artists relatively rarely: for every Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes production staged at Factory Theatre or Canadian Stage's Berkeley Street Theatre, for example, there are many more productions by other companies and independent artists that go largely unseen by spectators and critics. The reasons for this, along with the consequences of it, are related directly to Knowles's seemingly obvious pronouncement that "[t]heatre takes place in many different spaces . . ." ("Survival" 1), which now needs to be unpacked further.

As has been mentioned already, we have in fact touched upon all of the "different spaces" enumerated by Knowles at various points throughout this dissertation, but his compendious categorization is nonetheless worth outlining, for, in one way or another, theatre manifests itself in a variety of interconnected contexts: "a) the performing body . . . ; b) the organizational spaces of company structure, funding bodies, professional organizations, and so on . . . ; c) the spaces . . . of initial and ongoing training . . . ; d) the discursive spaces of various kinds of theatre criticism . . . ; and finally e) . . . the cultural landscape within which theatre takes place . . ." ("Survival" 1). Knowles appends one more type to his spatial taxonomy, the one that probably feels the most familiar, namely "the physical location of performance." Despite this sense of familiarity—or rather, because of it—even this "common-sensical understanding of space" should not be taken for granted, as it has been at least to some extent in this chapter thus far. Now that this definition of theatrical space has been brought up on three occasions, it is incumbent upon me to expand upon exactly how it and all of the other "physical and metaphorical locations" that Knowles sketches out are indeed "inextricably connected" ("Survival" 1), with particular attention being paid, of course, to how the Powells position themselves within and in relation to these spaces.

Devised puppet theatre is a doubly marginalized form of theatre, as it exists in the overlap between two other, broader forms—namely devised theatre and puppet theatre—neither of which could justifiably be described as being completely subsumed under the complex of the traditional theatre

industry. When considered in the Canadian context, it must actually be deemed to be triply marginalized, for even Canadian theatre, when conceived of in its entirety, can hardly be thought of as "mainstream." Consequently, as I have remarked elsewhere, Canadian puppetry as a whole, "as ambitious as it can be," must be regarded as "little more than a side current" ("Fighting"). Once one acknowledges this, one might come to believe that arguing that one puppet artist or company has been more "marginalized" than another would be nothing more than splitting hairs.

For the artists themselves, of course, there are very real degrees of marginalization, so to assert that Burkett, for instance, is *as* marginalized as a regionally based artist—such as Mike Harding of Brampton or David Smith of Kingston, both of whom were introduced in the first chapter—or an emerging artist (such as one might see performing at a given slam or cabaret but, regrettably, perhaps not at the next such event, given the frequency with which such artists emerge and submerge, a trend that was identified in the first chapter) would be not only foolhardy but also insensitive. That notwithstanding, if Filewod is justified in being "uncomfortable with the implied analysis of what is termed 'mainstream,' a term that does not imply anything as marginal as the theatre in Canada today" ("Erasing" 202), then one should feel even less comfortable using the term to describe a particular puppet theatre production, artist, or company in this country. Although Filewod was writing the above in 1989, theatre has not approached any closer to the principal metaphorical "stream" of Canadian culture.

Filewod contends that, historically in Canada, "[t]he construction of the mainstream was in effect an ideological fiction that rationalized larger grants to certain theatres on the basis of box office sales (or community penetration) and physical assets" ("Erasing" 204). Barton expresses lucidly and concisely a qualification already implied in Filewod's argument when he clarifies that the latter's "persuasive case for the lack of an *aesthetic* model of 'mainstream' theatre is not meant to preclude that mainstream's operation as an ideologically driven set of *material* conditions" ("Introduction" x). The historical model criticized by Filewod—that which places "alternate" or alternative theatre in opposition to mainstream theatre—was examined more thoroughly in the first chapter.[91] The definition of *mainstream* that he finds to be "inscribed in critical discourse" (201) should be repeated here, however: "The mainstream refers to the regional theatres—the system of civic theatres that came into being during the 1950s and 1960s in most Canadian cities." Although "[i]t is difficult to generalize about these theatres . . ." for several reasons, they did share the status of being "the flagship theatres of their respective regions," as per an agreement with the Canada Council of the Arts (then known as the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences). "This agreement translated into capital funding to construct or renovate large physical plants" (203), Filewod emphasizes.

As the reader mostly likely already knows or could have guessed, not one of these regional theatres was dedicated specifically to presenting puppet theatre productions. That said, one cannot simply

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[91] See 23n9.

ignore the fact that several contemporary Canadian puppet theatre companies and artists have at various times managed to secure the support of and book performances in theatres considered more generally to be "mainstream." Indeed, in Toronto, even the more prominent of the still-operating "alternate" theatres that, again according to the "[c]ritical orthodoxy" challenged by Filewod, "legitimized playwriting as a profession in this country . . . [and] spawned a generation of new actors, designers, and directors," ultimately "transform[ing] the conditions of their existence to become the new mainstream" ("Erasing" 202), have hosted a few of the more prominent puppetry companies and artists.

Theatre Passe Muraille, for example, presented a considerably more elaborate version of the Puppetmongers adaptation of *Hard Times*, as has been noted already, which ran from 30 September to 16 October 2010 (including preview performances). Theatre Passe Muraille management, admittedly after a significant delay, seemingly wanted to renew this relationship, as just over two years later, they presented the Powells' 2012 winter holiday season staging of *Cinderella in Muddy York* (which premièred in 2000). Interestingly, although the 2010 reinterpretation of *Hard Times* was relegated to the 55-seat Backspace, *Cinderella in Muddy York* ran at the larger and more well-appointed 185-seat Mainspace, albeit for a shorter period (28 December 2012 to 5 January 2013). The limited number of performances might partially explain the decision to book the company into the larger theatre for *Cinderella in Muddy York*, but puppet artists are certainly no strangers to short runs in small theatres. There were also probably few if any other companies vying for the space for the holiday season. A factor that should definitely not be overlooked, however, is Arnott's "vicious circle," or at least the apparent desire at Theatre Passe Muraille to exploit it, for whether or not the majority of potential adult spectators "expect[ed] only a superficial entertainment," they surely "expect[ed] to be able to bring children" (40), and theatre management must have realized that they could profit from this. An incentive like a discounted "Family 4 Pack" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Cinderella*") of tickets is an especially transparent indication of this.

It must also be acknowledged that Theatre Passe Muraille was also benefiting from a tradition established by the Powells in partnership with another successful and widely admired "alternate" theatre, Tarragon Theatre. Starting in 1989, the Powells had presented a winter holiday show every year at Tarragon, although just as they would be at Theatre Passe Muraille for *Hard Times*, they were consigned to a subsidiary space, the 100-seat Extra Space (Ouzounian). As of December 2013, their winter holiday show had in fact come back to the Extra Space at Tarragon (Puppetmongers Theatre, "Winter").

The Powells, of course, are not the only Canadian puppet artists to have achieved the level of recognition that is generally required for such theatres to book a production for a run of any substantial length. Burkett, as has been underscored several times throughout this study in various contexts, has likewise been welcomed into historically "alternate" spaces, both within Toronto (such as Factory Theatre) and outside of it (such as Theatre Network in Edmonton and the Vancouver East Cultural Centre). His work has been presented by still larger theatres, such as Canadian Stage, which, as Filewod

points out, was one of the stars of the "climax" of the prevailing narrative concerning the perceived conflict between the regional and alternate theatres, as it was born out of "the merger in 1988 of the 'alternate' Toronto Free Theatre with the 'regional' CentreStage" ("Erasing" 202). As it happens, when he has performed there, he has been booked into the Berkeley Street Theatre, which used to be occupied by the "alternate" half of the aforementioned "mixed" theatrical marriage.

Burkett was even granted the particular honour of being the official playwright-in-residence at Canadian Stage during the development of *Provenance*. It premièred at another of the "alternate" spaces listed above, however: Theatre Network. While such a title was never bestowed upon Mirbt, he and his work were nonetheless nurtured by a number "of major theatres" (*Puppetry* 46), as McKay informs us, including, as we are also already aware, Canadian Stage, as well as the yet larger and more unadulteratedly "regional" National Arts Centre.

The apparent current "renaissance" of puppetry in Canada (and, indeed, in the USA) and its historical significance to the study of Canadian theatre more generally were foregrounded in the opening chapter. While I have no intention of diminishing the importance of these, they must be taken into consideration from a realistic and relativistic perspective, such as that which Filewod discloses when he admits to being "uncomfortable with" the term "'mainstream'" ("Erasing" 202) when it is used in Canadian theatrical discourse, given the marginality of Canadian theatre overall. Another Canadian theatre scholar, Robert Wallace, echoed this assessment the following year in the preface to his book *Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada*, writing with more than a hint of regret that "while the art form [theatre] is definitely communal, it still is relatively invisible to the majority of Canadians" ("Preface" 7).

There is reason to believe, however, that these authors may be painting a grimmer picture than is justified. Hill Strategies Research, in a report sponsored by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council, provides analysis of data obtained from the General Social Survey of 2010, "an in-depth telephone survey of 7,502 Canadians 15 years of age or older" (5) conducted by Statistics Canada. Hill Strategies Research was particularly interested in evaluating "data on Canadians who attended at least one of five different arts activities during the 12 months prior to the survey" (1). "In 2010," according to this report, "nearly one-half of Canadians 15 or older (44%, or 12.4 million people) attended a theatrical performance such as a drama, musical theatre, dinner theatre, or comedy" (16). Obviously, this was an estimate extrapolated from a sample of the population, but it seems to have been a varied sample, for "theatre attendance rates varied for almost all demographic factors examined," with "[e]ducation and income . . . [being] particularly strong demographic factors in" (3) this regard. Even so, when overall percentages are compared, theatre performances beat all of the other arts activities in terms of attendance rates, including (surprisingly)

popular music concerts, which came in second with 39% of those surveyed attending at least one such performance (34).

If one is determined to judge matters "by the numbers," there are other signs of hope. In 2012, Statistics Canada released a collection of statistical tables offering "an overview of trends in the performing arts industry" ("Performing Arts"). Although the range of years covered differed by table—most in fact focused only on data collected in 2010—the information presented was relatively up to date, and it remains so, as it was all from between 2008 and 2010 ("Statistical Tables"). The table summarizing the total number of performances by non-profit companies (which are broken down into five major categories) and of spectators (at each type of performance) for the country as a whole for 2008 and 2010 reveals that, on average, both increased significantly over that time. In actuality, they might have increased even more, since only "preliminary" data for 2010 were available at the time. In spite of that, not all of the categorial totals increased; the total number of performances by "[t]heatre (except musical) companies" unquestionably did, however, rising from 29,752 to 33,588. The concurrent decrease in the average number of spectators at each such performance (from 251 to 238) would seem to be inconsistent with this ("Table 14"). That said, perhaps the increased number of offerings could account for it in itself, any audience "sprawl" would be compounded by a higher proportion of those offerings being presented by smaller companies in spaces with limited seating (or perhaps even just standing) arrangements for audiences.

In the end, of course, it was arguably a negligible decrease anyway; in fact, such statistics can fluctuate so frequently that ascertaining some kind of pattern or trend can be difficult indeed. We can find instances of this dating from closer to the period in which Filewod and Wallace were writing their respective relevant pieces. In March 1994, Kate Taylor announced in an article for the *Globe and Mail* that "[t]heatre . . . [was] the only performing art hanging on to its audience in the nineties. . . ." Her main source was an "annual survey of 200 non-profit groups by the Council for Business and the Arts in Canada," which had "found that theatre attendance rose by 4 per cent in 1992-93," while attendance at other types of performances had fallen considerably. Blair Mascall, the president of the Council at the time, told Taylor that the other performing arts might "have lost patrons to the growing commercial theatre scene or to the larger trend known as cocooning" but that in fact "the smaller [theatre] companies . . . had the most success keeping their audiences" ("Stage Holds").

Little over a year later, in May 1995, Christopher Harris, writing for the same newspaper as Taylor, proclaimed that the situation had reversed itself: in 1994, when Taylor was in fact writing her article about the robustness of theatre in Canada in 1992-92, "[t]heatre was the one performing arts sector in Canada that experienced a collective audience drop last year." His source for this information was the previously mentioned Council for Business and the Arts in Canada, which, after surveying 196 companies, had calculated that their attendance had declined by 13 per cent. The Council had qualified

this figure by "not[ing] that almost half the apparent theatre decline can be attributed to the fact that Edmonton's heavily attended Chinook Theatre"—known since 1995 as Fringe Theatre Adventures ("Fringe")—did not participate in the 1994 survey."

Such qualifications are not uncommon in studies of theatre attendance statistics, so neither extreme optimism nor extreme pessimism is warranted. One more example, from a study that has already been discussed, that should be borne in mind is that, for the purposes of the Hill Strategies Research report, "an 'attendee' at a particular activity" qualified as such if she "went at least once in 2010." Whether an attendee was in fact present at a given activity just once or multiple times during the year was not taken into consideration, however. Moreover, "the data include attendance of Canadian residents while travelling out of the country and exclude attendance by residents of other countries while travelling in Canada" (1). In other words, the chief criterion was the nationality of the attendees, not the location of the activities, which undoubtedly complicates any use of this source in a study of some aspect of "Canadian" theatre.

Of course, when attempting to establish whether or not a given production staged in a particular performance space situated within Canada is itself somehow "Canadian," one must take into account factors in addition to its location. Dwelling upon this consideration here, however, would take us back to the concerns of the first chapter. Moreover, location, in a more specific sense, is in fact one of our primary concerns in this chapter, for "box office sales (or community penetration) and physical assets" were essential components in "[t]he construction of the mainstream" in the 1960s and 1970s; thus, in spite of the status of the theatrical mainstream as "an ideological fiction" ("Erasing" 204), any differentiation between it and the equally fictional alternate theatre—since the latter depends upon the former for its definition—can have undeniably concrete consequences, as Filewod makes quite clear.

Access to and even the acquisition of "physical assets" can, in like manner, be key determinants with regard to where on a scale of marginalization a given puppet theatre company should be ranked. Furthermore, it might initially seem that obtaining the right to use a particular rehearsal and performance space—especially permanently, or at least for the life of the company, through a purchase or semipermanently through a long-term lease—would dramatically improve the chances of a puppet theatre company surviving at all. The financial support that these theatres can offer or help the companies to secure, not to mention the resources that they can enable artists to exploit, such as well-equipped performance and rehearsal spaces, technical and support staff, workshops (both the rooms in which set pieces, props, puppets, are so forth are constructed and the more metaphorical dramaturgical spaces in which new works are developed), storage space, and so on, tends to generate not only public attention but also media curiosity.

Since Canadian puppet theatre is but a subcategory of Canadian theatre in general, it should be unsurprising that this situation is not endemic to the Canadian puppet theatre. Wallace scrutinizes the

connections among performance spaces, the media, and finance capital, observing that "[m]ost English-Canadian theatre critics give priority to companies whose established reputations are supported by government and corporate subsidies and sustained by media coverage which the reviewers themselves produce" ("Producing" 109). One repercussion of this that directly affects this author and any other theatre scholars interested in Canadian puppetry is that finding a review of a past production by Burkett or the Powells, for example, is far less difficult than uncovering one of a past performance by Harding or Smith. Consequently, although, as was pressed home in the first chapter, there is a paucity of writing (both scholarly and popular) on Canadian puppetry as a whole, the need to take this sort of disparity with regard to "media coverage" into consideration is part of the rationale for adopting a spectrum model of marginalization in Canadian puppet theatre.

The difficulties facing the would-be researcher of Canadian puppetry aside, there are, naturally, other, more serious consequences of this lack of reportage and analysis for the smaller puppet theatre companies themselves, for, as Wallace explains, "[l]esser-known companies appearing in out-of-the-way venues are locked in a vicious circle: they need media attention to generate more media interest – which, in turn, they must achieve to attract audiences and win financial support" ("Producing" 109). Quoting from a *Globe and Mail* article by Ray Conlogue from 1987, in which he dismissed Toronto-based theatre company DNA Theatre, who had been recently invited to Montreal's Festival de Théâtre des Amériques, which he found surprising, since he did not consider them to be "representative of Toronto theatre" (qtd. in Wallace, "Producing" 107), Wallace writes that "'[h]ardly anyone sees' the work of" a company like DNA "because the majority of critics ignore its existence" (108).

There is the possibility that a company might succeed in breaking out of this "vicious circle" somehow, perhaps by staging a production that is widely recognized as the one in which it finally "comes into . . . [its] own" ("World" 34), to modify Nicholls's description of Burkett's *Tinka's New Dress*, or perhaps by finally receiving a major government or corporate grant. Otherwise, Wallace laments, such companies must "subsist without the grants that would facilitate adequate promotion of their shows." Even if a small theatre company submits a grant proposal that ends up getting approved, its members—as Wallace's profile of DNA makes all too clear—may still have to "scrounge meagre production funds that [will] barely allow them to rent a performance space," so that "producing their shows, let alone advertising them, . . . [proves] a major feat" ("Producing" 109). Consequently, these small companies are usually "relegated to the margins of Canadian theatre where, all too often, they die from neglect" (108). In other words, in the context of Canadian puppet theatre at least, the "vicious circle" posited by Wallace can effectively break the one proposed by Arnott in a most regrettable way: some companies will inevitably fold, with the result that no other spectators, child or adult, will ever be able to see them perform again, whatever "laziness" (Arnott 40) may have been manifested in their productions.

Moving into a space permanently or semipermanently is no more of a guaranteed cure-all for the challenges that small Canadian puppet theatre companies must face than receiving a grant is; in fact, it is invariably a mixed blessing. To be sure, acquiring a home base can alleviate the need to "scrounge," to use Wallace's term again, as a company would no longer necessarily be constrained into "appearing in out-of-the-way venues" ("Producing" 109) exclusively: a home theatre can be a space for both preparation and performance. Farfan, in her report on the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium, relays several advantages of procuring space that were brought up by the members of Jest in Time Theatre, who would come to disband in 2003 ("Jest"). Farfan relates that, having obtained "their own studio and office space in 1993 after nine years without a home," the members of Jest in Time found "it easier to strike a much needed balance between touring repertoire to generate income and getting into the studio to create new material." Having a space to which to come home can yield obvious benefits, as should already be apparent by now, in relation to both of these domains. It can also, however, facilitate quite a different type of connection: in addition to making touring more feasible (by means of facilities for building, repairing, and storing stage objects of all kinds in between tours, for example, and for rehearsing in preparation for a remount), it can strengthen more local ties. Jest in Time remains an exemplar in this regard as well, for its members discovered that occupying their own space "brought the company into closer contact with the Halifax community," in which it was based, for prior to this, they elucidated, few Haligonians "knew their work . . . because they were always on tour" (3).

Just because a company can mitigate some of the problems that plague what Knowles labels "nomadic companies" ("Survival" 2) by ensconcing itself in a theatre of its own, that does not mean that doing so will not spawn a host of other complications. Puppet theatres, in the sense of physical spaces devoted to the creation and presentation of puppetry performances, in Canada have proven to be fragile structures indeed, whatever materials were used to construct them physically. A few of these ventures were discussed in the first chapter, such as the two undertaken successively by the Vellemans (one in Toronto, the other in Chester, Nova Scotia). In order to stay afloat, a puppet theatre company—in Canada or elsewhere—must, in many cases, programme and present an entire season once it has taken possession of a particular space, as there are, of course, many costs associated with operating a theatre: maintenance and administrative expenses, property taxes, and, as applicable, payroll, to name just three of the more obvious examples. If, historically in Canada, puppet theatres have been rare, those with the personnel, popular appeal, body of work, and, of course, box-office receipts—along with, most likely, governmental and corporate funding, as well as private donations—needed in order to fill out an entire season with works developed by the respective resident companies are much rarer still.

There is, in fact, only one contemporary example that unequivocally fits this bill: Famous People Players. Founded in 1974 by Diane Dupuy, the company strives, according to its own mission statement, "[t]o provide a world-class stage presentation and to integrate the developmentally challenged into society

by toughening and strengthening our people to prepare them for the outside world" (Famous People Players, *Educational Program* 2). Famous People Players has certainly gone through considerable growth since Dupuy's early solo performances at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto from 1970 to 1973 (Dupuy, *Dare* 35; Dupuy, "Re: Famous People Players"). That growth can be measured in several different ways: in terms of company size, its budget, the breadth and depth of its purpose, and, most relevant to our present spatial concerns, the touring engagements mentioned in the introduction, for example. There is another, more local and concrete (pun intended) spatial dimension to consider, however: in 1994, the company moved into its first home theatre. As a matter of fact, the space was conceived of as a combined theatre, restaurant, and art gallery—in essence, "an educational project that would benefit many people" (115), as Dupuy herself sums it up in her book *Throw Your Heart over the Fence: The Continuing Adventure of the Famous People Players*, just one of the three that she has written on the subject of Famous People Players. Dupuy clearly had—and continues to have—several targets in mind for this "educational" agenda: the developmentally challenged members of the company, as implied in its mission statement; the audience in general, with respect to learning to appreciate those performers, as implied in the slogan for the company, "What you see is sensational. . . [.] What you don't see is Inspirational" (Famous People Players, *Educational Program* 1); and children, via a more conventional outreach programme.

What this all points to is that Dupuy wishes to position Famous People Players as an institution in three senses of the word: most obviously, as a physical institution; as a recognized authority on the empowerment of developmentally challenged individuals and on black-light puppetry; and as a Toronto "institution" in the colloquial sense, that is, as an immediately recognizable provider of "world-class" spectacle. This final definition of *institution* seems, in fact, to have informed Dupuy's vision of Famous People Players from the outset at least as much as, if not more than, the others, for she recollects—once again, we find ourselves relying upon someone's memory, so the usual caveats should be kept in mind—that, even when the company existed only as an idea in her head, she was convinced that it would offer "a unique form of entertainment." Each puppetry performance would actually "be more than a puppet show" (*Dare* 44), although perhaps describing it as an imagined incarnation of "total puppet theatre" would be more accurate, as "it would be a black-light extravaganza of color, movement, and music, brought to the stage by people who had spent their lives in the shadows" (*Dare* 44). Dupuy illuminates, if you will, the mechanics behind this form of puppetry:

> The technique used ultraviolet lights set in front of the stage to illuminate life-size puppets, each of which was manipulated by as many as three people. These puppets were painted in fluorescent colors. When the house lights were dimmed, the ultraviolet light caught the fluorescence, making the puppets appear to glow in the dark. The performers dressed entirely in black, with hoods over their heads, so the ultraviolet light wouldn't reveal their presence onstage. (*Dare* 36)

McKay, in his own definition of the form, explains that the black garb of the manipulators is complemented by "a stage area usually lined with black velvet," the cumulative effect being that "only fluorescent paint and fabrics on the puppets"—and on some costumes, I should add—"will be visible" (*Puppetry* 157).

Dupuy has long been known for her ambitiousness, but she did not, of course, invent black-light puppetry, as her own use of the past tense in the definition quoted above implies. This form of puppetry is customarily associated with the former Czechoslovakia and one of its successor states, the Czech Republic, but particularly Prague, which has served as the capital for both political entities.[92] That said, McKay asserts that black-light puppetry is but a "[v]ariation of Black Theatre" (*Puppetry* 157), the type of puppetry that was referenced earlier in this chapter, in the section on movement flexibility, in connection with the performers in the Puppetmongers workshop production of *Hard Times* attempting to isolate their bodies during one particular rehearsal. Philpott reveals that it was a French puppet artist, Georges Lafaye, who, in the mid-twentieth century, "[i]ntroduced the 'black theatre' technique . . . in which figures seem to be floating in air," a technique that in turn "influenced [the] development of" ("Lafaye") black-light puppetry. Czech companies were still the true popularizers of the latter, however. It was indeed an artist originally from what was then known as Czechoslovakia—although he was in fact Slovak—who provided Dupuy with the opportunity to gain practical experience in black-light puppetry for the first time, albeit apparently not in any kind of formal or direct manner. In 1973, a young Dupuy started a job at the Artists' Workshop at the Poor Alex Theatre in Toronto, "running errands and cleaning the ceramics oven." Mikulas Kravjansky and his company, Black Box Theatre of Canada, were rehearsing at the theatre at the time, so Dupuy "spent a month working with them in . . . [her] spare time." She found that she learnt more, however, from sitting "in the back of the theatre, watching them rehearse" than from the tasks that were actually related to her position, such as "carry[ing] props" (*Dare* 38). As it happened, this was not, in truth, her introduction to this form of puppetry: Bill Cosby, having watched one of her solo performances at the CNE, struck up a conversation with her and brought black-light puppetry to her attention for the first time. This encounter prompted her to research the form further, but her remaining performances commitments at the CNE and her upcoming (and very first) tour prevented her from gleaning anything more than basic understanding at that time (*Dare* 36).

Cosby's "laughing and applauding with great enthusiasm" (*Dare* 36) during Dupuy's performance at the CNE early in her career established a pattern of celebrity interest in and support of her work more generally. The celebrity who, unintentionally, had the greatest influence on what Dupuy thought her company should be was not a fellow puppet artist like Kravjansky; as a matter of fact, he was

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[92] One modern Czech black-light company reports that there are in fact nine such companies currently operating in Prague alone (WOW Black Light Theater). Another of these companies, Srnec Theatre, effectively annexes black-light puppetry in the name of the nation by claiming to be "the 1st Black Light Theatre in the world." Srnec Theatre was founded in 1961, making it over a decade older than Famous People Players.

a pianist and singer, but a showman before anything else: Liberace. Upon meeting him in person only briefly, Dupuy felt that he "had become a living inspiration — a mentor — whose personality and performing style would be the subject of our first show" (*Dare* 43). That did indeed come to pass, as "[t]he company's original number – still its signature piece - was *Aruba Liberace*, in which a life-size character of Liberace was animated playing the piano to the music on stage." More importantly, the fact that Dupuy held Liberace up as the "perfect model for" (Famous People Players, *Educational Program* 5) her company provides some context for her ranking an "extravaganza" above "a puppet show" (*Dare* 44) and for her positioning both her company and the space that they occupy as the means "[t]o provid[ing] a world-class stage presentation" (Famous People Players, *Educational Program* 2).

It probably goes without saying that Dupuy devotes considerably more space in her first book, *Dare to Dream: The Story of the Famous People Players*, to discussing Liberace's impact on both Famous People Players and herself than she does to outlining that of Kravjansky and the other members of Black Box Theatre. In fact, although she expresses admiration for the element of spectacle that she found in their production, they were, in effect, merely incarnating ideas that she claims she had already independently thought of years before: "It was as if the pictures I had created in my mind as a child of six had suddenly come to life before my eyes" (*Dare* 38). Nonetheless, Famous People Players is still another example of a Canadian puppet theatre company "forced to borrow concepts and techniques from the more established puppetry cultures" (13), to draw a connection back to the tendency identified by Jim Morrow that was explored in the first chapter. Even though the progressive and inclusive mission of the company remains most laudable, the recycling of "concepts and techniques" has, in this case, been noticeably less innovative than it has been in the other cases examined in the first chapter and elsewhere. Moreover, Dupuy and the other artists at Famous People Players have demonstrated little interest in "experimenting with proven techniques and adapting them to the processes which define our own theatre" in a self-reflective way, both of which are essential "to creating an approach which can be identified as truly Canadian" (14), according to Morrow. Indeed, it is difficult to discern in their work any of the Canadian "flavour" that, as was also stressed in the first chapter, tends to characterize the ways in which the more innovative companies and artists in this country apply an otherwise similarly adaptive approach to puppet theatre.

Although we may appear to have wandered from the primary subject at hand, space has had an overriding influence on Famous People Player's identity as a company and on the works that its members have created. It is true that this company sits at one end of a spectrum of relationships between Canadian puppet theatre companies and space, but what holds true for them may, with modifications and limitations, also hold true for other companies leasing their own spaces, even if they are not using them to present entire seasons of their own productions. Knowles's argument that "there's no such thing as an empty space" has already been mentioned, but we must return to it now. He expands on this point:

"Empty space is to theatre what common sense is to culture, and all spaces . . . like all societal givens . . . need to be interrogated and, in an important sense, dislocated (or at least denaturalized) . . ." ("Survival" 2). In the case of "nomadic theatre companies," he argues further, "the problem . . . is that you can't always find the spaces you want, and when you do find them (or more often some compromise resembling them) you can't always control those spaces, and your work gets pulled around by them in unanticipated ways" (3). This agency of space also "pulls around" the work of companies settled in distinct theatre buildings, of course, and Famous People Players is no exception. In fact, in contrast to the Jest in Time model, obtaining "a stable home base" (Farfan 3) can pull the members of a company away from their local community just as it can draw them closer to it.

Knowles warns that "a fuzzy universalism" can creep in "when work is removed from the specificities of its context, history, time, and place." His principal concern is productions that tour, especially when on what he designates "the festival circuit" ("Survival" 3). Famous People Players is indeed a touring company, although the "festival circuit" that Knowles criticizes does not figure prominently in its touring activities, as Alexis McDonald, formerly the educational director and touring coordinator for the company, explains: "[T]he majority of our touring since we've had our home theatre in Toronto since 1994 has been by invitation. We don't rent theatre spaces and plan shows in other cities. We are mostly hired by theatres." Even if, from a critical perspective, we concentrate chiefly on the company's home theatre—just as the members of the company do themselves, from a practical perspective, for it is their "number one priority" ("Re: Famous People Players"), as McDonald insists— we can still find evidence of the "fuzzy universalism" ("Survival" 3) denounced by Knowles, however.

As a Toronto "institution," Famous People Players and the physical plant with which it can so easily be conflated become a kind of amalgamated "destination" or tourist space. The company—or at least its administrators—evidently has both accepted and encouraged this reading of its identity. The company's current marketing strategy mirrors, in some significant ways, Dupuy's downplaying (in *Dare to Dream*) of whatever influence with regard to style and form Kravjansky and his Black Box Theatre might have had on the work of her own company in favour of framing this work as "more than . . . puppet show[s]," indeed as "extravaganza[s]" (44) inspired by and patterned after Liberace's spectacular performances. The most immediately visible example is the logo for the award—the only award—that Famous People Players has won that is prominently displayed on the company's website (Famous People Players, *Famous People Players*). Famous People Players did not receive this award from a puppetry organization but from the multinational corporation TripAdvisor, via the website *TripAdvisor*. Since 2011, the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence, which "celebrates hospitality excellence," has been "given only to establishments that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews on *TripAdvisor*" (TripAdvisor). Knowles attacks the discourse surrounding—not to mention obscuring and oversimplifying—productions that have been chosen for inclusion in the "festival circuit," both as it is

frequently practiced by those who organize and promote such festivals and as it is adopted by many of those who attend them. He observes that these productions "tend to be about theatre – about the form itself," which facilitates their construction within "festival brochures in universalist terms [such] as 'excellent' – for a festival audience, one that represents no actual community or society in any recognizable 'real world.'" Such productions therefore "tend to be admired (for virtuosity, innovation, or skill) rather than discussed as particular kinds of cultural work" ("Survival" 3). Finding examples of this kind of acclaim for Famous People Players is not difficult: the author of a review posted on *TripAdvisor* in November 2013 baldly states that s/he and whoever else came along "used adjectives such as amazing, perfect and mesmerizing" (One0ff0ur) to describe the performance that they attended. Canadian-born celebrity Dan Aykroyd refers to the company as "[a] vibrant, ever-morphisizing workshop of writing, dancing, stage and scenic wonders" (qtd. in Famous People Players, "Accolades").

Thus, both celebrities and more everyday audience members offer high praise but little in the way of enlightening criticism. One cannot turn to the Canadian press for this either, since, to begin with, very few actual reviews of Famous People Players productions have been published at all; the fact that only one review from a Canadian periodical is cited on the web page entitled "Accolades," part of the company's website, is indicative of this, even more so because it dates from October 1990, that is, from before the company acquired its own space. Although only the title of the newspaper for which the review was written, the *Toronto Star*, is provided on this web page, it is clearly Geoff Chapman's review of an unnamed production, for he writes, in the passage quoted on the web page, that the Famous People Players company is "a bunch of talented theatrical artists living out a precious dream in a manner that is startlingly unique." Someone working for the company, however, saw fit to replace the word "talented" with "[e]nthusiastic" (Famous People Players, "Accolades"). It is certainly conceivable that this was the result of nothing more than a clerical or typographical error, as Famous People Players, either through company publicity and advertising or through its primary spokesperson, Dupuy herself, has never shied away from extolling the talents of the performers in the company. Moreover, Chapman's article merits further consideration in its own right, for it exemplifies the kind of admiring appraisal of which Knowles disapproves ("Survival" 3). Chapman does open his review with a mild general criticism, hesitantly characterizing Famous People Players performances as "rough around the edges perhaps," but the rest of the piece is largely a paean to the company. More specifically, the "virtuosity, innovation, . . . [and] skill" (Knowles, "Survival" 3) demonstrated by the members of the company are precisely what he brings to the reader's attention.

Chapman, although failing to identify exactly which Famous People Players production he was reviewing, labels it an "exposition of special effects and enterprise." He does note that there was a Brechtian reveal of sorts when, as the performance approached its conclusion, "[t]he lighting effects were halted to reveal just how hard the players, garbed in black velvet and up till then invisible, worked to

handle a big Elvis look-a-like puppet . . . supported by fanciful denizens of the animal kingdom." Even if the spectators were therefore invited to reflect upon the labour of the performers in this moment of alienation, any critical analysis on their part did not go much further, according to Chapman, for the company seeks to transport an "enthralled audience out of their everyday worries." At this, they were successful, at least as far as Chapman himself was concerned, as he found it "hard not to be bowled over by a charming and all-new production." Not only does he emphasize the touchstones of work created for what Knowles calls "the festival circuit," that is, "virtuosity, innovation, . . . [and] skill" ("Survival" 3), but he also seems to imply that the body of work created by Famous People Players actually lies beyond the reach of critical analysis, since its purpose is to charm and enthral, not to elicit critical reflection, at least not upon anything other than the aforementioned three touchstones.

To relate all of this back to the subject of theatrical space, or, to be more precise, Knowles's conception of theatrical space as a series of layers ("Survival" 1-2), Chapman was reviewing a Famous People Players production that was being staged at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, that is, not at the company's own theatre, for one had not yet been procured, as has already been noted. Indeed, the company's priorities were entirely different at that time from those that have governed it since 1994, when it acquired that first space. Chapman bemoans the company's extended absence prior to its then current production, for Famous People Players had not "played its hometown in a commercial run for three years." The company had been engaged elsewhere, however, and would soon be again, for as Chapman explains, its members were "big hits south of the border, a constant source of relief to the makers of TV documentaries, and about to embark next week on a 60-city tour." As we already know, the company would soon be channelling its energy in a new direction, and change was already in the wind before Chapman's article was published, as Dupuy reveals in *Dare to Dream*, first published in 1988: "We also do the shows because touring means earning the income that brings us closer to our greatest goal: a home of our own" (240). Even though Dupuy and the other members of Famous People Players had "other artistic plans on the horizon," it was finding the appropriate space and planning their "new home that [were] consum[ing] most of . . . [their] attention" (241). The company would have to face the same challenges again later, as the lease on its first home theatre expired in 2009 (McDonald, "Re: Touring").

Farfan recounts that Hélène Beauchamp, a theatre scholar based at l'Université du Québec à Montréal, asserted at the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium that theatre companies that have resolved "to secure permanent performance space" have, for the most part, "end[ed] up changing their mandates, because they f[ou]nd themselves faced with such new obligations as paying the rent and fleshing out a season" (3). Little has in fact changed at Famous People Players in this regard, but Knowles—citing arguments made at the same event by Savannah Walling, cofounder and, then and now, artistic director of Vancouver Moving Theatre, and Carmen Jolin, then a member of the Montréal-based

company she would come to lead as general and artistic director, le Groupe de la Veillée—makes the more general point "that one's work is always shaped by material conditions and restraints," and thus, "to escape from one set of circumstances – spaces – is not to find freedom, but to change circumstances in ways that necessarily change the work." This most certainly applies when companies "move to permanent spaces," for after they do so, they are, perforce, no longer those companies "as we know them now" (4).

Neither Famous People Players nor Dupuy as a solo performer has been known for staging productions that were especially risky with regard to form or content, although both have dabbled in the risqué: the production that Chapman reviewed featured "a modest stripper"—who must have been modest indeed, given that all of the company's "shows are suitable for *all ages*" (Famous People Players, "Ticket Information")—while Dupuy gave her early, mildly provocative independent shows at the CNE something of a political edge, as they concerned, for example, the then "Prime Minister Trudeau's not-so-secret dates with Barbra Streisand in New York" (Dupuy, *Dare* 35). "[B]y taking wood-and-fabric versions of Trudeau and Streisand and making them do a little pas de deux" (43), Dupuy had already established one of the characteristics that would come to define her company's work, although she would soon move away from the hand puppets that she used in her performances at the CNE (Dupuy, "Re: Famous People Players"). She advances her own simple but compelling theory as to why this famous-people formula proved so popular: "The real Trudeau and Streisand would never get up on a stage and dance[,] . . . [b]ut it was funny and entertaining to see the puppets act out such a fantasy, especially after all the gossip about them that had appeared in the newspapers." Following this well-received initial foray, Dupuy "imagined bringing other famous people on stage in much the same way, as puppets of themselves, acting out fantasies based on their personal style but impossible for them to perform in real life" (44). By shifting to black-light puppetry, she and the rest of her company could amplify this element of fantasy, and an amusing but comparatively restrained *pas de deux* could—and would—become a much more extended and elaborate routine.

Notwithstanding that staging such an "extravaganza" (Dupuy, *Dare* 44) would require the collective labour of a number of theatre practitioners, Dupuy has consistently positioned herself as more than just their leader: she approaches the status of a messiah, for she, in her own words, wishes "to save" (*Dare* 37) the developmentally challenged people with whom she works. In calling attention to this, I do not wish to detract from either the merit or the importance of Dupuy's achievements—for which she has been awarded the Order of Canada, as well as the Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals—nor do I desire to disparage the much deserved success of the company, for it is one of the very few Canadian puppet theatre companies to have performed on Broadway, among other honours. What does need to be addressed is how Dupuy in herself represents an additional type of institutionalization—and of theatrical space—that, although in part contingent upon the other types that have already been examined, must be considered separately (to the extent that this is possible): Dupuy herself has become an institution.

This claim can be taken as a casual remark upon her fame and the "love affair" (O'Malley) between the media and both her and Famous People Players, but it was made with a more critically layered intention in mind, one that will in fact lead us back to our discussion of the layers of theatrical space and the strategies employed by Puppetmongers in order to traverse these layers. Dupuy's body, like all human bodies, is "not merely 'in' space, but actually made 'of' space" ("Making" 4), to relate Barton's phenomenological argument to a more strictly defined situation. She also, however, accumulates another layer of space as she moves through space, namely her symbolic but still physical embodiment of Famous People Players, which itself, as we now realize, must also be understood not as a unitary space but rather as a constellation of spaces.

Dupuy is always carrying this spatial mandate about her and projects it through space into other spaces in several different ways. First, as the reader is already aware, she is the author of three books concerning Famous People Players, but what has not yet been laid out is how, in these texts, she folds her own life into that of her company. In the first, *Dare to Dream*, Dupuy, aided by Liane Heller, chronicles both her own personal history and that of her company from her childhood days—when she found solace from her difficulties at school and at home in "the inner world" (12) of her imagination, which she was eventually able to represent in the form of puppet shows performed using the puppets and puppet theatre, "the greatest gift" (13) of her life, her mother gave her for the Christmas of her sixth year—to just after her company's Broadway début in 1986. Her next volume, *Throw Your Heart over the Fence* (1996) picks up (with some overlap) the historical narrative from there, charting the company's journey to acquiring a permanent home in 1994. The most recent text, *Daring to Dream: The Story of the Famous People Players* (2007), is largely a condensed amalgamation of the two books that preceded it; unlike the similarly titled *Dare to Dream*, this book was written solely by Dupuy, who also, revealingly, published it through her own company, Beyond Blacklight.

That Dupuy follows a narrative approach to structuring her texts is in itself neither particularly surprising nor necessarily inappropriate. Noted theatre historian and historiographer Thomas Postlewait scrutinizes "various constraints on historical scholarship and understanding," for "[t]here are certain factors and conditions that operate as filters between the initial event . . . and our perception of it." In an effort to draw attention to these "constraints," Postlewait has developed a list of "twelve 'cruxes' that the historian faces in the interrelated processes of investigating, analyzing, and reporting" (162). In his explanation of the eleventh "crux," "[t]he rhetorical tropes and narrative schemes that historians use to construct the past" (176), he observes that, because "[n]arrativity is not merely a technique, borrowed from literature, but instead a condition of our temporal understanding of individual and social experience" (177), it is understandable that "[o]f all the means we use for ordering history, the most prevalent is narrative" (176). This predilection is reinforced by the fact that "documents from the past, such as reports and autobiographies, reveal themselves to be organized in great measure according to narrative features,"

and it is upon such documents that historians must, of course, draw. Consequently, their own studies often "reproduce some of the narrative forms and explanations that exist in the [original] documents." Many such studies, for example, "tell a familiar story of innovation and revolution, thus recording yet one more time the triumphant battle of individual genius against traditions and conventions" (177). No extended academic studies have yet been written on Famous People Players; this is but symptomatic, however, of the general scarcity of published sources on Canadian puppetry. There are in fact no published book-length studies on specific Canadian puppet theatre companies, aside from Walsh's *Mermaid: A Puppet Theatre in Motion* and Dupuy's own books, although the latter author makes no pretence of writing objective, rigorously scholarly texts. She should not be looked down on simply for writing for a popular audience, but she certainly rehashes "a familiar story of innovation and revolution" (177), just as, in turn, anyone who might decide to write a book based upon her texts would, according to Postlewait.

Indications of this can be found in existing articles on Dupuy and Famous People Players—even when only one of the two is named in the title of a given article, the other is inevitably brought up by the author as well, as the two are inextricably linked, with Dupuy representing herself, and, in a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship with her, the media representing her as a microcosm of the company. There have been a number of markers along the twinned history of Dupuy and Famous People Players that she herself has pointed to, along with the media, as signs of her success—and, to a lesser extent, that of the members of her company—in her continual "battle of individual genius against traditions and conventions" (Postlewait 177). Many of these have also doubled as markers along the road towards greater institutionalization. For example, in an article published in *Chatelaine* several months after Famous People Players had moved into the company's first home theatre, Sean O'Malley declares, "Until Diane Dupuy came along, no one thought developmentally handicapped kids could handle the demands of commercial theater." While she has undoubtedly been a pioneer in this regard, most explanations for this, including her own, centre on her own personality, on her "chutzpah" (qtd. in Bickle 209) in particular, as her close friend Judi Schwartz puts it—in other words, on her ability to impose that space of which she is made and that authoritative and indeed authorial space that she gathers about her upon other spaces, some of which are indeed other bodies, other people. She does seem to have a "special knack for getting people to do what she wants" (207), as Laura Bickle, writing for *Canadian Living*, claims, relating the manipulation skills she developed as a child playfully experimenting with puppets to her equally adroit manipulation of both the performers in her company and sponsors later in her life, a metaphorical connection that is surprising only in how casually it is expressed. James Bradshaw, in a piece for the *Globe and Mail* covering the grand opening of the second theatre to house Famous People Players (still its current home) in late October 2009, depicts her in a similar light, countering her assertion at the time that hers was "a real grassroots, humble company" (qtd. in Bradshaw) with his own observation—apparently still a compliment—that "humility wasn't on display at the ribbon cutting," at

least with regard to Dupuy herself, who "relentlessly kidded and cajoled politicians and backers, aligning their chequebooks behind her singular vision through sheer force of personality."

O'Malley discloses that this authoritative space surrounding Dupuy may well be a performance space of sorts as well: "Though outwardly confident to the point of abrasiveness, the private Diane Dupuy can revert to the girl whose father berated her every time she repeated a year at school. It is a quality she does her best to hide." In fact, she "works hard to bolster the iron lady image" as a kind of defence measure, as she herself revealed to O'Malley as she said, "I love it when I'm portrayed in the media as an iron lady. The minute you write I'm a softy, people will take advantage of me" (qtd. in O'Malley). There are examples of Dupuy performing herself, that are more explicitly theatrical and that further evidence Famous People Player's status as an institution. In 1999, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the company, a new production, *Leave the Porch Light On*, was staged for the first time ("Gift"). Leaving aside celebrity impersonations and adaptations such as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *Carnival of the Animals* (both of which premièred in 1979 [Dupuy, "Re: Famous People Players"]), the company decided to dramatize "Dupuy's struggles with the theatre and . . . [the] real-life stories of cast members" ("Gift"). This would not be the only Famous People Players production created largely out of autobiographical content; in fact, the focus of such productions has been tightening on Dupuy herself.

Hi Yo Silver: The Musical, first staged in 2010, covered the period in Dupuy's life "from her childhood to the founding of Famous PEOPLE Players" (Famous People Players, "*Hi Yo Silver*"). The overlap with regard to subject matter between this production and Dupuy's first book, *Dare to Dream*, should already be apparent. By turning to that book, we can indeed discover the origin of the title of the musical. She writes that, in that "inner world" of her imagination as a child, a kind of theatre of the mind, she could play any role that she wished to, although her "favorite personality was the Lone Ranger." Crossing gender (and age) lines, she would mount her "imaginary horse, Silver, . . . shouting, 'Hi-yo, Silver!'" (12). In 2014, her company presented a "renamed" (Dupuy, "Re: Famous People Players") version of *Hi Yo Silver*, and the new title provided a much more specific clue as to what might have caused her problems in her childhood: *ADHD—Awesome Dreams with High Drama* ("*ADHD*").

Dupuy played herself in all three of the above productions—although Robyn Stevan, a founding member of Soulpepper Theatre Company, also in Toronto, originally portrayed Dupuy in *Leave the Porch Light On*, when she became "unavailable," Dupuy herself felt obliged to take over responsibility for the role, "stepping inside her own skin" ("*Porch Light*") to do so. Viewed in one way, this type of celebratory autobiographical performance could be seen as embodying—literally and figuratively—the institutionalization of Famous People Players as a company and as a space. Although, as was noted earlier in this section, aggressively engaged content and formal experimentation have not been conspicuous characteristics of either Dupuy's solo work or that of her company, gone are the days of mildly subversive

hand-puppet shows starring the current prime minister. As a matter of fact, as we learnt from Bradshaw's article concerning the opening of the second Famous People Players home theatre, Dupuy has since succeeded in making strategic alliances with politicians and other public figures.

Viewed in another way, however, autobiographical performance, as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington argue in a rather different context, "encourages audience members to identify with the actual performers," thereby making "the audience's awareness of . . . emotional vulnerability" (61) more acute. Govan, Nicholson, and Normington propose that "[a]utobiographical narratives" in general are actually "spaces" in themselves, or more precisely, "spaces where an individual's private stories are offered up for public consumption" (59). That said, they go on to caution that, as a whole, irrespective of form or method of transmission, autobiography should not be thought of "as a direct communication between the essential selves of the author and their audience." Building upon the postmodern critical work of Louis Renza, they question "the idea that the self is a coherent unity which might be called 'authentic'" (60) and that somehow might also be performed publicly with complete authenticity. Renza stresses "the distance between self and the performance of self-identity" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56) and "foregrounds the process of creation which sits at the heart of the production and reception of autobiographical texts." This "process of creation," in broad terms, entails "a reflection upon personal experience that is subjected to the filters of memory and personal editing." Autobiography is, therefore, a type of "bricolage" (60) at its core, as artists utilizing it in the production of new works are "constrained to work with existing material," and their creations, whatever the medium, are necessarily "only ever the contingent result[s] of the combination of things that were ready to hand" (Buchanan).

We have now found ourselves revisiting—albeit in a different but not, as we shall soon see, entirely unrelated context—the impact of the "process of creation" on both content and form. With respect to content as it relates to autobiography, there is not only the problem of what can be recalled—part of the larger concern with regard to being forced to rely upon human memory that has been mentioned before—to consider but also the problem of how memories are recalled: "what is remembered may not be the truth but an embroidered version of the real" (63), a point that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington reiterate in several different ways. Both of these must be taken into account whether one is examining "the performance of self-identity" in the development and performance of autobiographical theatrical productions or in daily life. This type of "performativity thus collapses the boundaries between that which occurs on stage and everyday events" (56), and this can influence an artist's or company's decisions concerning form as well.

Before we take a look at a few examples of these, we should briefly return to our more general consideration of the importance of the "process of creation." Renza's emphasis on creative process—which has since been adopted by Govan, Nicholson, and Normington—might remind the reader, fittingly, of Jurkowski's own ranking of it as "[t]he most important element" in both "the actors' theatre of the

avant-garde" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) and "contemporary puppet theatre" (43). Just as we have needed to with Jurkowski's argument, however, we must break down this monolithic conception of *process* further. We must likewise examine more closely Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's claim that "[a]utobiographical narratives are spaces . . ." (59) and how it might relate to Knowles's model of "theatrical space" ("Survival" 2) as a nexus of "physical and metaphorical locations [that] are inextricably connected" (1). Furthermore, we must connect all of this back to the work of Puppetmongers and devised puppet theatre more generally.

 "Creating an original performance, as opposed to staging a play" that has already been written, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington explain, "inevitably involves drawing upon personal experience or reframing pre-existing material within a collectively designed structure" (55). It is the former strategy that concerns us more here, although a number of companies, including Puppetmongers, have had recourse to both over their histories. Throughout this section, I have heeded the precedent established by Knowles by accepting that "physical and metaphorical locations" ("Survival" 1) must both be taken into account when attempting to arrive at an understanding of "theatrical space" (2), either as a general theoretical concept or as a given performance site. There can be, of course, some overlap between "physical and metaphorical locations" and between concrete and theoretical "theatrical space." When conceptualized as a "space," autobiography in general leans towards the metaphorical side, although it inevitably carves out a performance space of its own, even if that space is limited to a single individual's embodied "performance of self-identity" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56) in everyday practice. Renza clarifies that two separate spaces are actually brought together through the telescoping of time: "The content of the narrative set[s] up a screen between the truth of the narrated past and the present of the narrative situation" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56).

 In "shaping intimate thoughts, feelings and experiences for a witnessing audience," theatre artists engaged in the development of autobiographical productions tend to incorporate elements of "truth and fiction by recognizing that the imagination is integral to the narrative of selfhood," Govan, Nicholson, and Normington contend. Having done so, these artists may leave no signposts in their productions as to "what is truthful and what is fictional," which can result in "the question of the authenticity of narratives . . . [being] raised." In the context of theatrical devising, this is part of the more general tendency of "contemporary devisers [to] construct theatrical narratives that are explicitly intended to challenge neat distinctions between the fictional and real, between secrets and lies, and between imagination and authenticity" (56). Such "unfixed qualities of performance," Govan, Nicholson, and Normington conclude, "invite audiences to recognize the ways in which fiction is contained in reality, and how reality is always implied in fictional or fictionalised narratives" (57).

 Spectators might realize that there are broader connections to be made here with lived experience other than just the construction and performance of identity. Related to Postlewait's assertion that

narrativity is essential to our ability to process "individual and social experience" (177) is the earlier claim made by "[c]ultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan . . . that a fundamental human activity is to 'attach meaning to and organise place and space'" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 103). Indeed, we seek to uncover—or to help to create—the narrative or story behind a space, for "humans have a particular aptitude for symbolisation[,] and . . . their organisation of place and space is often endowed with the impulse to make concrete representation of values and beliefs" (103), as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington write in summary of Tuan's theory. Govan, Nicholson, and Normington also draw upon Michel de Certeau's work in cultural studies in order to elucidate the difference between place and space. Outlining de Certeau's understanding of these terms, they state that, according to him, "place is a geographic location with particular rules and regulations while space is the product of the social interactions which happen within that place and, as such, has a much more fluid identity" (104). In other words, while places may be found, spaces must be created.

Space is, in its turn, "often use[d] . . . as one of the ingredients in the creative process" (103) by devisers, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington observe. Devised theatre practitioners can avail themselves of this "ingredient" in several different ways: as "a springboard for creative ideas" or "as a framework that draws together an eclectic range of artistic activity," for example. In order to establish some kind of meaningful contact with space, devising companies "have developed a range of space-making strategies that engage directly with the environment within which they are working," so as to make it their own somehow. Ultimately, of course, such spaces must be shared with spectators, and spatial "interventions" by these companies "serve to activate the performance site and facilitate a process of creative symbolisation which may relate to the belief system of a community or the artistic values of a particular company" (104), as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington recognize, and convey that symbolization to an audience.

Given that they underscore the effectiveness "of space-making strategies that engage directly with the environment," one might assume that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington only discuss those devised theatre companies that create site-specific productions for the most part. They do in fact initially place emphasis on this sort of work in the examples of environmentally sensitive "space-making strategies" that they offer, such as "transforming a non-theatrical place (a suburban home, for example) into a theatrical space" (104). That said, they would nonetheless agree with Knowles's argument that "there's no such thing as an empty space" and that "all spaces," even the most conventional of theatre buildings, must therefore "be interrogated and, in an important sense, dislocated (or at least denaturalized) . . ." ("Survival" 2). Indeed, they devote an entire chapter to investigating "the creation of performance environments with a particular emphasis on the creation of theatrical landscapes within theatre buildings." Each of these seemingly rather use-specific places must still be "transfigure[d] . . . into a theatrical space" (105).

In the introduction to the aforementioned chapter, entitled "Making Performance Space/Creating Environments," Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, building on the theoretical groundwork of scholars such as Tuan and de Certeau, develop the concepts of *place* and *space* further, stressing that "place is . . . a static, arranged location, while space is unfixed, responsive and moulds itself to its occupants." They point out that these two concepts are directly applicable to an analysis of theatres in the sense of purpose-built buildings, for they "are 'places' since they represent a fixed location in which culture and social meaning can be controlled and represented for an audience." Even so, "the act of performance-making can shift the place to create a space," and "by opening up the space of the building" in order "to widen the boundaries of performance," theatre artists can, by extension, constructively "question the 'rules' of performance" (106) more generally.

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington cite the theatre practice of Schechner as an exemplar of "the way in which a performance space can be used to its full extent." His goal, they assert, was to work against a received "sense of place in order to create a malleable space that actors and audience could share," a genuine "environment" or "living state in which a performance c[ould] take place" (107). As Schechner himself put it, he and his company, The Performance Group, were endeavouring to create a performance space that felt "more lived in" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 108) to both the performers and the spectators. Although Schechner was unquestionably the head of and driving force behind The Performance Group, it was from the performers' interactions with the initial place, "a small garage in New York City" (107), that the actual "design and use of the space" (108) was derived. Only then could it justifiably carry the burden of its own name: The Performing Garage. Still, the original place could not be completely palimpsested by the space generated by the performers, for "articulating a space means letting the space have its say" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 108), as Schechner acknowledged. These efforts on the part of the members of The Performance Group, led by Schechner, were not, however, primarily verbal or intellectual in emphasis; rather, the surrounding space was perceived and interpreted from within the internal spaces of the performers' (and spectators') own bodies. According to Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's construal of this spatial dynamic, the ways in which the performers and spectators related to the space were "'haptic' (meaning 'to touch') in that the properties of the space seem[ed] to 'touch' the spectator and actors." The contact was "not literal, but through the senses; a feeling of the space" (108).

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's examination of Schechner's perspective and approach may seem reminiscent of Barton's analysis of the body, space, intuition, and the work of Number Eleven Theatre, and there are indeed a number of connections to be drawn between The Performance Group and contemporary devised theatre companies. Schechner, as Barton writes of Wells with regard to Number Eleven, chose to depend "almost entirely . . . on the material generated by the performers," who were "the space in which and *from* which the work . . . [was] sculpted" ("Making" 6) as they created space around

themselves. There is also a more general connection back to Jurkowski to be made, given that he locates "the creative process" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) at the centre of theatre as a whole and the "actor or puppetplayer" (43), in her turn, at the centre of that process.

As has already been demonstrated with the examples of *The Pirate Widow Cheng* and the workshop production of *Hard Times*, both developed by Puppetmongers Theatre, the body of the human performer can similarly be foregrounded, even if only temporarily, in the devising process employed by a contemporary puppet theatre company. There are other, more object-centred techniques, however, that, while also used by devising companies in the human theatre on an ad hoc basis to generate creative and scenic space, are a natural fit in a puppetry company's toolbox of devising tactics. Moreover, one such technique has already been presented in this study as a means of channelling spontaneity in the object-rich environment of puppet theatre.

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington note that, in order "to create a sense of environment within theatre and performance spaces," theatre "practitioners have frequently employed processes developed from modern art and architectural fields. . . ." One such process has been the introduction of "collections of objects and materials from the external world . . . into the arena of the performance space" (106). One of the more particular models that the authors have in mind is Robert Smithson, who, beginning towards the end of the 1960s, "collected objects from their natural sites and placed them within a 'neutral' gallery." He referred to "the original habitat" (109) of each of the transposed objects as a "site" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 109), while he designated "the new, unspecific gallery space" (109-10) to which it had been moved "non-site" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 110). The "dialectical opposition between" these two spaces means that, "by placing real objects within a gallery or performance, the nature of the illusion of the display space is revealed." It is, in other words, an alienating practice, in that, as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington infer, "the objects are 'real' when they are in their home environment, [but] they become 'false' when placed in a new one" (110).

The objects, in their new location, are only "false," of course, in the sense that they have been semiotized and layered, by the audience, with new meaning. Smithson—and thus Govan, Nicholson, and Normington—may have focused on the use of "objects from . . . natural sites" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 109) in particular to achieve this type of alienation effect, but, as we know from our discussion of *The Brick Bros. Circus* in the third chapter, for example, human-made objects can prove just as alienating in this regard. Manufactured objects can also serve as creative catalysts in devising just as readily as natural ones, as is likewise evidenced by *The Brick Bros. Circus* but also, for an example from the human theatre, by Number Eleven's *Icaria*, which, as was stated much earlier in this chapter, was created out of a variety of "fragments," including "odds of furniture" and "boots with heels worn down by someone else's feet," along with more intangible "pieces" and "snatches" (K. Wells, Grimes, Rucker, McLean, and J. Wells, "Number Eleven" 87), as Ker Wells reveals.

What is more difficult to pin down, although it is no less significant, is how such objects can be used to help infuse a space with "a sense of . . . being 'lived in,'" to turn to Govan, Nicholson, and Normington once more, during both rehearsals and performances, so that it becomes "capable of being shaped by, and reflecting, human experience" (111). In the same article from which Govan, Nicholson, and Normington quote on the subject of the work of The Performance Group, Schechner claims that the Paleolithic "art of archaic and primitive peoples . . . [arose] out of their living environments." One could find in this "cave art" a certain "logic continuous with but at the same time a transformation of living spaces." On the other hand, "Western mimetic art," he contends, "breaks the continuity between living spaces and artistic spaces"; it "duplicates rather than transforms living spaces" ("On Environmental Design" 392). Literally merging performance space with living space was not Schechner's objective; that said, in order to order for a performance space to "appear more lived in," there are a number of questions that should be contemplated, such as "Would I like to live in this place? If so, where? Why? If not, why not? Are my answers in keeping with the play?" (391). Like Schechner, the Powells have never expressed any interest in actually living in their studio. Nonetheless, David Powell, in outlining how they divided up the studio space that they occupied at the time that the workshop production of *Hard Times* was being developed, implies that domestic concerns were considered along with artistic ones, for he remarks that that had split it up "into a main space, a storage area, and a back cosy kitchen and sewing area" ("Re: School"). Their present home, also "[o]ne big main room," has been similarly laid out since they settled into it in August 2012 (A. Powell, "Re: *Hard Times* and Twins Show").

The way in which the Powells choose to organize their studio space is not something to be glossed over, for their productions are developed, rehearsed, revised, and sometimes even performed within that spatial womb. Schechner insists that "[t]he arrangement of things is as important as the things themselves" ("On Environmental Design" 393) and maintains that, in holding this belief, he is allied with the long-gone practitioners of "[p]rimeval art" (392). The Powells would seem to share this perspective as well; furthermore, it is also tempting to draw a connection between the Powells' use of their studio space and Schechner's more figurative understanding of animism, the "system" that he associates with Paleolithic artists. Indeed, any philosophy "that accepts *all things as alive in space*"—in the sense that, as Schechner clarifies, "there is no 'dead space,' no 'neutral' object or place," since any given space or "object . . . has its distinct and living qualities" (393)—also allows for both objects and spaces to act as agents in the creative process. Thus, it appears that Knowles's contention that one "can't always control those spaces" in which one creates work, with the result that one's "work gets pulled around by them in unanticipated ways" ("Survival" 3), has probably always obtained in a general way. The proposition that objects are also capable of exercising their agency is more specifically relevant to puppetry, and, in that context, the most poetic spokesperson for this school of thought is surely Jurkowski: "Each puppet embodies a programme of its acting self. . . . If the player wants to realise this programme he has to

submit to the puppet. And this is the model of the relationship between the 'magic' puppet and its puppeteer. The puppeteer serves the puppet — that is he serves its magic" ("Towards a Theatre" 42).

We have already, of course, been acquainted with Jurkowski's opinion on this matter, not to mention his own thoughts on animism as it relates to his proposed theory as to the evolution of the puppet ("Towards a Theatre" 37-40). Now, however, it, along with Knowles's point about space, can be reframed in a more positive—or at less more neutral—fashion. Jurkowski's assertion that the constructed puppet, since it "is only a pictorial representation of the character" and must therefore embody that character, "passes through one stage of transformation only" (41) was criticized in the second and third chapters. The truth is that the purpose-built puppet can enjoy the same freedom of signification that, according to Jurkowski, the object as such is always inherently able to. What this means is that, in one way, neither the puppet nor the object truly "embodies a programme of its acting self," in spite of Jurkowski's proclamation that the puppet does and that is why the manipulator must "submit to" it. In reality, "the performer must invent" this "programme of acting . . . from [her or] his own imagination" (42) in both cases, as Jurkowski says only of the performer's relationship with the object, even if that process of invention amounts to actualizing onstage, in partnership with the puppet, the character a given constructed puppet was made to represent.

All that said, in another way, albeit one that Jurkowski probably did not have in mind, a puppet or object can indeed "give the impulse to the puppetplayer," who therefore, in bringing it to life in a certain way, "serves the puppet — that is . . . serves its magic." This is not as teleological a process as Jurkowski would have us believe that it is. Moreover, there are factors other than the characteristics of the object or puppet in question—such as, in the case of the puppet only, according to Jurkowski, "its plastic expression, its technique of animation and its tradition of movement" ("Towards a Theatre" 42)—that must be taken into account, particularly its spatial context.

Jurkowski's declaration that "[t]he most important element" in both "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" ("Towards a Theatre" 42) and the "contemporary puppet theatre" (43) has been quoted several times already. Furthermore, as we were made aware by Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, a key component of this process—in both of the theatrical contexts mentioned by Jurkowski, as it turns out—can be the creation of "a living space" through the integration of "collections of objects and materials . . . into the arena of the performance space" (106). In addition, it should be added, objects can be used to generate rehearsal space within a predefined place, and by elevating the status of objects so that they, like the performers manipulating them and indeed like the space surrounding all of these animate and inanimate bodies, help to shape the work thereby developed, puppet artists implicitly call into question the only apparent "unity of approach for puppets' and actors' theatre" (43) of which Jurkowski explicitly denies the existence.

As was noted at the close of the fourth chapter, Jurkowski, as he himself confesses, was not actually able to offer any convincing evidence as to why no such "unity of approach" with regard to the "contemporary puppet theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43) and "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" (42) in fact exists. Over the course of this dissertation, particularly since the conclusion of the fourth chapter, some corroboration of his refutation has been provided, even though, as has been underscored a few times, similarities have been emphasized as much as differences, at least in the more specific "avant-garde" context of theatrical devising. We can now perceive an especially sharp difference between the two with respect to how space and objects can collaborate, so to speak, in the development of a particular devised production. The critical mass of objects—constructed puppets, some from their own past productions, others belonging to various traditions from around the world; the raw materials used to build the aforementioned puppets, as well as costumes and props for both human and puppet performers, set pieces, and so on; the leftovers remaining after such constructional efforts; and a miscellany of sundry other things too varied to break down any further here—that has amassed within the Powells' studio supplies more than just some interesting conversation pieces to show to visitors. This salmagundi definitively establishes the studio as their space, even if they only lease it; that is, it furnishes both the resources that can be used (sometimes in unexpected ways) to create new work and the general atmosphere of "a living space" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 106) in which the work can be cultivated.

Contrasting place with space, Tuan concludes that "place is experienced as security, while space represents freedom" (106), Govan, Nicholson, and Normington inform the reader. Although this may seem to be a reasonable judgment at first, given how these two concepts are understood by Tuan—not to mention Govan, Nicholson, and Normington themselves, along with de Certeau, as outlined above—some degree of "security" can be beneficial, as it can give collaborators the time and thus mental clarity that can facilitate an approach to new work development that is so, as Barton puts it, "*opportunistic*" ("Making" 2): theatrical devising. An environment in which devisers feel "safe" to create would be advantageous, considering the risks—dramaturgical and, frequently, physical—that they often take as part of an approach that "rel[ies] to an uncommon degree on coincidence" (2-3), as Barton stresses. Devising "is a form of theatre that requires its practitioners to be highly sensitive to the unpredicted, and to be able to seize and capitalize on the unexpected" (3), and even a space that is only temporarily possessed by a company can allow devisers to hone their sensitivity "to the unpredicted" and to store and possibly rediscover, through play, a panoply of assorted objects, potentially the primary means by which they "seize and capitalize on the unexpected."

No space or place is completely secure, however. A company can be suddenly but, in the end, only briefly dislocated from the space that it has created, as Puppetmongers, along with the guest artists also working on the workshop production of *Hard Times*, was a result of the fire alarm test discussed

earlier in this section and in the section on movement flexibility. Dislocation from a particular space can also be permanent, as might have been the case, for example, if an actual fire had broken out during the Puppetmongers rehearsal that was interrupted temporarily by the aforementioned fire alarm test. The catalyst for displacement can certainly be less conflagrant in nature: it can be something as superficially mundane as a lease expiring.

The way in which a company handles even such a quotidian spatial problem can in fact reveal much about its relationship with space. When the Powells' relatively short-term lease on a studio expires—after only three years, in one case (D. Powell, "Re: School")—they can disassemble their shelving, pack up their puppets, tools, and other belongings, and transport it all to another place in order to establish a new space of their own. This requires considerable effort on their part, to be sure: aside from the packing, loading, unloading, unpacking, and so on, there is the work of generating the space itself, which is still related to those physical tasks associated with moving into a new space, since, in addition to their own bodies, they deploy their "collections of objects and materials" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 106) so as to make the space their own.

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington draw attention to Tuan's recognition of "the important relationship between space and time" (131), foregrounding one of his central questions in particular: "[H]ow long does it take to get to know a place?" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 131). They, quite justifiably, point out that his "is an important question for site-related performance as artists may be allocated a short amount of time to research and develop a performance," and these artists consequently might scarcely be able "to gain a superficial appreciation of the site" (131). That notwithstanding, if we turn to Tuan's book, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, itself, we can readily perceive that his rather poetic spatial and temporal analysis is equally relevant in the context of a company like Puppetmongers, which, in terms of its relationship with space, sits somewhere in between the companies engaged in site-specific theatre that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington mention—or, more broadly, the "nomadic companies" ("Survival" 2) examined by Knowles—and more entrenched companies like Famous People Players with extensive physical plants at their disposal.

Tuan posits several types of spatial "knowledge" that can be gained in different ways and at different rates. "Abstract knowledge *about* a place," for example, "can be acquired in short order if one is diligent," presumably through research and investigation. "The visual quality of" a place can similarly be "quickly tallied if one has the artist's eye." "[T]he 'feel' of a place," on the other hand, "takes longer to acquire," for "[i]t is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years" (183). This more phenomenological form of knowledge "is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, of work and play" (183-84), unique, that is, to both the place itself and to the individual

experiencing it. The "feel" of a place is intimately related to the "bodily knowledge" ("Making" 4) analyzed by Barton, as it too "is registered in one's muscles and bones" (Tuan 184).

Tuan initially applies his theory regarding experiential knowledge of place to the physical and behavioural changes that occur as humans acclimatize to different natural environments. The benefits of this sort of gradual adaptation in response to—or, more accurately, in interaction with—one's surroundings would not seem to be open to dispute; indeed, this "subconscious kind of knowing," as Tuan classifies it, would seem to be free of possible pitfalls. There is a warning implied in his claim, however, that, as we acclimatize and "become more familiar with a place, . . . we can take more and more of it for granted." Thus, "a new house ceases to make little demands on our attention" and comes to be "as comfortable and unobtrusive as an old pair of slippers" (184). Here we can make a more specific connection back to Barton's probe into the relationship between devising and both "individual intuition and bodily knowledge" ("Making" 11), for, just as one can get to be so "familiar with a place" that one can start to "take . . . it for granted" (184), as Tuan observes, so too can one begin to take one's own body for granted. Barton's explanation of the consequences of this to devised theatre practitioners was presented in the fifth chapter. The fact that Puppetmongers is often—but not too often—forced to relocate and adapt to a new space may therefore allow for a productive degree of acclimatization while still preventing the Powells from becoming too "familiar with a place." Since an overly "comfortable" (Tuan 184) relationship with a given space is not permitted to develop, the likelihood of them taking "intellectual and bodily 'short cuts'" (Barton, "Making" 11) related to their use of space is reduced. Moreover, the vagaries of leasing a space within a larger place (a large industrial building that is anything but a conventional theatre space) over which they ultimately have no real control keep them on their toes. Puppetmongers is certainly not as "dislocated, nomadic, or engaged in a kind of guerrilla theatre" as the companies at the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium with which Knowles was primarily concerned in his address and subsequent article. It nevertheless follows, of necessity, "the guerrilla practice of shifting ground, . . . refusing to settle in to entrenched positions and taken-for-granted places or starting points," although perhaps not as "continually and purposefully" as the companies Knowles had in mind. Even so, each time the Powells arrive at a new (to them) studio space, or indeed tour to a new school or performance space, or even enter into a new collaboration with other artists (hosting the rehearsals themselves, as they did for the *Hard Times* workshop production, or visiting a doubly new organizational and physical space), they must "ask questions about how this (new) cultural, social, organizational, or physical space can be made to work this time" ("Survival" 3).

By using a selection of items from their ever-growing but always, with considerable preparation, mobile hoard in conjunction with their own bodies to create space, the Powells are able to resist (to some extent) the force exerted by rehearsal and performance spaces themselves, for, as we have been informed by Knowles, "work gets pulled around by them in unanticipated ways" ("Survival" 3). Still, as Knowles

and others have outlined, such efforts are not ever likely to be totally successful. In fact, Schechner cautions us that they should not be, since "[a]rticulating a space means letting the space have its say" ("On Environmental Design" 185n2). As we know, he lauds the artists of the Paleolithic period for doing just this, and his comparison of them with their ancient Greek counterparts is surprisingly analogous to a comparison of Puppetmongers with Famous People Players in terms of how they respectively work in and with space: "The Greek way is to transform the material and conceptualize the thing. The primeval way is to work directly with the material and to keep intact the tension between the thing and the material" (394).

This "tension between the thing and the material" ("On Environmental Design" 394) is, according to Schechner, what "gives primeval art its special aliveness." It arises, he proposes, because every artist, presumably regardless of medium, encounters "two orders of reality" that are contradictory: "putting things in space according to the logic of the things themselves . . . [and] dealing forthrightly with the material out of which the things are made or extruded" (393). Prehistoric art is imbued with this tension, but the ancient Greeks were uncomfortable with it and therefore "resolved" (394) it, Schechner, citing "art and architecture historian" (392) S. Giedion, argues, "by developing the neutral field—separating the artwork from its material source" (394). He further elucidates that this "neutral field, best exemplified in the blank white stretched canvas," would become "the basic convention of Western Renaissance art" and much of that which would follow, for "[t]he Western artist smoothes out the surfaces and makes it neutral before [s]he begins" (393).

Schechner claims that "[p]rimeval art is an extension and transformation of the living environment from which it arises and back into which it subsides" ("On Environmental Design" 392), but of course, in the case of Puppetmongers, this environment is an artificial one. There are, in fact, layers of artifice: the building in which the Powells' studio is located; the studio itself; the various shelving units, pieces of furniture, and so forth that they use to divide up the space; and the materials and objects that they have collected. The studio can therefore hardly be equated with a natural structure such as a cave.

Nevertheless, the Powells themselves are directly responsible for creating only a fraction of those things. There does seem to be an organic quality to assembling what is needed to move the process (and story) forward out of what happens to be on hand. The maquette puppet, which has already been mentioned many times, is, of course, an ideal illustration of this. For a more comprehensive—spatially, at least—frame of reference, one could look at the set for the workshop production of *Hard Times*, which gradually came together over the first few rehearsals. It began during the very first rehearsal with the performers using milk crates and chairs, common enough sights in a rehearsal studio, to establish some different playing areas, levels, and so on. Soon, a pair of ladders and a piece of wood, likewise objects that one would hardly be surprised to find in a studio, were also brought into play. All of these items could be adjusted, as deemed necessary, as easily as they were acquired, thereby ensuring a high degree of space flexibility—not to mention, it probably goes without saying, design flexibility, with regard to the

set; movement flexibility, with regard to how the set could be used; and even narrative flexibility, for the story, along with the ways in which they were considering telling it, had to be tested.

Earle himself, after all, frankly acknowledged that his preliminary adaptation was "being taken up by the company." As work began on the first scene during that first rehearsal, it was soon decided, for example, that Rajaram would play both Gradgrind and McChoakumchild, one of the teachers in Gradgrind's employ. As was discussed above in the section on movement flexibility, Rajaram used a mask when presenting the role of Gradgrind, sometimes as a mask proper, sometimes as a puppet. McChoakumchild, on the other hand (literally, for a brief time as an experiment during the first rehearsal, when Rajaram tried holding one in each hand as they interacted with each other and with other characters, although after that, the Gradgrind mask remained on Rajaram's face while the two characters were onstage together), was consistently represented by a puppet. The form that that puppet took, however, did go through some significant changes, in part due to how the collaborators—but especially Earle—wanted the relationship between Gradgrind and McChoakumchild to be portrayed, but also, I would argue, based on my observation of the rehearsal process, due to how the performers were using the space. McChoakumchild began life in rehearsals—indeed, during the first rehearsal—as a lowly fly-swatter, a hastily chosen stand-in or maquette puppet that symbolized quite strikingly, if you will, that character's propensity for disciplinary violence against his students. Only a few minutes later, though, David Powell impulsively decided to slap together a different maquette puppet, constructed out of two pieces of scrap wood, that would quickly flip up to a standing position from a prone position when Rajaram stepped on its base; it was, in other words, another "Canadian control" puppet that, once standing, could remain so unaided. Even though everyone present appreciated the humour of the explosive appearances that resulted, which matched Rajaram's equally explosive vocalization for the character, after a few days, the collaborators settled on a more conventional type of maquette puppet to stand in for McChoakumchild: a hand puppet. More specifically, it was a hand puppet representing the traditional character of the Doctor from a Punch and Judy set in the Powells' collection; David Powell removed its identifying prop, a stethoscope, and just over two weeks later, added a new one: a makeshift mortar board. Rajaram and the Powells even experimented with the idea of combining these two versions of McChoakumchild, but Earle decided to exercise his dual authority as director and playwright and determined that only the hand puppet was to be used, justifying his verdict with reference to the themes of and characters in the adaptation: he wanted McChoakumchild to be a literalized extension of Gradgrind, under his full control, and the hand puppet proved an ideal vehicle for this metaphorical message.

Of course, the hand puppet was also ideal for literalizing McChoakumchild's previously mentioned violence against his students. As Arnott points out, every type of puppet comes "with its own peculiar advantages and drawbacks" (58), although he patently does not believe that all puppets are created equal, since he concludes that "*marionettes* are [the] most generally satisfactory" (60). Speaight

nonetheless demonstrates convincingly that there several kinds of stage action that are "easy effect[s] for glove puppets, but very tricky with marionettes"; the "use of little 'props'" in particular "cries out for glove puppet treatment." Drawing upon his seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of English puppetry, as well as his practical experience, especially that which he gained from manipulating the puppets for the Old Vic production of *Bartholomew Fair* first staged in 1950, Speaight asserts that the puppet show within Jonson's play was implicitly written to be performed by hand puppets. He cites, for example, bits of stage business like "the puppets lean[ing] out of the stage to hit the showman over the head" ("*Bartholomew*" 113). The "vivifying effect on the puppets" (Veltruský 117) that this sort of puppet-on-human violence can generate was analyzed in detail in the fourth chapter, as was "the vivification" that can be triggered by "human performers . . . addressing them [the puppets] as performers" (116), *Bartholomew Fair* again serving as an ideal example. Indeed, Speaight proclaims that this play is "full of 'puppet points'" in general, such as "knockabout funny business and audience participation" (112).

The Puppetmongers workshop production of *Hard Times* was likewise "full of 'puppet points'" (Speaight, "*Bartholomew*" 113), although the limited onstage violence involved puppet characters only. McChoakumchild was to wield two different weapons over the course of the actual performance of the workshop production (which ended up being of the first of two acts only): a slim piece of wood that could fit between the puppet's thumb and other fingers, so that it could be held there unaided as a combined pointer and club, and a much larger, thicker piece of wood, possibly a chair leg, that had to be gripped using both of the puppet's hands. The first was inexplicably cut before the actual performance, most likely due to nothing more than forgetfulness on Rajaram's part, making it an understandable oversight, given the stress and anxiety that can surround performing a piece, especially a work-in-progress, in front of an audience for the first time. It was to be used, however, in the opening scene, in which sections of dowelling were used to represent the students in McChoakumchild's class, with the exception of the small *matryoshka* doll that represented Sissy (also known as Cecilia) Jupe, one of the more important secondary characters in the play and the most frequent target of her teacher's wrath, and that of a Lego figurine representing an unnamed student, which presumably was included to add some humour and variety to the composition of the class. Later in the performance, this antagonistic relationship became more physicalized when McChoakumchild tackled Sissy (who was by this point being depicted through the employment of a hand puppet, the Judy puppet from the same set as the Doctor puppet representing McChoakumchild, in fact) and slammed her against the ground a few times for giving what he thought to be an incorrect answer to one of his questions. A few moments later, he hit her once with the larger club described above for the same reason.

McChoakumchild's vociferations and violent acts were greeted with laughter from a number of spectators who probably would not have reacted in the same way to a human actor playing a teacher beating and verbally abusing one of his students, also played by a human actor. McChoakumchild

therefore followed in the tradition of other comically irascible hand puppets, their paragon being Punch. McChoakumchild did not in fact go as far as Punch, and even the latter, when "[a]pproached historically," Speaight advises, should "be seen not as an inhuman monster who goes through life striking and murdering every one who crosses his path, but as the old comedian . . . who only murders each new character brought up before him as the quickest way of ending *that* scene and getting on with the next." Even an untrained spectator, who does not possess Speaight's knowledge of Punch and other comic characters and forms and who consequently may not analyze such a performance at the same level, will nevertheless "have sensed . . . that the beatings and the killings are only a convention with no relation to reality, and that behind his [Punch's] wooden victories there lies the arch-type of 'he who gets slapped,' the primitive and eternal clown" (*Punch* 79), Speaight himself submits.

McChoakumchild did not have to confront any challenges comparable to those that Punch traditionally must face, including that which is provided by the character of the Doctor, who "comes to Punch's assistance after a fall from a horse, sometimes after his fright from the Ghost," Speaight explains. Resulting from this encounter "are various traditional funny lines and bits of business" (*Punch* 86) as the Doctor inspects Punch's "body for bruises and feels his pulse" (86-87) while his patient "usually pretends he is dead—and says so!" This routine culminates in the Doctor determining "that Punch is shamming and produc[ing] his physic—a stick," but after the patient receives multiple supposedly medicinal blows, "Punch always gives the Doctor a dose of his own medicine" (87). Of course, the Doctor would also, as it turned out, come to "lend" one of his incarnate bodies to McChoakumchild.

Even though McChoakumchild did not fall into "the arch-type of 'he who gets slapped,' the primitive and eternal clown" (Speaight, *Punch* 79), at least not due to having received any literal beatings, he was still, as Earle made clear in his decision with regard to which type of puppet was to be used to represent McChoakumchild onstage, a "clown" of a more metaphorical variety. Classifying him as a buffoon would actually be more accurate, as he was not—as Punch becomes over the course of his traditional narrative—a plucky underdog battling representatives of authority, but rather a puppet manipulated (literally, of course, but also figuratively) by Rajaram as Gradgrind, aping his opinions and words. McChoakumchild was but a cog in the educational and utilitarian machine epitomized in the Gradgrind School, having been "[l]ately turned, along with a hundred and forty other schoolmasters, at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs," as the Narrator declared. He was not in actuality even a skilled mimic, as he would often, to very humorous effect, be overhasty in anticipating what Gradgrind was going to say and would end up having to contradict himself seconds later. As a result, he would find himself being "slapped" by Gradgrind, albeit only metaphorically; Rajaram (as Gradgrind) did go so far as to restrain McChoakumchild physically, if only lightly, with his free hand during a few of his more tempestuous moments.

As the reader was informed in the third chapter, and may well have already known, Punch's voice—and, out of all of the character voices in a Punch and Judy show, only his voice—is traditionally distorted, conventionally but not invariably through the use of a swazzle.[93] Voice modification devices of various kinds have in fact been used in a number of puppet traditions around the world for centuries, and, as Proschan confirms, the purpose behind using one "varies from one tradition to another, in fact, from one moment to another within the performance" ("Puppet Voices" 533). In the context of the Punch and Judy show specifically, Percy Press, Jr., son of Percy Press (one of the more famous English Punch and Judy showmen of the twentieth century) and an inheritor of this puppet tradition, insightfully observes that distorting Punch's voice to such an extent that it becomes ridiculous "takes the cruelty out of" what would otherwise be "a controversial story" (qtd. in Proschan, "Puppet Voices" 541).

Speaight once claimed that "[t]here is an inherent disparity between the figure of the puppet and the voice of a man." He did concede that one "may become accustomed to the convention by which a full sized human voice is supposed to proceed from the (usually) immobile lips of a marionette" but nonetheless maintained "that in the past it was considered necessary to disguise the human voice when it spoke in the puppet show" ("Puppet Voices" 37). By the time his book *The History of the English Puppet Theatre* was published several years later, he had become much more meticulous in how he employed puppetry terminology (22-23). In this particular instance in an earlier short article, however, he seemed to be using the term *marionette* in a very loose way indeed, namely to refer to any type of puppet at all.[94] Another, perhaps more significant (and troubling) generalization is that he appears to accept English— and, more broadly, European—folk puppetry as representative of the whole art. In spite of that, his concluding point remains valid, even over sixty years after his article was published: "Today we may feel that the public has been educated to accept the human voice as a natural vehicle of puppet dialogue; it would be retrograde to suggest a general revival of the squeaker" ("Puppet Voices" 39), an alternative term for *swazzle* that was particularly prevalent in literary sources from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (38). That said, "there are shows in which it is desirable to reduce the human element to a minimum," he admits, and in such cases, the utilization of some sort of voice modification device could "lend just that 'unhuman' timbre to the voice that is necessary to make of the puppet show a completely distinct form of entertainment" (39).

Speaight's observations concerning voice modification in puppet theatre are echoed, in a more theoretical tone, in the ruminations of several of the semioticians of puppetry, most of whom we met in the second chapter. Bogatyrëv, for example, quotes "the Czech theorist and puppet theatre director" (50) Erik Kolár, who in turn had been analyzing an argument by Zich, as he identifies an essential "aesthetic contradiction in the dualism of puppet theater — the inanimate material of the puppet and the puppeteer's

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[93] See 139 and 139n69.

[94] Later in the same article, though, Speaight uses the term "marionette" ("Puppet Voices" 38) in a more precise manner, which confuses matters further.

human voice" (qtd. in Bogatyrëv 60). The assumption that a puppet must be wholly composed of "inanimate material" has already been interrogated in the second chapter, but a puppet must still be "perceived to be an object" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 82), as Tillis demonstrates. Thus, even when a given wholly animate puppet is being considered, "in a performance where the puppet's movements are organically blended with a human voice, Zich's contradiction does exist, and for that reason puppeteers have been distorting the human voice for quite some time" (60), as Bogatyrëv notes.

Bogatyrëv further remarks that, "with contemporary puppets whose shape differs strikingly from humans, the contradiction between the puppet's shape and movement and the puppeteer's ordinary voice naturally increases," which has prompted some modern puppet artists to "look for various means to distort the human voice" (61) even more radically, including technological means (61-62). He warns that "the use of machines in puppet theater to distort the human voice should be limited," however, given "that, in comparison with a live theater performance, the collective interplay of actor and audience occurs more often in puppetry," most obviously when the puppet addresses "the audience directly" (62). This "collective interplay" is, moreover, a major source of signification, along with "the interaction of live actors and puppets" (63).

Rajaram did not employ any such technological means of distorting his voice when speaking for the hand puppet representing McChoakumchild in the workshop production of *Hard Times*. Perhaps Bogatyrëv would not have been especially astonished, since the puppet in question was not one of those "whose shape differs strikingly from humans" (61), to quote Bogatyrëv again. What might have surprised him more was that artificial vocal distortion was not a tactic employed at all during either the development or performance of this adaptation of *Hard Times*, even though several characters were represented by everyday objects that did not at all clearly resemble human beings, as has been emphasized in a number of different contexts throughout this chapter. Even traditional, "analogue" means of distortion, such as the swazzle, were eschewed. Bogatyrëv does provide one example of a technique that requires no such mediation, but it belongs to "old Czech folk puppetry" (61). Proschan, however, insists that there are "other means . . . for puppeteers to develop a distinct system in which puppets can speak, a system which can collide with normal language and speech to provoke the audience's perception" ("Puppet Voices" 552), means that do not rely at all upon the use of vocal distortion devices.

Proschan makes a curious generalization as he attempts to elucidate the rationale behind and the effects of vocal distortion in puppet theatre. "Puppet voices," he expounds, "are small voices to correspond to the diminutive size of the puppets," for were the "puppets . . . to speak with normal human voices, . . . the incongruity would ruin the illusion" ("Puppet Voices" 548). Of course, a puppet need not be "diminutive" any more than it need be wholly inanimate, contrary to the other generalization (made by Kolár and Bogatyrëv) criticized in the context of puppet speech. Proschan is well aware of this, as he mentions the commonly far from diminutive puppets of the Sicilian rod-marionette (552) and Japanese

Bunraku (553) traditions himself, which makes his generalization all the more curious. Regardless, his implied argument that puppet speech is an inherently spatial matter not only brings us back to the subject that is our chief concern in this section but also grants us greater insight into complex interrelationship among Rajaram as a performer in the Puppetmongers workshop production of *Hard Times*, his portrayals of both Gradgrind and McChoakumchild, the other performers onstage, and the audience.

Vocal distortion in puppet theatre need not only yield "an internally consistent, mutually reinforcing semiotic system" ("Puppet Voices" 548-49), Proschan clarifies, for it can also render more apparent "the interaction of two distinct yet related" (549) systems, namely that of puppet theatre and that of the purely human theatre. Speech is but a more specific, constituent system of both of these semiotic systems, and the collision of these two corresponding sign systems of speech is "capable of producing humorous effect by virtue of their incongruity" (548). This incongruity is strikingly noticeable when a "human interlocutor stands beside a puppet," as then the other sign systems, design and movement, can "amplify the differences in languages" (549) in a particularly obvious way. This human interlocutor can be located at a certain remove from the puppetry performance proper—physically and semiotically. The Petrushka hand-puppet tradition of Russia—examined in this respect by both Bogatyrëv (64-66) and Jurkowski ("The Sign Systems" 64-65)—depends upon just such a human participant (in the form of the musician) in order to function. Even so, as Proschan reveals, any distance that such interlocutors put between themselves and the respective puppetry performances with which they interact collapses, for although they visibly "operate by breaking the performance frame" (547), they actually only "help to further the illusion unfolding on stage by seeming to subvert it—they make the frame by breaking it" (547-48).

As we know from the fourth chapter, even an already (productively) unstable boundary like the one between the musician and the puppetry performance in the Petrushka performance becomes all the more so (still productively) in tandem puppetry. Not unlike the Powells in *The Brick Bros. Circus*, Rajaram took on several "roles" (in both the sense of characters and that of functions in the performance) in the workshop production of *Hard Times*: in terms of characters, as has already been noted, at times, he had to play Gradgrind and McChoakumchild onstage simultaneously—although it usually would have been more accurate to have said that he had to switch between these two characters very quickly; in terms of functions, he was required to be an actor, a manipulator, a speaker (for the hand puppet representing McChoakumchild), and an interlocutor. All of these roles were (often humorously) brought into collision with one another, as were, by extension, the associated sign systems of the human and puppet theatres, again much as they are in *The Brick Bros. Circus*. As a matter of fact, one of the characters from that production, the Brick Contortionist—or rather, the cleverly disguised sponge used to represent her, along with a spare one the Powells also had on hand—found her way into a circus scene in *Hard Times*. Thus,

as in the production in which the Contortionist originally starred, the sign system of the circus joined those of the other two aforementioned sign systems, albeit only briefly this time.

We can follow this chain of signifying elements down as well as up: Prochan's example of two different sign systems of speech colliding in puppet theatre is very pertinent in relation to the workshop production of *Hard Times*, and the "incongruity" ("Puppet Voices" 548) of these two systems is even more marked "when the human interlocutor [who] stands beside a puppet" (549) is also manipulating and speaking for that puppet in full view of the audience. Such a collision of bodies (puppet and human), characters, functions, and sign systems would seem to give the audience more interpretative "work" to do, but "cues that signal distinct shifts between the many performance styles and modes in the piece" (126) can be provided, as Corbett wrote of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, a devised production from the human theatre that was, like *Hard Times*, inspired in part by the Punch and Judy tradition, as was discussed in greater detail in the fifth chapter. Rajaram's vocal shift into an intentionally stereotyped Irish accent when speaking for McChoakumchild was one such cue, and it was also an instance of one of the vocal distortion techniques not requiring the use of some kind of physical device that Proschan enumerates, namely "the shifting of registers" (552) in the linguistic sense, when a puppet artist begins to speak for a group of puppets representing a region, class, or some other social body distinct from the group for which she had previously been speaking. Although his examples are taken from traditional forms of puppetry—indeed, he cites Bogatyrëv's own example from traditional Czech puppetry (qtd. in Proschan, "Puppet Voices" 552)—he also offers a more contemporary example of the use of a related but more broadly defined technique, the incorporation of "exaggerated parodies of stereotypical speaking styles, elaborated far beyond what is necessary to differentiate the characters" (552). It is true that Proschan's example is a puppet artist who still adhered to a traditional form of puppetry—the rod marionette tradition of Liège—but, since a hand puppet from a Punch of Judy set was used to represent McChoakumchild in *Hard Times*, the same could be said of Rajaram, to some extent. The much more significant parallel, however, is that the parodic exaggeration of an Irish accent that Rajaram thought would be an appropriate choice for his portrayal of McChoakumchild was thrown into sharp relief by the accent with which it was juxtaposed: the upper-middle-class English accent that he employed when playing Gradgrind.

The juxtaposition of these two characters and voices in the workshop production of *Hard Times* did indeed prove "capable of producing humorous effect by virtue of their incongruity" ("Puppet Voices" 548), as Proschan would have predicted that it would. There was more to it than that, however, and in exposing this, we will move away from more theoretically spatial concerns and back to an exploration of space flexibility, in the main as it pertains to the "more common-sensical understanding of space . . . [as] the physical location of performance" ("Survival" 1) that Knowles mentions, before we conclude this admittedly lengthy but clearly central section. As has already been shown, and as will continue to be

shown, this section is directly related not only to all of the others that have preceded it within this chapter but also to all of the previous chapters. This discussion of space flexibility will, in fact, immediately propel us into the conclusion for this dissertation.

The workshop production of *Hard Times* was, as Speaight writes of Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, "full of 'puppet points,'" as was observed earlier. The two pieces actually shared some of the same "puppet points," albeit not to the same degree, including some "knockabout funny business and audience participation" ("*Bartholomew*" 112). The first point, as it manifested in *Hard Times*, has already been examined in isolation, but, in the context of this particular production, it was, as it happened, closely associated with the second point. In the opening scene of this incarnation of *Hard Times*, McChoakumchild (being manipulated by Rajaram) turned to the audience after Sissy (the *matryoshka* doll among the dowelling-section children under David Powell's control) failed to respond to his request for a definition of *horse*. Rajaram then broke the "fourth wall"—to claim that there were even three stage walls in the conventional sense would be a stretch, as the production was simply staged in a cleared area within the Puppetmongers studio, with only one actual wall helping to define the performance space, namely the one running behind the set—and had his hand puppet make the same request of several audience members. The only responses offered were a few quiet, perhaps nervous, laughs. As noted previously, McChoakumchild was not holding the pointer-cum-club that he was supposed to wield throughout this scene, a regrettable oversight, as that prop, as small and ultimately harmless as it was in reality, could have pushed this confrontation with the audience further through a strongly implied threat of potential violence should some spectator have failed to provide the definition that McChoakumchild wanted to hear or, like Sissy, or any definition whatsoever.

Had McChoakumchild's foray into the audience's domain been intensified in this manner, it would have definitely generated more than just "humorous effect" (Proschan, "Puppet Voices" 548). A readily perceivable threat to the audience, even one that could subsequently be dismissed just as readily, would have had the same "vivifying effect on the" hand puppet that Veltruský argues is induced when "the live performer represents the undergoer of the action performed by the puppet" (117). This effect could have also been augmented, should at least one spectator have proven brave enough to risk advancing a definition of *horse*, by this spectator joining Rajaram (as Gradgrind) in speaking to the hand puppet as if it were a living thing (116). Had the interaction between Rajaram (as McChoakumchild) and the audience been developed further, it also would have pointed up an aspect of space flexibility of which Rajaram (shortly before, as Gradgrind) had already taken advantage by addressing the audience members as if they, like the small objects atop two trays being carried by the Powells onstage, were students in McChoakumchild's class: the permeable nature of the boundary between the performers and the spectators.

The hand puppet was obviously an effective choice for this type of interaction, all the more so because it was being manipulated in the tandem style: the semiotic distance between the puppet and the human performer collapsed, just as the aesthetic and physical distance between both of the aforementioned signifiers and the seated spectators collapsed as well. Thus, the circumstances were ideal for spontaneous interaction with the audience, even if, as has been lamented already, they were not exploited as thoroughly and thoughtfully as they could have been. Furthermore, the intrinsic capabilities of the hand puppet itself could have been exploited more fully too. As Speaight reminds us, this type of puppet is particularly adept at handling "little 'props'" ("*Bartholomew*" 113), but, as we also know, McChoakumchild was not holding his favoured pedagogical and punitive implement during the scene in question when the workshop production of *Hard Times* was actually presented to an audience. The hand puppet's inherent capacity for quick full-body turns and nimble movements (albeit within a limited range) of the head and arms, however, was turned to account more successfully as McChoakumchild literally and figuratively got into the faces of several spectators and other puppets, not to mention a puppet operator, namely David Powell, during an especially tense confrontation between Sissy Jupe and the combined forces of McChoakumchild and Gradgrind. Although Powell did not break character as he manipulated the *matryoshka* doll representing Sissy, his face expressed her discomfort, a performance technique characteristic of tandem puppetry, as was explained in the fourth chapter.

Powell and Rajaram were so close to one another, in fact, that Powell was able to take over the manipulation of McChoakumchild with his right hand while still holding Sissy with his left, freeing Rajaram to approach the audience (as Gradgrind) to deliver the closing monologue for the scene. Already a challenging maneuver, its potential difficulty was compounded by the fact that it was suggested only two days before *Hard Times* was to be performed in front of an audience comprising more than just Earle and myself. Rajaram and the Powells had been working together on that production for just over two weeks by that time, of course, and had in fact been intermittently working together on the larger (and still ongoing) *Hard Times* project of which it was but a part for several years; still, the Powells' amenability to trying such arrangements with guest collaborators speaks more generally to their collaborative flexibility, the first of their "flexibilities" to be discussed in this chapter. Their flexibility in this regard becomes all the more apparent when one takes into consideration that Rajaram was the collaborator responsible for suggesting the handover of the McChoakumchild puppet to David Powell, not to mention his own confrontation with the audience, among other things. Such creative contributions from the performers served, as has been underscored previously in this chapter, to counterbalance and indeed reframe the authority and authorship that might have been thought to have inhered within Earle alone.

If one takes into account all that the hand-puppet version of McChoakumchild allowed Rajaram to do onstage so effectively—interact with the audience, interact with the puppet itself, switch between characters being portrayed, transgress, however briefly, the boundary between the performers and

spectators that had been established, and so on—it becomes difficult to question the decision to use it instead of the respective fly-swatter and scrap-wood versions that preceded it. According to my rehearsal observation notes, Rajaram himself was in fact the first to propose, towards the end of the first rehearsal, that he should try using a hand puppet to represent McChoakumchild, even if, over two weeks later, Earle, as director and playwright, was the one to authorize it definitively. The inspiration behind that choice, however, was rooted in the space itself, that is, the Puppetmongers studio, which reflected the developmental tendency that was identified earlier in this section. The McChoakumchild hand puppet itself was but one item in the assortment "of objects and materials [that] ha[d] been brought into the arena of the performance space" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 106) by the Powells in order to define the space that they occupied as their own in a creatively—more in the sense that it fuelled their creative process than that it was artfully arranged—meaningful way.

Recognizing this dimension of space flexibility obliges us to revisit Rajaram's questioning of my apparent compulsion to record who was responsible for coming up with each idea during the devising process for the workshop production of *Hard Times*. It complicates his challenge as well, and we can easily find ourselves mired in a kind of attributional *différance* as we perhaps endlessly defer making a final judgment as to who was responsible for a given idea. Was it truly Rajaram, as would indeed appear to be the case at first glance? Was it actually David Powell, who first struck upon the idea of using a hand puppet to stand in for a character? Was it in fact the individual at Harbourfront Centre—the Powells could not recall the person's name—who called them as many as eleven years ago, asking if they would like a complete Punch and Judy set, including a booth, painted backdrops, props, and so forth, that had been found in the residence of a recently deceased relative, who thereby ended up indirectly furnishing Rajaram with the Doctor puppet in the first place, so that he could go on to use it to represent McChoakumchild (A. Powell, Personal interview)?

The deceptively facile answer, of course, is that all of these people were responsible. They all converged—albeit not all physically—upon the Puppetmongers studio, and thus, as we have already learnt at a theoretical level from Tuan, de Certeau, and Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, any question with regard to idea attribution in such a context must become one of not only who but also what was responsible for generating a given idea. Space therefore acted as a unifying creative element, due to its flexibility, but flexibility should not be confused with security. In fact, as was noted earlier in this section, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, following Tuan, posit them as opposites (106). The Puppetmongers studio afforded an artistically "safe space," in that all of the resources required by the devising process— in terms of personnel, inspirational objects, building materials, and tools, to name just a few examples— could be brought together within that space and subsequently examined, exploited, exchanged, and so on. The space was not at all financially "safe," however. Of course, as was observed earlier in this section, no space is entirely "safe," financially or otherwise. As Ann Powell disclosed to me more recently, however,

Puppetmongers continues to have a particularly perilous financial relationship with space (Personal interview); still, the economic facet of the company's characteristic space flexibility has enabled it to weather a number of financial storms since it was founded forty years ago. In fact, to extend this thus far clichéd metaphor further, the Powells have managed to find some creative ways of reefing their spatial "sails" in order to keep making headway as the integrant permanent members of the company.

This can indeed take the form of an actual, if temporary, "reefing" or reduction in the available area within the studio that results from subletting part of it to another company on a short-term basis. Although, as the reader well knows by now, the Powells often present workshops and performances at outside locations, they—like many other theatre artists who have also acquired, however provisionally, some kind of home base—also present them at their leased studio. Their company therefore occupies a liminal position with regard to space, as was touched upon earlier in this section. They do not possess—nor do they desire to possess—a long-term home theatre "that is dependant [sic] on ticket sales" or "that needs ongoing programming to stay viable" (D. Powell, "Re: School"), as do many large companies in the human theatre and even a few puppet theatre companies, such as Famous People Players and Mermaid Theatre. This leaves the Powells free of the responsibilities associated with maintaining a permanent space, responsibilities that can lead to a move towards "safer" material, so as not to scare away potential subscribers, shareholders, or sponsors. However, it also leaves them open to the caprices of landlords and pushes them to seek continually new ways "to pay the rent" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006), as Ann Powell succinctly put it. One might think that, as a tenant, Puppetmongers would not be affected by such things as property tax increases and other changes to laws and fees related to owning and developing property. However, as many tenants (companies and individuals alike) can undoubtedly attest, a landlord's problem can quickly "trickle down" and become a tenant's problem as well.

Ann Powell supplied a recent example: in August 2012, she and her brother moved their company into the space in which it is still ensconced at the time of writing this, having signed a five-year lease. The Powells were aware that there would be incremental annual increases to their monthly lease rate, but following the most recent property tax hike, their landlord decided that all of the tenants should share that particular burden. As a result, the Powells found that their rate had gone up by nearly a thousand dollars to a total of approximately three thousand dollars a month (Personal interview). An already stressful situation was becoming increasingly desperate.

The Powells, however, have repeatedly proven deft spatial "jugglers." In the past, they have rented out not only their studio to other companies—such as Pea Green Theatre Group and, in fact, Woolfe's Eldritch Theatre—to use as a rehearsal space but also some of the contents of that studio, including "lamps, screens, props, musical instruments, world music recordings and puppets[,] to numerous theatre, dance and film productions" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "Theatre"). Just last year, the

Powells hit upon an idea for a more sustained source of income derived from their space: instead of negotiating with the members of a given company the particulars of which company (Puppetmongers or the guest company) would be using which areas of the studio at what time, they could try to find their own tenant to rent a specific part of it from them for a longer period of time. That way, they could more conveniently share the space with their subtenant and continue to make use of the better part of it themselves. Stephanie Fortin, artist-in-residence at the Textile Studio at Harbourfront Centre and the head of her own independent company, Coeur De Lion Textiles, responded to the advertisement that the Powells had in due course published, as her space at Harbourfront was being renovated at the time (Coeur De Lion Textiles; A. Powell, Personal interview). Although Fortin only needed the relatively small area that had been reserved for her within the Puppetmongers studio from December 2013 to January 2014, this kind of arrangement is certainly a financial and spatial management tactic to which the Powells could have recourse again in the future, should they so desire. As Ann Powell emphasized, the Powells' own company could not function as it does now with an ad hoc relationship with studio space (Personal interview), such as any future subtenants would have, at least in relation to the Puppetmongers studio. Those very subtenants could in fact help to ensure that the Powells continue to enjoy a stable relationship with space, if only to the degree that the forces of the real estate market (and of nature) will allow.

Knowles declares emphatically "that to change circumstances – spaces – is to change the work" ("Survival" 4). The primary scenario that he has in mind is moving *into* a permanent space, but surely moving *out of* such a space would affect the work, not to mention the developmental processes employed to create it, just as much, if not more? The Puppetmongers studio, wherever it might be found on a given day, is, as we have seen, clearly not a permanent space in the strict sense. Even so, Farfan does list "paying the rent" among the "new obligations" that come with taking possession of supposedly "permanent performance space" (3), obligations that must be faced by a company trying to work out "how to survive success" (4). Thus, *permanent* should be understood to be a relative term, particularly when a company that has some kind of space to call home, even if only for a set period of time, is compared with one of the "nomadic companies" (2) of the sort that Knowles discusses.

The question of "how to survive success" (Farfan 4) is a difficult one to answer, and the answer will, of course, vary from company to company. Moreover, a particular company's answer can change: the Powells were at one point considering "run[ning] a season of . . . [S]aturday shows and . . . sell[ing] season tickets," David Powell revealed in 2005. Had they done so, it could have been construed as a shift towards more entrenched institutionalization, as they would then have had the sensibilities of potential subscribers to take into account. David Powell, at least, has indeed expressed an interest in securing that unmistakable marker of potential institutionalization: a "permanent space" ("Re: School"). That said, as has already been mentioned, even if they did ever acquire such a space—and, given the size of their

company, their persistent financial concerns as a small independent company, and so on, that is highly unlikely—they would not want its future to hinge upon box office receipts.

Puppetmongers currently has neither a permanent space nor a subscription season: the company has ultimately sought other answers to the question of "how to survive success" (Farfan 4), some of which have been examined here. The fact that these options were contemplated along with others is still testimony to the company's flexible relationship with space. If this relationship could be characterized as flexible, then perhaps the one between Famous People Players and space could be characterized as rigid, although I do not mean this to be an entirely opprobrious description.

Dupuy's "chutzpah" (qtd. in Bickle 209) and "her special knack for getting people to do what she wants" (Bickle 207) were scrutinized earlier in this section. Perhaps nowhere were these traits more on display than at the grand opening of the present home for her company, which was covered in Bradshaw's previously cited article for the *Globe and Mail*. Famous People Players, like Puppetmongers, has had to deal with a great number of financial challenges. Unlike Puppetmongers, however, Famous People Players (or, more specifically, Dupuy) has generally refused to negotiate with the space in which it had settled. Thus, we will soon be reminded of Schechner's comparison between Paleolithic and Greek artists: "The Greek way is to transform the material and conceptualize the thing. The primeval way is to work directly with the material and to keep intact the tension between the thing and the material" ("On Environmental Design" 394).

Bradshaw highlights Dupuy's ability to transform space at several different levels, ranging from her immediate surroundings (that is, the Famous People Players theatre building) to the neighbourhood in which that site is located to the more metaphorical level of morality itself. Dupuy has effected such "renovations" through much bolder and broader strokes than could have been achieved using subtler tactics, such as the incorporation of "collections of objects and materials from the external world . . . into the arena of the performance space" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 106), a technique employed by Puppetmongers and other devising companies, as we are already aware. In fact, as was briefly indicated earlier in this section, Dupuy was able to bring considerable financial and political clout to bear against the obstacles that were perceived to be standing in the way of the further progress of her company. In doing so, she was exploiting resources that are simply out of reach for a company on the scale of Puppetmongers.

Dupuy's renovations to the neighbourhood—and, by extension, at least as Dupuy herself would have it, ethical atmosphere—surrounding the first home of Famous People Players actually precipitated the company's search for a new home, according to both Dupuy and Bradshaw. Bradshaw reports that Dupuy had been "recognized for helping to revitalize the Queen and Dovercourt neighbourhood," which, prior to the arrival of her company, had been "hooker city" (qtd. in Bradshaw), in Dupuy's dismissive opinion. Bradshaw suggests that perhaps she and her company "did too good a job," for gentrification

apparently rippled out from their headquarters, giving rise to "a trendy stretch peppered with art galleries," in which "property values ha[d] skyrocketed." These developments "prompted the company's landlord to evict them . . . to make way for a high-rise."

Thus, even a theatre company as large and as institutionalized as Famous People Players can fall prey to the caprice of a landlord. To be sure, this was a graver predicament than the rent increase with which the Powells had to contend. Dupuy nevertheless had the kind of capital and connections at her disposal that one would not normally associate with a puppet theatre company, at least not in Canada. As has been stated already, however, Dupuy, as she herself proclaimed, wanted to create "more than a puppet show" (*Dare* 44) and indeed institute more than a theatre company, more even than a theatre building: she had been spearheading "an educational project" (*Throw* 115), and she possessed the means to make certain that she would continue to do so.

Dupuy's first step was to find a new home for her company, but she did not have to undertake this step alone (or even herself), for she assigned not one but three real estate agents the seemingly impossible task of locating a property that would not only "fit her needs" but also still "come relatively cheap." Such a space was in fact eventually found, but as one might have expected, it needed some work. On top of the lease payments that would now commence, there would be construction costs, and on top of both of those, there would be administrative costs, such as "the city's new developer's fee." In contrast with the Powells, Dupuy did not need to reef any sails in order to navigate through this storm, as a number of allies, including "city councillor Mark Grimes and lawyer Bob Onyschuk," laboured to eliminate the storm altogether. In the end, "the city . . . agreed to waive the $186,000 bill" (Bradshaw) for the aforementioned developer's fee, while the federal government and the Ontario Trillium Foundation provided enough funds to cover more than half of the other associated costs. Moreover, the company continued to attract numerous private donors, many of whom, as has been the case throughout the history of the company, were celebrities.

Both Puppetmongers and Famous People Players moved into industrial sites, and the members of both companies had to find ways of "owning" these respective spaces, even if, with regard to their literal, legal relationships with these sites, they were, in both cases, only leasing. Several of the nuanced, flexible, and often object- and body-centred methods employed by Puppetmongers have been considered, but it should be emphasized here again that the Powells themselves had no say in how their studio was laid out physically: that had already been decided by the property developer before they moved in. Dupuy, on the other hand, has twice now opted for a more literal "carving out" of space. In each instance, approximately a million dollars was spent (*Throw* 114; Bradshaw) on forcing an industrial site to "fit her needs" (Bradshaw). At this point, the reader has most likely already assumed, rightly, that such expenditures are outside the realm of possibility for a small company like Puppetmongers. This should not necessarily be seen as a liability, however. Acquiring such an extensive space, entering into a long-term lease contract,

and undertaking such expensive and thoroughgoing renovations can all further impel an already housed company to adopt a less precarious position overall. As mentioned just above, such a strategy can entail a shift towards content that could be deemed somehow "safer."

Content and Form: Overlaps, Intersections, and Interstices

The question of what constitutes a "safe" production becomes a particularly contentious one in the context of puppet theatre. One must acknowledge, for example, that Puppetmongers focuses primarily on theatre for young and family audiences, and given the "vicious circle" posited by Arnott that has been referenced so many times throughout much of this dissertation, this would seem to be a safe bet indeed. That said, this need not mean that the productions created by such a company must be overly "safe" in terms of content or form. Still, skilled puppet artists can take advantage of how "fatally easy," to quote Arnott again, "puppetry is." In fact, the "laziness" that, according to Arnott, the "irresistible attraction" of puppets "engenders . . . in the puppeteer" (40) is actually, along with "the mediocre puppetry that results from it, . . . the fault of particular artists, and not of puppetry itself" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 66), Tillis counters.

Tillis goes further still and relates what Arnott identifies as a problem inherent in puppetry directly to his own theory of double-vision, stressing that "almost regardless of the production values involved, the puppet will stimulate a certain amount of pleasure by challenging its audience to consider the ontology of an 'object' with 'life'" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 66). Contrary to Arnott's assumption, this process is consequently of a high degree of complexity. In spite of that, the audience does not even need to be cognizant of it in order for it to function effectively. Even young children can appreciate "the pleasure of a profound and illuminating paradox provoked by an 'object' with 'life'" (65), as Tillis notes, which, reminds us once again of Arnott's "vicious circle" (40): "The percipient adult comes to realize that he can expect only a superficial entertainment. . . . So the public expects to be able to bring children, and troupes who make their living from puppetry are forced to give the public what it wants. Inevitably, the entertainment cannot rise above a certain level" (40-41).

One could nevertheless put even more of a positive spin on this state of affairs, which is unique to puppet theatre, than Tillis does and emphasize how "fatally easy" (Arnott 40), as it were, triggering audiences' double-vision can be. In doing so, some potential ways of breaking Arnott's "vicious circle" (40) can be revealed. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that the "vicious circle" ("Producing" 109) discerned independently by Wallace can also be broken at the same time, although this carries with it certain risks related to the now familiar issue of institutionalization. To return to Arnott's circle, however, he has a point—in fact, in one respect, he does not go far enough, in that the Powells (and other object theatre practitioners) are able to stimulate the audience's imagination without the use of particularly "attractive" (Arnott 40) puppets. Certainly, the objects can be supplemented with a few props or

suggestions of costumes, so as to differentiate the characters more effectively and generally help the audience to navigate the rather abstract world of object theatre. That notwithstanding, a brick wearing a red clown nose—to revisit, in a different context, an example from the Puppetmongers production *The Brick Bros. Circus*, Brikko the Clown—is still a far cry from the much more conventional types of puppets addressed by Arnott.

The fact that Puppetmongers is able to draw in audience members young and old with this kind of highly formalized object theatre suggests that not only can puppet theatre for family audiences "rise above a certain level" (41), *pace* Arnott, but it can also be aggressively experimental in terms of form. This is complemented by the Powells' refusal to stick with only overly "safe" content when performing for young and family audiences. In the very first production that they devised as Puppetmongers, *The Miller* (1974), a cow is skinned and eviscerated onstage, and the eponymous hero tricks an innocent passerby out of his goods and into dying in his place, for example. Consequently, companies like Puppetmongers are capable of breaking Arnott's "vicious circle" in three distinct ways: through experimental form, strong (even at times shocking for some spectators) narrative choices, and a resolve to combine both of these in performances for the family audiences whom Arnott blames for the "vicious circle" that he postulates.

The fatal ease, as Arnott would have it, of puppetry is what allows puppet artists to inspire spectators to undertake what Blumenthal refers to as "canyon-spanning feats of disbelief suspension" (71). As we know from the third chapter of this dissertation, *The Brick Bros. Circus* is one of her examples, to which we could add the workshop production of *Hard Times* that has featured so prominently in this chapter. For that performance too, the performers needed to bring deep reserves of energy and focus to the table in order to induce the audience to imagine that the puppets with which they shared the stage were alive; as is the case with *The Brick Bros. Circus*, those puppets that were in fact everyday objects or conglomerations of such objects required that much more energy and focus from the performers if they were to come to life.

Although the Powells' body of work therefore demonstrates that puppet theatre for young and family audiences can indeed "rise above a certain level" (41), despite Arnott's objections, the envelopes of form and content admittedly can be pushed to the point where allowing children to attend a given performance may no longer be appropriate. Object theatre is nothing more or less than one form of puppet theatre among many; thus, it can—theoretically, at least—be used in any performance context to give shape to any idea for a show that an artist or troupe might have. The content of an object theatre piece could therefore be so overtly sexual, for example, that it would no doubt be judged by many to be inappropriate for young audiences. A puppet theatre performance might also be considered inappropriate for young audiences for more subtle reasons, just like any other kind of performance. No matter how "attractive" (40) the puppets in a given performance might be, "[p]uppets are not magic charms that can

be guaranteed to amuse a child audience indefinitely, whatever happens," Arnott concedes. "If the play's subject-matter is beyond their understanding they will soon be bored," he cautions, "regardless of whether they are watching puppets or human beings" (38). Even though "children are unpredictable," and therefore one should "never dogmatize about their tastes," as one "may . . . find a way to their imaginations with the most unlikely material," best practice for parents, teachers, and other adults responsible for the care of children would be to apply "the same criteria to puppet shows as to live performances," Arnott advises. "No parent would dream of taking his child to all films or all plays, or expect him to read and enjoy all books irrespective of their contents," he exclaims, so "why should this medium prove the exception?" (39).

Arnott's answer to his own question is "the popular equation of puppets with dolls" (39). In the second chapter, I compared these two different types of objects. Consequently, I can appreciate Arnott's frustration. Even so, he goes too far when he claims that "parents bring them [children], no matter what the play's subject, in the firm belief that puppets and children automatically go together" (38). I doubt that this was ever so invariably the case, and it definitely is not now. Of course, one does occasionally still see an adult attempting to bring a child or two into a Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes performance, for example. There were also two children in the audience for the workshop production of *Hard Times*. Although, for the most part, not nearly as risqué as a typical Burkett production, that adaptation, one might assume, was perhaps too text-heavy and conceptual to hold the attention of young audience members for very long. Still, the children in attendance seemed to be paying attention; it should be borne in mind, however, that only the first of two acts was presented at that time. The runtime of the full-length version staged at the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille two years later was two hours, and while older children could be expected to sit through a performance of that length, even one as text-heavy (particularly for a Puppetmongers production) as *Hard Times*, it would be less reasonable to expect those in the age group that makes Arnott especially anxious, "children of six or seven" (39), to do so. The advanced level of language used throughout most of the play—it had been adapted from a novel by Dickens, after all—would have made it even more challenging to keep children that young engaged.

Be that as it may, there was nothing in the publicity for the production that actively discouraged adults from bringing children with them, as is generally found in the publicity for a Burkett production, for example. Funnily enough, it was an online advertisement for *The Miller*—a show created specifically for young and family audiences, even though, as noted just above, it has a few rather grisly sequences— that carried such a cautionary notice, albeit a jocular one: "Warning! An innocent puppet cow is butchered and the evil puppet plotters do not survive the show!" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "March Break").

The aforementioned advertisement was for a 2014 remount of *The Miller*. It was, in fact, a double bill, as *The Miller* was restaged, together with its sequel, *The Miller's Wife*, under the combined title of

The Miller and His Wife. The last time these two productions had been staged together at the same time was in 2007 for a short run at the Puppetmongers studio. In 2014, however, they were remounted in the very space in which the more elaborate version of *Hard Times* had been presented in 2010: the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille. This was a highly significant change of venue, considering all that argued in the preceding section on space flexibility. Although this obviously did not signal a permanent resettlement, Knowles's point "that to change circumstances – spaces – is to change the work" ("Survival" 4) should still be recalled. Even though I myself cannot remember there being any glaring differences with regard to staging between the 2007 and 2014 remounts of *The Miller and His Wife*—as always, the fallible nature of human memory could be an obscuring factor here—the differences in terms of show dates and times alone are worth considering.

In 2007, Puppetmongers had scheduled six evening and two matinee performances of *The Miller and His Wife* for February (Puppetmongers Theatre, *The Miller and His Wife*, 2007). The emphasis on evening performances was understandable, since the company was already planning to stage a different production, *The Brick Bros. Circus*, over the March school break for that year, also in their studio.[95] Thus, the Powells needed to ensure that the performances, given the intended audience, would be at times convenient for families (that is, evenings on weekdays, matinees on Sundays). The 2014 remount, on the other hand, was scheduled to coincide with March break itself; consequently, as would be expected, there were more matinee performances than there were in 2007. There were also, however, more evening performances and therefore more performances overall: thirteen as opposed to eight (Puppetmongers Theatre, *The Miller and His Wife*, 2014). Again, the timing of the run was no doubt a determinant but perhaps not the only one; after all, only six performances of *The Brick Bros. Circus* had been scheduled for the 2007 March break (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*The Brick Bros*[.] *Circus*."). We must look to the pervasive and seemingly unavoidable influence of space once more to shed further light on this matter.

Wallace's "vicious circle" was explained earlier in this chapter: smaller "companies appearing in out-of-the-way venues . . . need media attention to generate more media interest – which, in turn, they must achieve to attract audiences and win financial support." "Most English-Canadian theatre critics," however, "give priority to companies whose established reputations are supported by government and corporate subsidies and sustained by media coverage which the reviewers themselves produce" ("Producing" 109). By transferring *The Miller and His Wife* to the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille, Puppetmongers took a chance on attracting more media and audience interest, in exchange for increasing the costs associated with remounting the production by not staging it in their own studio. The risk that this entailed was only compounded by a delayed publicity campaign, although the Powells' administrator and publicist Sheila Sky was surely at least as responsible for that error as the Powells themselves were.

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[95] In the end, however, that run of *The Brick Bros. Circus* was cancelled, due to David Powell breaking one of his legs during a rehearsal (D. Powell, "Re: Accident?!").

Unfortunately, the gamble failed in some respects. The production was reviewed on a few local theatre blogs, including *Mooney on Theatre*, as well as on *Stage Door*, a website devoted to reviewing productions staged in Ontario, and the *Charlebois Post – Canada*, an online periodical covering the performing arts. It did not capture the attention of larger media outlets, however. Tied up with this problem, as we know from Wallace's analysis, was the fact that, particularly at the beginning of the run, Puppetmongers struggled to fill the fifty-five seats in the Backspace. Sky and the Powells were therefore prudent to book more performances within that time span than they had in 2007, when they staged the same production over nearly the same number of calendar days.

This kind of financial risk, while undeniably worthy of concern in itself, is but part of a larger, problematic picture related to space. Whatever planning might have preceded the run of performances of *The Miller and His Wife* at the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille, one cannot plan for everything. Even when companies manage to break free—if only partially, as the case may be, as the Puppetmongers example reveals—from the "vicious circle" ("Producing" 109) theorized by Wallace by renting high-profile spaces in which to mount some or all of their productions, they "can't always control those spaces, and . . . [their] work gets pulled around by them in unanticipated ways" ("Survival" 3), as we have already learnt from Knowles. Determining how best to deal with such financial and spatial forces is another dimension of the struggle to work out "how to survive success" (Farfan 4).

During their performance of *The Miller and His Wife*—or rather, just before the performance itself began—the Powells demonstrated that they had one tool in particular at their disposal that could be of service in the midst of such a struggle: a distinctive approach to carrying their own space with them and, although constrained by certain physical and economic factors that can never be completely overcome, using it to write over the spaces in which they perform. In doing so, they proved that they could, to some degree, successfully fight against the spatial "pull" identified by Knowles in performance spaces other than their own studio. Their approach could be designated, to borrow a term from the founding artistic directors of the British devised theatre company Frantic Assembly, Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett, a "pre-show." For Graham and Hoggett, the pre-show is composed of "those unique minutes between entering the performance space and the start of the performance proper"; it is, quite simply, "the claiming of the space" (21). Graham and Hoggett make it clear that the pre-show is an ideal strategy for the kinds of companies that Knowles describes as "nomadic" ("Survival" 2), for when they first seized upon it as a means of bringing both themselves and the spectators into the same space, a space that "had been claimed by Frantic," they were leading "a company about to set out on a multi-venue tour for the first time" (21). Even subscribers should feel "that in some way tonight might be different from what they might usually expect," while the members of the company would benefit from "[a] few precious moments of control before the technical capacity of the venue and the responses of the audience that night started to have their own effect" (22).

The pre-shows devised by Frantic Assembly have tended to quite specific and well thought out, particularly in terms of movement choreography and sound design. In fact, Graham and Hoggett assert that, "[e]ven at its most basic, the pre-show was a carefully selected music track played at a volume level that forced the incoming audience to shout slightly" and was therefore "[a]n attempt to . . . create an underlying level of *event*." They characterize the Frantic pre-show as "a precious device, not in the sense of being delicate or even necessarily well crafted . . . but precious as in valuable, an essential part of . . . the theatrical experience of coming to see" (23) their company perform.

Frantic Assembly is not a puppet theatre company, so, aside from any set pieces and other design and technical elements, the members of the company have had to create their pre-shows using only their own bodies. Puppetmongers is, in contrast, a puppet theatre company, and yet its members also relied primarily upon their own bodies for the comparatively informal pre-show that opened *The Miller and His Wife*. There was little in their pre-show that resembled Frantic Assembly's "first pre-show," which must have appeared to have been, to some spectators at least, rather frantic indeed: "[T]here was a 30-second blast from a Nine Inch Nails track (famed American Industrial/Techno/Grunge artist Trent Reznor) during which we emerged from both wings (when available) and executed a furious blast of movement upon each other, at the end of which we disappeared until the start of the show . . ." (Graham and Hoggett 22). The Powells, by comparison, were sedate and as focused on the audience as they were on each other. In fact, given that they seemed to do little more than go through a few last-minute preparations and joke with some members of the audience, perhaps *pre-show* is too formal and technical a term for this period of interaction with the audience.

This gentle opening, with its casual conversation and friendly teasing, served a purpose nonetheless, intentionally or otherwise. It ensured that each spectator was introduced to the spirit of play that pervades the personalities of both Ann and David Powell as individuals, as well as, by extension, the works that they create and the processes that they make use of as they do so. The openness and apparent authenticity displayed by these dedicated but genial artists as they, in essence, performed themselves were carried into the performance proper, as Laura Stein, reviewing *The Miller and His Wife* for *Mooney on Theatre*, confirms: "It's a wonder to see the comfort that Ann and David have in performing this show, as it's been in their repertoire for so long they know just when and how to play around with the story." This playful attitude towards the story was evidenced by a number of anachronistic and metatheatrical references. In his review for *Stage Door*, Christopher Hoile provides a useful list of examples:

> When the Rich Man searches for the Miller and his family who have hidden, he says he's searched everywhere, "even behind the scenery." When the Rich man wants to talk to the Miller he tells him to come over to "centre stage." When the Miller's Wife wants to go to town, though its [sic] the Middles [sic] Ages, she goes to the bus stop to wait for the #42. After the Chancellor's henchmen take the Miller, who is reading a newspaper, off to the palace he asks, "Why didn't you e-mail?"

By directly addressing some members of the audience before they started to manipulate and speak for their puppets, the Powells had prepared the spectators, both adults and children, for the metatheatrical devices to come.

The Miller and His Wife is not the only Puppetmongers production that normally opens with a pre-show. The reader will recall from the third chapter that The Brick Bros. Circus does as well, and for a similar reason: to play into the audience's expectations as to what a puppet—and, more generally, a play—was and could do, only to call them into question shortly thereafter. That said, one reviewer, Jason Booker, is convinced that they did not in fact go far enough in this regard. He reduces the metatheatrical elements that were present in the production to "[p]ostmodern jokes" and laments that "the fourth wall" remained "firmly in place, aside from those occasional tongue-in-cheek remarks." His comments are difficult to reconcile with each other; moreover, he does not explicitly argue that the fourth wall *should* have been breached to a greater degree, nor does he offer any suggestions as to how it could have been done.

It would therefore be interesting (and potentially revealing) to read a review of the Powells' even more metatheatrical and more recently developed production And Now We Are Here by Booker, had he written one. This production is also openly autobiographical, and all of these qualities are closely related, as we shall soon see. A comparison between this piece and the autobiographical works created by Dupuy and Famous People Players that were analyzed earlier in this chapter is begging to be made, and in doing so, I will fulfill the promise I made to elaborate on the impact of autobiography and "the performance of self-identity" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56) on form as well as content.

Govan, Nicholson, and Normington stress that "human memory acts as a filter" and can therefore potentially shape an autobiographical production in ways that those involved may not perceive. As has already been established, the autobiographical productions developed by Famous People Players could fairly be described as "embroidered" (63), to use Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's term again, primarily because they have increasingly privileged one subjectivity in particular: that of Dupuy herself. The influence of memory can also, however, be represented in the work itself. In such cases, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington observe, "the piece foregrounds the possibility of different versions of reality which arise due to different subjectivities." By frankly declaring herself to be "a storyteller," the authors contend, a devised theatre practitioner "actively engages in a mode of self-representation which also allows for the possibility of writing from other subject positions" (63). Would such a strategy not be all the more authentic and effective if different "subject positions" were represented in a performance physically as well as dramaturgically?

By multiplying the perspectives represented in an autobiographical piece, performers (as storytellers) do more than provide balance and fill out the content, for "[t]he practice of retelling and remembering can also lend a formal structure to the performance work," as Govan, Nicholson, and

Normington note. The performers may in fact make "no attempt to recreate the action" onstage, choosing instead to place "the emphasis . . . on the moment of remembering" (63) itself. By "directly announc[ing] themselves as storytellers," performers self-reflexively amplify "the present of the narrative situation" (64), calling further attention to what Renza refers to as the "screen between the truth of the narrated past and the present of the narrative situation" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56). The audience may well have already realized that the "account of events" being presented by the performers "may have involved a reshaping of facts" (64), Govan, Nicholson, and Normington acknowledge, but this awareness can be heightened by the performers intentionally and verbally framing their acts "of retelling and remembering" (63) as such. What might be less immediately obvious is that the performers are thereby "presenting heightened versions of themselves" (65), in that "[t]heir identity as 'real people' and as performers is blurred as they do not have a mask of character, yet they are also clearly behaving in a heightened and self-conscious manner" (65-66). As was explained in the previous section, this form of "performativity thus collapses the boundaries between that which occurs on stage and everyday events" (56). Govan, Nicholson, and Normington frequently use the term *non-acting* to denote this performative practice, citing John Howell, who defines it as "pretending to be yourself," as opposed to "pretending to be someone else" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 66), which is his definition of *acting*.

 And Now We Are Here was known as *Monger Memories* when it was first being developed for The Whole Shebang multidisciplinary festival in Toronto in November 2012. The mandate of the festival, which was being organized by Dreamwalker Dance Company in cooperation with Volcano Theatre, was to interrogate "the notion of identity by exploring twinning, mirroring, and unison in an exciting and deeply immersive program" (Dreamwalker). As but one in a series of performances that was presented only four times over three days (with two evening and two afternoon performances, it was a short piece, clocking in at just over eleven minutes. The Powells' audience was receptive and appreciative, however, and they have since revisited and restaged the piece for two puppetry festivals: Les Trois Jours de Casteliers in Montréal in March 2013 and their own Fresh Ideas in Puppetry Day in May 2013. As recently as February 2014, Ann Powell reveals, they set "a few days aside to brainstorm, to see if it is an idea that can be a longer show" ("Re: *Hard Times* and Twins Show").

 Contrary to what one might presume from either of the titles by which the piece has been known, but especially its current one, *And Now We Are Here*, it is not in fact a teleological paean to the admittedly lengthy and successful careers of the Powells, even though the history of their company could no doubt be mined for milestones to celebrate, in the manner of Famous People Players. Stylistically and formalistically, the piece actually has more in common with an earlier Puppetmongers production, *The Ballad of Tamlin*, which was examined above in the section on narrative flexibility. In both, "the struggle is not only of the characters within the story, it is also of the story-tellers['] quest to find the real version and tell it" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Ballad*"), as the Powells write of *The Ballad of Tamlin* specifically.

That said, these two productions initially seem to differ in at least one significant way: the Powells might have dropped out of character at several points during *The Ballad of Tamlin*, but in *And Now We Are Here*, the characters and storytellers ostensibly overlap completely.

As was pointed out in the earlier context of narrative flexibility, however, the sequences in which the Powells appeared to have broken away from—and thereby alienated—the story were still largely scripted for *The Ballad of Tamlin*, meaning that, in that production too, they "present[ed] heightened versions of themselves" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 65). It is just as important to bear in mind that there were in fact gaps between the "heightened versions" of the Powells who were addressing the audience in *And Now We Are Here* and their remembered selves, whom they were presenting through the medium of shadow puppetry. These were indeed their childhood selves, and, taking into account the distance (in terms of both time and personal development) that separated their current selves, heightened or otherwise, from these earlier ones, it would not be a distortion of Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's argument to claim that, even if the younger Powells were the only characters represented in these re-enacted memories—and they were not—this production was still in part created by "writing from other subject positions," namely those of the children whom the Powells once were. Thus, this production, as they continue to work on it, illustrates "the possibility of different versions of reality which arise due to different subjectivities" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 63).

As was implied above, more fundamentally "different subjectivities" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 63) become apparent when one allows for the fact that there is, of course, more than one Powell participating in the development process for a given Puppetmongers production. The "struggle" to uncover "the real version" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "*Ballad*") of a story is bound to lead to at least some conflict in the rehearsal space as devisers disagree over which version should be considered the "real" one. Given how subjective a space memory is, there is no more a "real" version of a memory, no matter how recently the phenomenon that the devisers are attempting to remember was originally perceived, than there is of a Scottish ballad, for example. We therefore encounter here another metaphorical space, one that serves as the content to be shaped by autobiography as a form. Thanks to Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, we are already aware that autobiography itself is a space "where an individual's private stories are offered up for public consumption" (59). Like all spaces, an autobiographical performance, even an individual memory, can be a site of contestation, and the Powells demonstrate this point repeatedly in *And Now We Are Here*.

As was underscored in the fifth chapter, theatrical devising can also be as much a site of conflict as it can of collaboration: these two qualities are not mutually exclusive. This is certainly true of the Puppetmongers approach to devising. The reader will recall Ann Powell's remark, quoted above in the introduction to the section on movement flexibility: "Of course we argue—we're brother and sister. Everybody argues" (qtd. in Oppenheim). Barton's analysis—discussed in the fifth chapter of this study—

of the devised theatre company bluemouth inc. could be applied to Puppetmongers as well, for the "collaborative *structure*" respectively framing the work of both companies "requires a democracy predicated on the ability to sustain and thrive in the tension of passionate and volatile exchange (including conflict and difference), in addition to (and, at times, rather than) the equilibrium of consensus" ("Introduction" xv). This dimension of the Powells' approach to devising was even more perceptible just below the surface level of *And Now We Are Here* than it was in the case of *The Ballad of Tamlin*.

Once again, the interpretation of what lay below this surface level, "the mask of the performance," that Bobgan offered with regard to *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, which he had directed, will prove useful. If one is willing to dig deeper than the "overall structure, the first thing the audience gets, the kind of knee-jerk account of what they saw," one eventually realizes that characters in both productions are "not only performing for the audience, but in some ways performing in order to communicate to each other" (qtd. in Corbett 127). Arriving at this realization while watching *And Now We Are Here* was made easier by the Powells' frequent explicit references to their "exploration of the relationship between various levels of communication," to draw upon Corbett's examination of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*. Corbett goes on to mention that that production was "at some level about the codes that we employ in relationships" (127), and while *And Now We Are Here* was not about a romantic relationship, it too forced the audience to look at these codes. The fact that it was autobiographical, created and performed by two real-life siblings, only increased the potential of this production to trigger the mirroring effect identified by Corbett.

Just like *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, however, *And Now We Are Here* "never provides absolute clarity." After all, it too is a "play [that] focuses on the dynamics of two people that love each other"—albeit in a familial, as opposed to romantic, way—"but are struggling to understand one another" (Corbett 127). An important part of this struggle in *And Now We Are Here* specifically is the effort on the part of the siblings to make some collective sense of their memories and thus of their shared past. They nonetheless remain individuals throughout, as is manifested in each of them at times recounting a personal memory, while at other times offering a personal perspective on a shared memory. Their respective perspectives, moreover, sometimes collide with one another onstage, and, given the phenomenological nature of these memories, clear-cut resolutions are not possible. Consequently, "[t]he pleasure, and often discomfort, of watching this work," as Corbett writes of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, "stems from giving oneself over to a navigation of meaning that is fluid and often ambiguous" (127).

Although several examples of this kind of recollective collision could be enumerated, the instance of it that closed *And Now We Are Here* as it was staged at The Whole Shebang is the most elucidative, given the purposes of this section, this chapter, and indeed this dissertation as a whole. Even in such a brief sequence, two different but ultimately related types of collision, both of which have already been

scrutinized in this study, can be discerned: dramaturgical and semiotic. Indeed, this particular sequence concluded with both collisions occurring simultaneously. Ann Powell had been telling the story of their return to England after spending a year and a half in Hong Kong—due to their father having received a military posting there—describing the snowman and surrounding expanse of snow that she saw out of the hotel window. Her brother then took over the story, adding that a "huge blizzard" subsequently swept through the area, but she quickly rose from her seated position by her shadow projection equipment, walked up to and parted the two adjacent curtains[96] onto which they had been projecting their shadows, and declared reproachfully, "There was no blizzard, David." Thus, two contrasting accounts of what is ostensibly the same memory collide onstage, presumably just as they were "brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" ("Navigating" 109), to quote once more Barton's explanation of Number Eleven's own process, in the Puppetmongers studio as the sequence was being devised in the first place.

Moreover, two sign systems collided as well, with Ann Powell, now as a "heightened" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 65) version of her present self, interrupting her brother's representation of the blizzard with her actorly presence. Her irruption into what might be referred to as *puppet space* (although, in the context of shadow puppetry, this term would actually designate the surface or surfaces on which the shadows of the puppets were cast, as those shadows are what are ultimately imagined by the spectators to be alive, as they may or may not be able to see the puppets themselves) marked the end of action involving puppets. Both of the performers bowed to each other—as human performers, leaving their puppets and technical equipment behind—in between the two curtains, signalling that the performance was now over. Certainly, David Powell's inclusion of the apparently invented narrative element of the blizzard, complete with spinning points of light and dramatic sound effects vocalized by Powell himself, made for "a good story," as he himself protested as he prepared to transition from his "heightened" self to his everyday self (with an intermediary self functioning as a member of the stage crew in full view of the audience but not "performing" in the same way as he helped to clear the stage in preparation for the next piece). When the production is viewed more holistically, however, the Powells' oscillations between helping and seeming to hinder one another—in the final analysis, they are, of course, working together throughout the piece to advance the story—are probably most responsible for creating "a good story" from the audience's perspective, despite the fact that, strictly speaking, they lie outside of the story being told.

Or do they? Govan, Nicholson, and Normington assert "that the audience for autobiographical performance is looking to make an authentic connection with the material it is presented with," a desire that "is problematised by the fact that such performances are often a mixture of truth and lies and personal material is usually indistinguishable from the fiction" (71). Although David Powell's appended bit of

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[96] These two curtains were originally part of a larger set created by Powell herself to serve as the backdrop in *The Ballad of Tamlin* (A. Powell, "Re: Fact-Checking"). The backdrop doubled as a shadow screen for one sequence towards the end of the production.

fiction was openly revealed to be such, this was not typical of the Powells' approach to autobiographical performance in this production, nor is it typical of devising strategies (related to autobiography) more generally, according to Govan, Nicholson, and Normington. That said, the "dynamic" between "reality and fiction" can at times "be foregrounded within performance events" in just such a way, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington acknowledge. In doing so, a performer "highlights the performative quality of the work and heightens the audience members' critical awareness by asking them to re-evaluate all they have been told throughout the piece" (71). Indeed, by saving their partly fictional episode until the end of their performance, the Powells encouraged the spectators to re-evaluate everything they had seen thus far—that is, the entire performance. An attentive spectator, however, would have noticed that many of the Powells' recollections were bracketed with nondiegetic comments that indicated that not everything might have been as it was being presented. The performers readily admitted to not recalling certain details, for example, and noted when their parents had, at a later date, informed them that their version of an event or experience was inaccurate. Their parents' memories should not necessarily be trusted more than their own, but by recognizing such inconsistencies, the Powells, at the very least, cast some doubt upon the incidents that they were recreating by casting shadows upon the twin curtains.

The Powells did not face the audience directly often during *And Now We Are Here*; moreover, their bodies and faces were usually obscured by the relative darkness surrounding the curtains onto which they were projecting their representations of the locations, characters, and objects from their stories. Nonetheless, the aforementioned bracketing extradiegetic comments were made with the audience in mind, even when one sibling appeared to be addressing solely the other. Each spectator was therefore positioned as a witness, for, as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington argue, "audiences for autobiographical performance are drawn into a relationship with the performer [or performers] due to the authentic nature of the material and the fact that the story is being told directly to them" (61).

Although such a performance commonly "acknowledges observers" in a frank way "and places an emphasis on sharing intimacies with witnesses" (61), the very idea of authenticity—with regard to both the self and the medium used to share some part of it with the audience—must continually be problematized, as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington also certainly realize. As was pointed out in the previous section, those authors, following Renza, accept that autobiography is not actually a form of "direct communication" but is rather the "result of a reflection upon personal experience that is subjected to the filters of memory and personal editing" (60). This applies to all autobiographical performances, but some companies, such as Puppetmongers, are more willing to make this fact explicit in their work and thereby separate themselves from companies like Famous People Players by moving beyond being their own panegyrists.

The spectators at such a performance are therefore anything but passive: rather, they are participants in a kind of game. They wish "to assess the skill of the performers, . . . to ascertain whether

people are 'being themselves' or performing – a division that such work deliberately seeks to blur" (71), as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington observe. An autobiographical production constructed in this way may even "prompt the audience to reflect upon the performance of self within everyday life and its codes and conventions" (66). The spectators, in their day-to-day lives, are not "performing" in the same way that Ann and David Powell do in *And Now We Are Here*, but there are still connections to be made between these two types of performativity. "All the world is not, of course, a stage," Goffman reminds us in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, "but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify" (72). In the end, a production like *And Now We Are Here* "raises questions as to what constitutes art and where it differs from everyday life" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 71-72).

Renza, as has already been mentioned in this chapter, holds that an autobiography establishes "a screen between the truth of the narrated past and the present of the narrative situation" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 56). When the autobiography in question is a performance—as opposed to purely literary—text, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington elaborate, "the present of the narrative situation is heightened in a way it might not be on the page as the performers stand in front of the audience and directly announce themselves as storytellers" (64). This provides a convenient pun, since the Powells used literal screens in *And Now We Are Here* as surfaces onto which to project their reconstructions of their past in a present that they shared with the audience. Consequently, unlike the specific example that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington examine in this context, there was both an "attempt to recreate the action"—albeit rather abstractly, in that a selection of seemingly disparate memories were distilled through the necessarily abstracting medium of puppetry—and an "emphasis on the moment of remembering" (63).

"Being engaged in the moment is of course key to all performance practice" (66), Govan, Nicholson, and Normington concede, but in autobiographical performances, "this dynamic is heightened as performers seek to make real connections with the audience through the revelation of self" (66-67). As a result, an autobiographical production will frequently be mounted with "minimal staging so that the focus is instead on building a rapport between the performer and the audience members" (67). The Powells might have gone beyond the proverbial "two boards and a passion" in staging *And Now We Are Here*, as it did require shadow puppets, lighting equipment, and projection screens. Even so, this should be compared with the menagerie of black-light puppets used in the Famous People Players production *Leave the Porch Light On*, for example, to represent the various members of the troupe onstage as plants, animals, and so forth (*Black Light*). Neither production is "better" than the other is: each simply reflects a different set of priorities.

As Dupuy herself has written, one of her chief goals has always been to present "a unique form of entertainment," a veritable "extravaganza" (*Dare* 44), in fact. As I hope I have already made clear, however, *And Now We Are Here*, like any other Puppetmongers production, is by no means devoid of

entertaining elements. It even has its fair share of celebratory moments, although perhaps *joyful* would be a more appropriate and accurate modifier. Just as presence and engagement with the audience are demanded of all theatrical performers but particularly those creating and presenting autobiographical works, so too is an audience required for any performance proper to take place, although the relationship between the audience and the performers can become especially intense during an autobiographical performance. Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, focusing on the role of the spectator as witness to an autobiographical performance, note that "work within the field of trauma studies which is concerned with the analysis of emotional trauma and memory, and the relationship between these two" has proven a valuable resource in this more theatrical context. Scholars in both this field and in theatre and performance studies have "acknowledge[d] the efficacy of personal narratives and recognise[d] the impulse within witnesses to bear testament to the story that has been presented to them" (69).

Granted, spectators—or rather, witnesses—were not expected "to bear testament to" either "emotional trauma" or "catastrophe" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69) during *And Now We Are Here*, as the content was, for the most part, considerably lighter in tone, even when the Powells were sharing their memories of severe storms or childhood crises, such as when a much younger David Powell managed to get a bead stuck up his nose. The overall tone of joviality was certainly punctuated with the occasional moment of mystery when they contrasted their image of a memory with their parents' conviction that it was an implausible memory, such as their recollection of being able to float in a bath full of red salty water while travelling by ship across the Red Sea, even though their parents insisted that seawater was not piped into the baths. The prevailing tones of joy and more light-hearted wonder as the Powells tried to make sense of how they tried to make sense of the world as children nonetheless warrant consideration alongside these other, seemingly more serious tones. Govan, Nicholson, and Normington cite theatre and performance art scholar Peggy Phelan's similar but more generalized evaluation in connection with the idea of "[w]itnessing in the theatre," for spectators are not only asked to bear witness to trauma and tragedy. On the contrary, they can "discover the capacity to respond to the equally treacherous and equally urgent need to witness joy, pleasure, and the profundity of delight we feel in our mortal bodies, flawed minds, imperfect hearts, and impoverished tongues" (qtd. in Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69).

Thus, whether the confidences being shared with the audience are joyous or sorrowful—or perhaps something else still, such as uncanny—framing the spectators present at a performance as witnesses "suggests a different level of engagement," as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington submit. More is asked of both parties, performers and spectators, and both risk more as well. Although spectators may not be actively invited to divulge their own secrets, "the audience can be seen to be another character within the piece" (69) in question, Govan, Nicholson, and Normington propose. This realigned relationship between spectators and performers is another way in which, during an autobiographical

performance, "performativity . . . collapses the boundaries between that which occurs on stage and everyday events" (56) and, by extension, those between the "actors" participating in both types of events. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, this realigned relationship can also "shape form as well as content," as Govan, Nicholson, and Normington phrase it. "Direct address to the audience" is often employed as the vehicle for the autobiographical content, for performers electing to use this technique as they devise their production wish to conceive of it as "a dialogue between performer[s] and audience" (69).

There are other related forms that similarly rely upon a heightened sense of presence, primarily, or at least initially, on the part of the performers, but as we have seen, they hope that the spectators will also appreciate "the significance of the 'in-the-same-roomness' of theatre" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69), a quality that can be particularly pronounced during an autobiographical performance. In other words, the performers are making a "gesture of outreach," as they are "searching blindly for the understanding presence that will meet . . . [them] half way" (132), to revisit Corbett's metaphorical reference, first quoted in the fifth chapter, to the publication of the script for *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*. Although that was not an explicitly autobiographical production, those who devised it "share[d] a methodology that s[ought] to capitalize on, and manipulate, the presence and liveness of theatre," much like the Powells as they developed *And Now We Are Here*. Both productions also called for "the recognition and control of the actor's presence" (130).

The significance of the individual presences of the performers involved in each of these productions reverberated through more than just the actual performances of each. Corbett's description of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* as "a piece that was created by and for specific performers within the context of a particular artistic practice" could be said to be even more applicable to *And Now We Are Here*. Corbett clearly lays out Wells, Kowalchuk, and Bobgan's shared "theatrical lineage" (129), but it would be difficult to compare those admittedly important professional and theoretical connections with the Powells' "humongously ridiculous history together" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006) as siblings, to quote David Powell again, and, beginning with their cooperative play with marionettes as children (A. Powell, "Re: 'Canadian Control'"; Oppenheim), as collaborators.

Consequently, were the Powells ever to publish an approximation of a script for this production, "to consider the resulting print text, as we often regard play scripts, as potentially realizable through an unlimited number of concrete stagings, would be to sever the piece from its animating force" (129-30), as Corbett asserts with regard to the published version of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*. Indeed, this would be even truer in the case of *And Now We Are Here*, since it is an autobiographical production. To be sure, it is highly unlikely that a script for *And Now We Are Here* will ever in fact be published, considering its brevity and the Powells' apparent lack of interest in formally publishing much of anything. Still, even if it were, it would be an account of "an event that, in some ways," as Corbett states with

reference to *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, could not "be reproduced." For one thing, "material created by one actor would not be assigned to another actor, unless performed citationally" (130). This sort of citational performance has actually already been incorporated into the production. For the previously mentioned episode concerning David Powell sticking a bead up his nose as a child, for example, his sister is the one controlling the shadow puppets and lighting equipment and providing most of the speech for the character—"Which hole in my head could this fit into?"—as well as her own commentary, such as her summary remark, "Stupid, stupid, stupid." Given this respect for the "owner" of the memory, imagining an entirely different company seeking permission from Puppetmongers to mount its own production of *And Now We Are Here* is even more challenging than imagining the same scenario in regard to *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*. If it were to happen, then, following Corbett's logic, the entire production would have to be staged citationally somehow; there would even be a few sequences, including much of Ann Powell's part in the bead episode, that would have to be presented as citations-within-citations.

As has already been demonstrated over the course of this study, but particularly in this chapter, a Puppetmongers production never reaches a stage where changes are not permitted. Corbett similarly emphasizes that, "[a]s a collective construction," *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* has been subject to "change as time goes by and the piece is remounted in different locations." As a result, the published playtext should be considered "a record of the piece at a particular moment" (131). Renza, upon whom Govan, Nicholson, and Normington rely for their own formulations regarding autobiographical performance, himself describes "autobiographical writing" in a similar fashion: "as an endless prelude." Much like a devised theatre project whose co-creators are still active, an autobiography has "a beginning without middle (the realm of fiction) or without end (the realm of history)"; it is, in the end—inasmuch as one can speak of an "end" in this context—"a purely fragmentary, incomplete literary project" (295).

Given that a textual record—or any other form of documentation—of a devised performance, autobiographical or otherwise, will always necessarily be incomplete, one must take into consideration, as Corbett does, "[w]hat is missing," for it is often "more than just the visual and spatial information communicated in performance." In the case of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* specifically, Corbett offers the "breathtaking experience of presence" (131) as an example. With regard to devised theatre more generally, a published playtext can provide only limited insight into "the creative methodology and process of development behind" (129) a given production, so that, while a hypothetical published version of *And Now We Are Here* or the actual published version "of *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* may give us a structural or linguistic approximation of conflict, the type of collision that is embodied in this performance is ultimately unavailable to the reader" (130). Presence, conflict, and collision, as I have endeavoured to show, all lie at the heart of both the developmental process behind and the performances of *And Now We Are Here* as well.

These three elements also lie at the heart of many other devised productions, no doubt, but the reasons for their inclusion (and for the relative emphasis they each receive across productions) vary. The same is true of "the use of personal experience within contemporary devised work" (60), according to Govan, Nicholson, and Normington, as autobiographical content can serve purposes "ranging from ideological impulses to artistic pragmatism" (60-61). For both *The Confessions of Punch and Judy* and *And Now We Are Here*, presence, conflict, and collision—along with autobiographical content, in the case of the latter—propelled their explorations of personal relationships. "Ideological impulses" could surely be teased out of these productions, given the originally "feminist principle that the personal is political"; nevertheless, there are clearer examples of the use of "autobiographical narrative as a means of substantiating an ideological message" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 61). In outlining a striking— this is in part a pun that is perhaps in poor taste, as shall soon be disclosed—if not immediately obvious instance from the Powells' body of work, we will briefly revisit their ongoing *Hard Times* project, which has figured so conspicuously in this chapter, before drawing this chapter to a close.

A Change of Place: A Change in View

A production like *And Now We Are Here* proves that self-referentiality can affect the form and content of a work more deeply than was the case (in the opinion of Booker) with *The Miller and His Wife*. Certainly, "a different level of engagement" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69) with the audience can be achieved in autobiographical performances by going beyond the metatheatrical "[p]ostmodern jokes" that Booker and others identified in their reviews of *The Miller and His Wife* and positioning the spectators as witnesses. Formal techniques such as direct address can also be used to this effect in productions that are much less bluntly autobiographical than either the Powells' *And Now We Are Here* or any of the productions analyzed by Govan, Nicholson, and Normington.

Rajaram's engagement with the audience, as both Gradgrind and McChoakumchild, during the one public performance of the workshop production of *Hard Times* in 2008 was discussed in detail earlier in this chapter. Now, however, prompted by Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's analysis, we can see that the spectators were being implicated in the stage action as witnesses right from the beginning of the opening scene. Even in rehearsals, Rajaram himself may have already been aware of the significance of putting the audience in this position: not only did they have to watch the puppets representing students suffer verbal and (in Sissy Jupe's case) physical abuse at the hands of McChoakumchild, but they also had to get through a confrontation with this volatile teacher themselves. Rajaram even asked his fellow collaborators if they were comfortable with the physical violence Sissy was having to endure. Nobody objected, and David Powell even commented that such instances of abuse were common occurrences when he was in school. Although none of the collaborators presumably had witnessed a teacher attacking a student in as exaggerated a way as McChoakumchild did, one wonders whether David Powell and

perhaps some or all of the others were silently drawing upon "personal experience . . . as a means of substantiating an ideological message" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 61).

As I watched these threatening and violent sequences unfold onstage in 2008, I found my own reaction to be ambivalent and difficult to parse; to have claimed that I was also able to gauge with certainty what other spectators were thinking or feeling at the time would have been foolhardy. McChoakumchild's paroxysms of rage were not devoid of humour, as I indicated earlier in this chapter; still, the power dynamic being depicted in these scenes demanded at least some serious consideration. Thus, I found these sequences to lie somewhere between the "knockabout funny business" (Speaight, "*Bartholomew*" 112) of a more traditional hand-puppet performance in the vein of the Punch and Judy show and the earnest engagement with "emotional trauma and memory" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69) that characterizes many autobiographical productions.

Given that the scenes featuring McChoakumchild were, for me, the most memorable ones, as much for their humour as for their unsettling quality, I was surprised to discover that they had been so radically altered for the more elaborate staging of *Hard Times* in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille in 2010. The interaction between the puppet representing McChoakumchild and the audience, and between that puppet and its operator, Rajaram, had been curtailed nearly to the point of having been completely cut. The performance now opened with McChoakumchild's laboured entrance, which drew the audience's attention to that character alone and allowed for a few brief moments of engagement with the audience: he looked the audience up and down from stage left, leaning in to scrutinize one spectator particularly carefully before shaking his head and grunting in disapproval. He then crossed the stage and repeated the same evaluative scan of the audience. Finally, he acknowledged the human performer responsible for his locomotion and (albeit limited thus far) vocalization by turning to face Rajaram and then nodding to him in order to indicate that it was time to ring the bell to signal that the school day, and thus the first scene proper, was about to begin. The bell also ended up signalling the end of McChoakumchild's interaction with both the audience and the human performers as such. Gradgrind was now being played by a masked Ann Powell, and while McChoakumchild still interacted with him at the level of two characters in the same scene, the concretized metaphorical relationship between the two—with McChoakumchild being presented figuratively and literally as Gradgrind's puppet—had been lost.

An even more conspicuous absence was that of the violence that accompanied McChoakumchild's appearances onstage in the 2008 workshop production. Gone were any martial props that might serve as evidence of a lineage that could be traced at least as far back as Punch. This is not to suggest that McChoakumchild's temperament had been changed beyond recognition, however. He still confronted Sissy hostilely when she offered an incorrect answer—or no answer whatsoever—to one of his questions, and he even went so far as to shove one student—the overeager Bitzer—back down into his seat so as to cut off his protracted, lexicographic response to his teacher's request for a definition of

horse. Even though this was indeed a surprising physical action, since Bitzer was unquestionably his favourite student, it was now the only one that was likely to have been construed as an instance of physical abuse. That said, moments before, McChoakumchild had silenced another student attempting to answer his question and then lightly stroked Bitzer's head in encouragement, which, in a present-day classroom, could have been considered as questionable an action as the shove.

Minimizing the onstage violence for the 2010 staging of *Hard Times* concomitantly eliminated several opportunities for humour. At the same time, and perhaps to a greater degree, the perceptible threat to the audience had been reduced. This was compounded by the severing of the puppet representing McChoakumchild from the human performer representing Gradgrind. Although the spectators were still explicitly called on to witness how the students were being treated by means of the function of the narrator or storyteller—a role shared by David Powell and Rajaram in the opening scene—they were no longer implicated in the action as directly as their counterparts at the performance at the Puppetmongers studio in 2008 had been. Gradgrind was now not able to address the spectators in tandem with the McChoakumchild puppet, with the result that they were less clearly positioned as students in McChoakumchild's class. Their "fellow" students onstage suffered fewer physical attacks, Gradgrind was no longer in close enough proximity to McChoakumchild to restrain him physically (which had had the effect of increasing the likelihood that spectators would perceive the puppet to be a potential threat, even to themselves), and McChoakumchild did not cross into the spectators' domain to importune them for a definition of *horse*. In reality, of course, the audience at the 2008 performance was just as safe as the one at the 2010 performance. Nevertheless, the heightened "level of engagement" that had been realized in 2008—by positioning each spectator as "another character within the piece" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 69) through the use of formal techniques often associated with autobiographical performance—had been compromised.

The semiotic repercussions of this are not particularly difficult to identify. As we know, Veltruský stresses the importance of "the metonymic potential" of the "collective work" of theatre in general and of puppet theatre more specifically, for "[t]he interplay" among all the performers onstage, human or puppet, "is the source of a great variety of meanings that would otherwise not arise" (112). In the context of puppetry, this "metonymic potential is a powerful factor in the vivification of the puppets whenever they are combined with human performers" (116), as was discussed in the fourth chapter of this study with reference to tandem puppetry. There was still evidence of "metonymic potential" in the 2010 staging of *Hard Times*: Rajaram was still employing the tandem style in his manipulation of McChoakumchild, and there remained some interaction (albeit attenuated) between Rajaram and his puppet and between that puppet and the character of Gradgrind. Still, some sense of "interplay" in Veltruský's sense was definitely lost as a result of the decision to make Ann Powell responsible for embodying Gradgrind instead of Rajaram.

On the other hand, one could certainly argue that this decision also freed Rajaram to focus on his manipulation and characterization of McChoakumchild in the opening scene, thereby allowing him to develop a more nuanced and "vivifying" performance, as was indeed in evidence in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille, although surely the additional rehearsal time helped as well. In fact, increased clarity and readability—or, as Corbett would say, "perceived accessibility" (125)—appeared to have been a goal that the collaborators had set for this version of their adaptation of *Hard Times*. There was another instance of this related to violence (or rather, the comparative lack thereof in this staging) and the changes made to how the puppet representing McChoakumchild was deployed. The sequence in question was actually the one in which McChoakumchild was at his most violent—in 2008, at least. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the section on space flexibility: McChoakumchild tackled the hand-puppet version of Sissy, slammed that puppet into the ground several times, and then hit it with a club.

In the structure of the play, this a story within the story: Sissy is telling Louisa, her classmate and Gradgrind's daughter, about the challenges that she is facing at school, but instead of having her deliver it as a narrative, Earle incorporated the recollection as a scene within a larger scene. The 2010 production of *Hard Times* was more successful at making the relationship between this sequence and the scene of which it was a part clear to the audience. In 2008, Ann Powell had manipulated and spoken for both the hand puppet representing Louisa—another Judy puppet, but one designed and built by David Powell himself for his 1975 performance at Nathan Phillips Square (D. Powell, "Re: Fact-Checking")—in the parts of the scene that framed this play within a play and the piece of dowelling that was used to represent Bitzer in the play within the play itself. Consequently, she had to abandon the Louisa puppet (which had actually been placed over a stand so that it could support itself when left on its own, thereby qualifying as yet another example of a "Canadian control" puppet) in order to begin operating the Bitzer puppet. For the 2010 production, rather than leaving a lifeless Louisa to stare vacantly out to the side, bereft of an operator, the collaborators had determined that David Powell should control Louisa instead, so that she could remain alive in the imagination of the audience by staying focused on the action of the play within the play for its duration. Louisa thereby doubled as a signpost for spectators, indicating whither their attention should be directed. Meanwhile, the McChoakumchild puppet, now being manipulated (along with the Bitzer puppet) by Ann Powell from behind the set, had been moved to a window located near the top of the stage-right flat of the set. With the Sissy puppet (now controlled by Rajaram) perched atop a short ladder that had been placed in front of the opposite side of the flat, the highly physical interaction between the two characters that had been seen in the workshop production had been rendered impossible. That said, this new arrangement, coupled with a lighting change to give that part of the stage greater focus, demarcated more clearly the memory being shared as a different "space."

Perhaps the collaborators also began to believe that the exaggerated violence was distracting the audience (and even themselves) with its grotesque humour. After all, even if all of the changes reviewed

above resulted in a heightened sense of "perceived accessibility" (125), one must still differentiate "between the mask of the performance and what lies beneath" with regard to *Hard Times*, just as Corbett does in connection with *The Confessions of Punch and Judy*, while bearing in mind that "the various levels of communication are interrelated, rather than in competition, with one another" (127). The Powells and the other devisers working on the *Hard Times* project might well have found that what they thought lay beneath the "mask" of their own performance was being obscured to too great a degree. When I asked Ann Powell what kept drawing her and her brother back to Dickens's novel, she put politics first, nothing that it continues to be "timely in its social commentary," given that, at its heart, it addresses "issues that we're still struggling with 150 years later" ("Re: *Hard Times* Questions"). Considering that Gradgrind's school was a microcosm of the society that Dickens wished to interrogate, and that it still served a similar purpose for the Powells and their guest collaborators, the fact that they have been continually revisiting and revising how the school was depicted onstage should not come as much of a surprise.

I do not want to give the impression, however, that all of the changes made to the Puppetmongers adaptation of *Hard Times* were carried out in the name of greater clarity and "perceived accessibility" (Corbett 125) only. The Powells and their collaborators had clearly devoted considerable resources to developing a production that was richer in spectacular elements, but the intention was not merely to provide the audience with some pleasant diversions. Rather, the more polished appearance, while undoubtedly also offering a more immediately familiar and accessible surface layer to spectators in order to draw them into the performance, granted the devisers the freedom to design the set, puppets, and other aspects of staging from scratch. On the one hand, this meant that any "built-in" meanings and physical qualities associated with the objects and stand-in puppets that had figured so prominently in the workshop production would inevitably be lost. In some cases, the object or objects that had been selected to represent a particular character were especially appropriate and evocative, such as the bricks, vice, and flap cap that, through the intervention of Rajaram, came together to represent Blackpool collectively. On the other hand, by designing and constructing the puppets themselves, the devisers could incorporate nuanced design features and effects that would have been difficult if not impossible to achieve had they continued to rely upon found objects and puppets pulled from the Powells' existing collection.

One particularly well-thought-out example of this—which, according to Ann Powell, had developed out of the devisers' experimentation with "the idea of masks for some of the characters" as they collaborated on the workshop production of *Hard Times* in 2008—was their design strategy "of having large heads on the puppets to match masks of the same characters" ("Re: *Hard Times* Questions") worn by human performers, as Ann Powell describes it. This strategy also caught the attention of some reviewers. Lucy Allen, writing for *Mooney on Theatre*, observed enthusiastically that "[t]he puppetry and mask work alone . . . [was] worth the price of admission." Apparently, these two categories of theatrical

objects blurred together for her, as she stressed that she "really liked was that a character wasn't necessarily confined to one type of puppet," citing Louisa as an example, for that character "was both a glove puppet and a mask at different points in the show." Although a mask can certainly be manipulated as a puppet—as we already know, this sort of repurposing was found to be useful during the development of the workshop production of *Hard Times*—it cannot simply be counted among the types of puppets that feature in a given production without more of an explanation being provided.

It is true that at least one mask incontestably became a puppet, but the mask in question represented James Harthouse, who attempts to seduce Louisa, not Louisa herself. This mask was under the control of Rajaram, who usually held it to his face by means of a control rod attached to its side. The mask could also, however, "be shifted away from the face entirely," by means of the same control rod, so that "a new threshold . . . [could be] crossed and the performing object ha[d] become detached from the actor's body, developing its own center of gravity, its own structure, its own presence," which, Kaplin tells us, means "that the term 'puppet' can be used" (33). The mask representing Louisa, by contrast, was worn more conventionally by Ann Powell, in that "the mask's features correspond[ed] more or less with the actor's own face, the character's center of gravity remain[ed] united firmly to the performer's" (Kaplin 33). Thus, one would think that the audience probably would not have perceived Powell to have been an "actor subsumed in the puppet" rather than merely an "actor wearing a mask" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 20), to bring up Tillis's comparison again. That said, Allen seems to reveal in her review that she perceived Powell "to be but part of the object" (21), as Tillis would say; while her perspective is potentially as valid as that of any other spectator, further clarification as to how she came to this conclusion would have made her interpretation more convincing.

Even if the masks worn at times by the human performers in the 2010 Puppetmongers production of *Hard Times* did not invariably—even when coupled with complementary costumes—transform them, semiotically and phenomenologically, at least, into "living puppets," as Paula Citron, in her review for the *Globe and Mail*, claimed that they did, these reviewers were still onto something. This "something" was in fact identified in the fourth chapter as characteristic of tandem puppetry, for the close—again, semiotically and phenomenologically, but also dramaturgically, in that they are both equally and explicitly central to the developmental process and resulting production, and often spatially—relationship between the puppet and the human performer that largely defines this style can easily precipitate the perceptual "bleeding" that takes place when the audience perceives the visible performer and the puppet to have partaken of the nature of one another.

This effect was amplified about halfway through the second act of *Hard Times*, when the Louisa hand puppet returned to the stage under the control of Ann Powell, who was still wearing the same long skirt that she had been wearing, along with a mask, in earlier scenes in that act in order to present the character of Louisa as an actor. This was surely a choice motivated at least in part by practical

considerations, given that Powell had to switch back and forth between these two methods of representing Louisa over the course of the second act. Even so, there was more to it than that: even though Powell did not interact with the character being represented by the hand puppet that she was manipulating, this echoing technique served to level the importance of both bodies (human and puppet) as signifiers. It also brought them closer together. By continuing to wear the costume that had helped her to construct the role of Louisa as an actor, even as she was operating the puppet that had resumed being the primary visual signifier of that character, and by using the same character voice for both representations, Powell equated herself with the puppet at a semiotic and even, to a degree, material level, thereby tapping into the objectness of the puppet. At the same time, as a result of Powell's focus on and manipulation of that puppet, it appeared to come to life; that is, it seemed to tap into Powell's actual status as a living being. This kind of mutual (if necessarily partial) transformation, as we know, gives the lie to Jurkowski's claim that "[t]he puppet seen alongside human beings is more puppetlike, and the human being seen alongside puppets seems to be more humanlike" ("The Sign Systems" 78). It is, in fact, an instance of "metonymic potential" (Veltruský 112) that is subtler than many of the others that have analyzed thus far in this study. In the 2010 production of *Hard Times* in particular, this mutual transformation reinforced the role of the Louisa hand "puppet as partner of the actor," to quote Jurkowski again, although Powell's role as partner of the puppet is just as apparent. Given that she appeared in the same production as both an actor in the more usual sense and as a puppet operator, Powell put a rather different spin on the trend to which Jurkowski calls his reader's attention as he proclaims that "the actor has replaced the puppet player" ("Towards a Theatre" 39): she combined these two roles instead of completely replacing one with the other. Her brother David Powell and Rajaram alternated between these two roles as well, but the echoing effect that she achieved by means of her costume and the Louisa hand puppet was a unique contribution.

We have therefore seen that it would be inaccurate and indeed unfair to maintain that the sole aim of the developmental work that took place in the interim between the 2008 workshop production of *Hard Times* and the 2010 production mounted in the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille was to clarify the intentions of the devisers by simplifying some elements of the production. Such an argument would itself be an oversimplification. With respect to those changes that did appear to have been made with this aim in mind, it is tempting to point one's finger at the space itself, at Theatre Passe Muraille as the host for the production, and charge it with unduly influencing the devisers as they considered how best to proceed. Even the Backspace is, after all, a much more institutionalized space than the Puppetmongers studio, and one can easily imagine compromises being made for the sake of "selling" the show to a more conventional space and audience. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the workshop production was just that. As was emphasized earlier in this chapter in the section on design flexibility, the maquette puppets used for the 2008 performance were not expected to find their way into the (not necessarily) final production at the Backspace, and the same can be said of the makeshift set.

Even so, whatever the intentional political content of the production, the politics of the space in which the 2010 version of *Hard Times* was staged would also have their say. Schechner posits "three fundamental models of space arrangement" under which all "indoor theatres," and even "certain outdoor theatres such as the Greek type" ("On Environmental Design" 394), can be subsumed. Indeed, he subsumes most of the types of theatre spaces with which we are already familiar, including "'open stages' such as arenas, thrust stages, and other theatres with fixed seating," under the category of "Orthodox Theatre" (395), which he defines as "theatre derived from Renaissance and Enlightenment models and scenically characterized by (1) segregation of audience from performers, (2) fixed and regular seating of audience, (3) construction of scenery situated in one part of the theatre only" (379). As a place—that is, as "a geographic location with particular rules and regulations" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 104)— the Backspace at Theatre Passe Muraille, despite its small size and the well-known link between it and experimental work, is unquestionably an "orthodox theatre" in Schechner's sense. As a space, however— as a "product of the social interactions which happen within that place" (Govan, Nicholson, and Normington 104)—the Backspace could have become more of a "Confrontation Theatre" ("On Environmental Design" 395), the second of Schechner's categories, if the Powells and the other devisers had developed a relationship with that space more similar to the one that they had had with the Puppetmongers studio in 2008, when they presented a performance of the workshop production of *Hard Times*.

Of course, the Powells' relationship with the Backspace could never have been the same as the one that they have had with their own space, even if the latter has been based merely upon a lease and thus frequently subject to renegotiation and alteration; in fact, what we are really considering is the relationship between the Powells and each in a series of distinct spaces. Still, these are less tenuous relationships than that which a company has with a space being rented only for a run of performances. There was little the Powells and their collaborators could have done to change the space physically in order to meet their needs, given its "fixed seating" ("On Environmental Design" 395), a sign of orthodoxy, according to Schechner. Quite unlike the individual chairs that can be arranged into an ad hoc audience space in the Puppetmongers studio, fixed benches built into the ground are what spectators at the Backspace must sit upon. Paul Thompson, who served as the artistic director of Theatre Passe Muraille from 1972 to 1982 and who himself was "a primary force in the development of collective creation in Canada" (Rudakoff), contends that these benches actually embody what he sees as the progressive, egalitarian politics of the Backspace: "You can't make it more comfortable for an audience without reducing the limited seating already. I think there's also a kind of democratic business where, when somebody comes in . . . you have your butt against somebody else's for the whole show." The very discomfort of the seating—the hard benches and the crampedness that Thompson describes so

colourfully—is itself alienating and justifiable politically, for each spectator present must "choose to be uncomfortable, or, to get involved in the show" (qtd. in McKeown, "Shows").

Thompson's argument is exciting and even seductive, but one has to question how conducive the Backspace is, given the cramped quarters and the rather steeply raked auditorium, to getting the audience "involved in the show" (qtd. in McKeown, "Shows") in a substantive and meaningful way. Certainly, "an orthodox space . . . [can be] used for unorthodox ends," as Schechner observes, as it is in what he has dubbed "Confrontation Theatre" ("On Environmental Design" 395). His description of this theatre model may remind the reader of Rajaram's forays into the audience—as Gradgrind and as McChoakumchild—during the 2008 performance of *Hard Times*: "The goal of Confrontation Theatre is to provoke the' audience into participating in the play. Often this provocation takes the form of actual or simulated hostility. . . . Spectators are invited onto the stage and performers go into the auditorium" (396). Rajaram did not literally invite any spectators into the playing area, but we have already seen how permeable the boundary was between the space that had been reserved for the spectators and that which had been reserved for the performers. We have also seen that this same boundary became markedly less permeable two years later in the Backspace.

A change of venue necessarily brings with it a change in spatial politics, intentionally (on the part of the theatre company in question) or otherwise. This too is part of "what lies beneath" (Corbett 126) what Bobgan identifies as "the mask of performance" (qtd. in Corbett 127). The objective of the foregoing comparison of the two different stagings of *Hard Times* by the Powells and their guest collaborators was not to paint a picture of potentially deadening institutionalization of the type that was associated with Famous People Players earlier in this chapter. The very fact that the Powells have consistently remained so open to revisiting and revising this production, just as they have with respect to all of their productions, is further proof that these two theatre artists keep their minds open to the idea of play throughout the developmental process and even into performance.

The term *play* should not necessarily be equated with *haphazardness*: a vitalizing approach to new work development, even one that, as a variation on theatrical devising, is dependent upon spontaneity, can still revolve around certain fixed principles, such as the five flexibilities that have been the chief talking points of this chapter. Fowler, in considering Canadian theatre more generally and appraising the value of process in that context, characterizes "theatrical work in English-speaking Canada" as "isolated pockets of often competitive endeavour, usually operating . . . from a (laudable but impoverished) desire to be original and innovative," when each company could instead concentrate on formulating and then gradually and continuously refining "a developed process which by its very nature inevitably re-invents the theatrical experience with each new production" (3) and even, we should add, with each new staging of a production still in a given company's repertoire. According to Fowler, just such a process helped to form the core of Primus's identity as a company, and I would argue—indeed, I

have been arguing—that Puppetmongers could similarly serve as a model in this regard. As a matter of fact, if we take into account the Powells' "humongously ridiculous history together" (D. Powell and A. Powell, Personal interview, 4 Mar. 2006), as David Powell puts it, we must acknowledge that Fowler's description of Primus applies all the more to Puppetmongers:

> We are a permanent ensemble. Years spent working together have given us the time to develop a creative process (so that when we begin a project, we have a means with which to undertake the creative task) and a practical methodology (so that we have administrative and technical skills to structure and execute our creative choices). We are able to maintain our productions in our repertoire long enough for them to season and mature, and for them to recoup initial investment and earn revenue. (3)

The Powells' long history as collaborators and longer history as siblings make them an exceptional and compelling subject for a case study, but it is their deliberate foregrounding of and dedication to the idea that "[t]he most important element is the creative process" ("Towards a Theatre" 42), to return to Jurkowski's observation regarding "contemporary puppet theatre" (43) once again, that illustrate how much of the freedom of devising can still be enjoyed in the object-centred world of puppet theatre. That said, whether it has decades of experience in collaboration and an impressive number of productions thus created under its belt or whether it has been in existence for only a few weeks, a devised puppet theatre company must always be willing to do the work—the work of play, that is—so as not to fall into the trap of what Arnott refers to as the "fatally easy" (40).

One must recognize that, just as "[t]he child in us reacts instinctively" to a puppetry performance, even a subpar one, as Arnott cautions, so too does it react "instinctively" to the idea of play being used constructively, such as in the development of a puppet theatre performance. We are nevertheless already aware that Tillis disputes Arnott's assertion that the "child in" each spectator necessarily "engenders a certain laziness in the puppeteer" (40) by retorting "that such laziness, and the mediocre puppetry that results from it, are the fault of particular artists, and not of puppetry itself" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 66). Likewise, even the members of the most democratically organized devised puppet theatre company imaginable would be wise to devote some time to reflecting upon their developmental process, as Fowler and the other members of Primus clearly did. A number of the benefits of this kind of attention to process have been discussed over the course of this dissertation, and the most important ones will be reviewed in the conclusion to follow. In the present context, however, a new one needs to be mentioned, for just as puppet artists who are mindful of the reception process that Tillis has designated "double-vision" (64) are more likely "not [to] fall prey to . . . laziness" (66) of the sort identified by Arnott, so too can they avoid getting lost in the wealth of possibilities offered by a playful approach to new work development by devising a rich, reiterable but still flexible process, even as they begin the actual devising of a new work.

There would, in fact, be no harm in beginning this processual devising first. By doing so, devised puppet theatre practitioners could chart their own paths through the admittedly inspiring but sometimes distracting opportunities provided by play, which might otherwise prevent them from realizing their

projects onstage at some point. Devised theatre artists may well often prioritize process over product, and this in itself can certainly be healthy and productive, as this study and several others have confirmed. If no one outside of a given company is ever a witness to a particular project, however, then any sense of it being "theatre" becomes purely hypothetical as a result of endless deferral.

In the context of devised puppet theatre specifically, any potential puppets—inanimate, animate, or hybrid—that figure in a project similarly remain just that, potential or hypothetical, as without even an audience of one present, the "double-vision" unique to puppet theatre cannot by its very definition take place, for "[t]he puppet, properly speaking, exists only as a particular process of performance, in which the audience perceives a theatrical figure to be an object that is made to deploy abstracted signs of life, which encourage the audience to satisfy its psychological desire to imagine that the perceived object does, in fact, have life" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 64), as Tillis states. In fact, should there be no public performance at all, it would be the puppets that would suffer the most, despite the fact—or rather because of it—that a "puppet has no real life," as Tillis verifies: "Strip the actor and the puppet of their theatrical signs, and you still have a living person, while the puppet has ceased to exist" (83). Any instance of this would be a regrettable (semiotic) death—or, more accurately, failure to live—for, should the devisers participating in a given puppetry project "not fall prey to such laziness" as was mentioned again above or to the sometimes dizzying number of choices that have to be made once one decides to enter the realm of spontaneous play, then they could prove "able to create masterful and important theatrical productions— productions possible only with the puppet" (66), as Tillis insists, and through a devised approach to new work development, I would further propose.

Conclusion:

"And This Is Jamie, Who We Like to Throw Things At."

The Beginning of the End of the Beginning: Attitude, Process, Perspective

As we embark upon the final stage of this exploratory journey into the past and present of Canadian puppetry (with particular attention having been paid to Canadian devised puppetry), several clarifications and reiterations should be made before a few informed speculations with regard to the possible future of it are put forward. To begin with, what was being advocated in the previous chapter, especially at the end of it, was an attitude towards process. It was not my intention to prescribe a particular type of process or provide some kind of "recipe for success." Puppetmongers Theatre was meant to serve as an example of a company whose members exhibit this attitude, not as a model whose processes should be imitated slavishly.

This attitude towards process, as we have seen, is a playful one. Just what is meant by "playful," however, should be briefly explained, as doing so will grant us a new means of approach to re-examining the central through line of this dissertation: a focus on process brings perspective, which applies to scholars, practitioners, and critics alike. A chapter-by-chapter review of the benefits of a focus on process will in turn oblige us to scrutinize the question that has been lying just below the surface of much of this study: Does the focus on the object in puppet theatre restrict the spontaneity and physical freedom that are so central to theatrical devising? Having arrived at an answer to that question that will allow us to proceed while still remaining open to subsequent revision by other scholars (and, most likely, myself), I will conclude this conclusion and thus this study as a whole by broadening my own focus. My intention will be to provide scope for a look at what the next steps might be for artists, scholars, and artist-scholars—as well as scholar-artists, one might add, as methods of interweaving research and practice, and motives for attaching a given weight to the former and another to the latter, vary—interested in exploring devised puppet theatre further. As has been the case throughout this dissertation, puppet theatre will be presented as what it is: simply one form of theatre among many, no more and certainly no less.

The Work of Play

Pavis emphasizes that, while "[t]heatre has many things in common with play in its principles and rules," this overlap is less conspicuous in the context of "forms" ("Play" 268). Expanding on Johan Huizinga's pioneering study *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Roger Caillois, in *Man, Play and Games*, posits six characteristics of play that indicate its broad commonalities with theatre. Play, he submits, must be "[*f*]*ree*," that is, "not obligatory"; "[*s*]*eparate*," meaning "circumscribed within limits of space and time"; "[*u*]*ncertain*," in that the outcome cannot be decided ahead of time, "and some latitude for innovations . . . [must be] left to the player's initiative" (9); "[*u*]*nproductive:* creating neither

goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind"; "[*g*]*overned by rules*" or "conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts"; and "[*m*]*ake-believe*," for it is "accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life" (10). These aspects of play point up as many potential differences between theatre and play as they do similarities. Caillois himself offers a compelling example: "A characteristic of play . . . is that it creates no wealth or goods, thus differing from work or art." It is true that play can be "designed to be extremely lucrative or ruinous," as evidenced by "games of chance," but by the end of such games, "[t]he sum of the winnings at best would only equal the losses of the other players"; that is, there can be an "exchange" (5), but nothing can be brought into existence that was not already there.

There are different forms and styles of play, of course, just as there are different forms and styles of theatre. Thus, the conceptual distance between theatre and play is not a constant: it may increase or decrease, depending on which forms and styles are under consideration. If we examine this fluctuation more closely, we can discern that some of the aforementioned characteristics of play may obtain more markedly in situations in which a certain game is being played or a certain form or style of theatre is being practiced, while others may fade into the background or go through some kind of complication. Theatrical devising provides a particularly tricky but revealing example.

"Many games do not imply rules" (8), Caillois declares, despite listing "[*g*]*overned by rules*" (10) among the characteristics of play that he identifies. These seemingly ungoverned games "presuppose free improvisation, and the chief attraction of" such games "lies in the pleasure of playing a role, of acting *as if* one were someone or something else" (8), Caillois argues, echoing (but not citing) Stanislavsky's use of *if*: "From the moment of the appearance of [the *Magic*] *If* the actor passes from the plane of actual reality into the plane of another life, created and imagined by him" ("Magic If"). For Caillois, however, these games nonetheless do have *de facto* rules, or at least constraints, in that "the fiction, the sentiment of *as if* replaces and performs the same function as do rules." An individual playing a more conventionally rule-based game such as checkers or baseball, "by the very fact of complying with their respective rules, is separated from real life where there is no activity that literally corresponds to any of these games." In such cases, an imaginative "*as if*" need not be formulated by the player. When playing a game that requires assuming some kind of role, however, "the player on the one hand lacks knowledge of how to invent and follow rules that do not exist in reality, and on the other hand the game is accompanied by the knowledge that the required behavior is pretense, or simple mimicry" (8). Therefore, Caillois concludes, games "are ruled *or* make-believe" (9); that is, these are mutually exclusive systems of organization, at least in the context of games.

Theatre cannot be directly equated with play, as has already been noted. Consequently, regardless of whether or not Caillois's structuralist synchronic analysis actually holds true whatever historical period or geographical area is considered—that is, whether or not it can demonstrated that every game,

throughout space and time, is either "ruled *or* make-believe" (Caillois 9), a question outside of the purview of this dissertation—since theatrical productions and processes and not games as such are our subjects of interest here, surely we can allow the strictures that he imposes to bend slightly. Indeed, in the context of devising specifically, we encounter yet another boundary that, upon closer inspection, is revealed to be permeable, for this approach to new work development is, in one sense, "ruled" and at the same time, but in another sense, "make-believe." Moreover, these two aspects of devising can in fact be complementary, as we began to see towards the end of the sixth chapter. Devising would therefore appear to be both remarkably close to and yet impossibly distant from play.

This is not to suggest that these two aspects are always weighted equally. We should recall Govan, Nicholson, and Normington's assertion that "devising is most accurately described in the plural – as *processes* of experimentation and sets of creative *strategies* – rather than a single methodology" (7). For Barton, devising comprises "adopted strategies and rules, *process*" ("Introduction" ix), and each of these "rules" is precisely what enables a company to engage productively in what Caillois refers to as "make-believe" (9)—first in the rehearsal space and subsequently, in the same space or a different one, in front of an audience—and, more generally, in play. Both "make-believe" and play can—to varying degrees, depending on the objectives, processes, and collaborative structure of the company in question—be "*free within the limits set by the rules*" (8). The extent to which "make-believe" and play are "free" is contingent upon which of the two "ways of playing" (53) postulated by Caillois is favoured by a given company. Once again, we are faced with a proposed theoretical continuum, with *paidia* at one end and *ludus* at the other. *Paidia*, Caillois elucidates, is primal "uncontrolled fantasy" (13) that surfaces in "spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct" (28) in both humans and animals. Its "frolicsome and impulsive exuberance" is related "to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety" (13).

Given that we have already encountered some of the terms used by Caillois in his description of *paidia* in the context of theatrical devising, we might be tempted to draw a connection between the two immediately. However, without some kind of structure in place to channel the type of energy unleashed by "a cat entangled in a ball of wool, a dog sniffing, and an infant laughing at his rattle," for example, it can "readily [be] carried to excess" (Caillois 28). Although this sort of gratuitous free play can certainly have a place in the rehearsal space and the devising process, if a group of devisers were to rely solely upon this way of playing, they would most likely succumb to the kind of distraction that was identified towards the end of the sixth chapter. "At the opposite extreme" of Caillois's continuum is what might appear to be the solution to this problem: an ostensibly more constructive way of playing that he labels *ludus*. Unquestionably less "anarchic and capricious," *ludus*, Caillois writes more censoriously, is play restrained by "arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions." Even though, in the end, it is still as "completely impractical" as *paidia*, *ludus* demands, as it evolves, "an ever greater amount of effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity," so much so that the chances of play "attaining its desired effect"

become "uncertain" (13). Still, *ludus* is play "transform[ed] . . . into an instrument of fecund and decisive culture"; the games thereby created "reflect the moral and intellectual values of a culture, as well as contribute to their refinement and development" (27). None of these cultural contributions would be possible, however, without the instinctual impetus that *paidia* supplies.

As the reader may have already deduced, what I was recommending at the close of the last chapter was an attitude towards process—or, more specifically, towards play—that could be located somewhere in the middle of Caillois's continuum. The exact location actually matters little, as long as both extremes, *paidia* and *ludus*, are taken into account. The improvisational and turbulent spirit of *paidia*—much like the dramaturgical "turbulence" proposed as an ideal by Barba, which led to Barton developing his concept further—cannot and should not be completely tamed. That said, "in disciplining the *paidia*," Caillois concedes, "*ludus* stands for the specific element in play the impact and cultural creativity of which seems most impressive" (33). That is how the playfulness of "[c]hildren's initiations" and games involving "[m]asks, [d]isguises," and role-play, for example, becomes the artistry of "[t]heater [s]pectacles in general" (36).

There are yet more specific and relevant parallels between Caillois's theories concerning play and puppet theatre productions—as a subset of "[t]heater [s]pectacles in general" (36)—in particular that should be mentioned, especially since they shed further light on the Powells' understanding of and approach to collaboration and devising. Objects in general figure prominently in Caillois's analysis of play. In fact, he asserts that the "elementary need for disturbance and tumult"—that is, for *paidia*—"first appears as an impulse to touch, grasp, taste, smell, and then drop any accessible object." In children, this can easily develop into "a taste for destruction and breaking things" and later for somewhat more sublimated manifestations, such as "breaking up a gathering, holding up a queue, disturbing the play or work of others" (28), and so on. However, "conventions, techniques, and utensils" can intervene, and by these means, "the first games as such [can] arise," including "doll-play" (29)—or, more precisely, doll-*ludus*.

Equating "doll-play" (Caillois 29) with puppetry would be a mistake, as we learnt in the second chapter, for as Baird clarifies, the former "involves an intimate action which never extends past" the doll and the person playing with it. "In no sense is that show business" (13), Baird reasons. Still, the apparently justifiable line that he draws between doll-play and puppetry can become blurred. Consider, for example, a child who uses the same doll with which she had been engaged in "an intimate action" to stage a short performance for her parents or friends. The doll, in this case, would have already been transformed into a puppet, but a more conventional, purpose-built puppet could certainly be used by the child instead, with the same objective in mind. The Powells began their collaborative relationship putting on such shows as children, using marionettes that their parents had purchased for them (Oppenheim). In doing so, they surely experienced more than just the form of "pleasure" that Caillois associates with

"*ludus* proper," namely that which is "experienced in solving a problem arbitrarily designed for this purpose," for experiencing that pleasure alone would mean "that reaching a solution ha[d] no other goal than personal satisfaction for its own sake" (29).

Indeed, "in *ludus* the tension and skill of the player" need not be "related to any explicit feeling of emulation or rivalry"; in other words, not only are spectators unnecessary, but so too are other players, in many cases. Thus, in such situations, "the conflict is with the obstacle, not with one or several competitors," Caillois affirms. Beginning as children, the Powells, much like Caillois's hypothetical *ludus* player, found their play (and eventually work, which still retained some elements of play, as we have seen) with puppets to be "an occasion for training" that gradually resulted in "the acquisition of a special skill, a particular mastery of the operation of one or another contraption" (29), although, as has been demonstrated, especially in the sixth chapter, they are definitely still willing to experiment with a new "skill," "contraption," or technique. While the Powells might not have come into "conflict" with "competitors" as such, they have, as we also know well from the last chapter, sometimes come into conflict with each other.

Several different types of "collisions" have been surveyed over the course of this dissertation in the context of puppet theatre, particularly devised puppet theatre: collisions of bodies; of sign systems; of dramaturgical elements; even of the collaborators themselves, in terms of their respective opinions, ideas, interpretations, and so forth. One more type should now be added to this list: collisions of "ways of playing" (Caillois 53), that is, of at least two different styles of play, with at least one of them being situated towards the *paidia* end of the continuum and another towards the *ludus* end. Within a particular group of devisers collaborating with one another on a given project, one individual might be predisposed to favour one way of playing, while a fellow deviser might be inclined to practice a very different way. One can easily imagine a similar situation also arising with regard to forms or styles of puppetry—although we should recall from the fourth chapter that a style of puppetry is a way of "doing" puppetry that, hypothetically, could be incorporated into any production, whatever form or forms were being used, making it a clearer analogue of a way of playing.

That said, given the playful nature of play—the reader is asked to forgive the necessary tautology—abruptly switching between styles of play is probably easier to manage than quickly shifting from one style of puppetry to another. The decision to adhere to tandem puppetry, presentational or alienated puppetry, or some kind of combination of or oscillation between the two, for example, would have a formative influence on the processual stages and elements to follow and on the resulting production. Devisers should remain open to rethinking this decision, should the chosen style end up being incongruous with the project in question to the point of hindering further progress, but they should also be aware that any significant changes in this regard could necessitate revisiting every aspect of the production, including puppet design, movement vocabulary (for both puppets and human performers),

spatial relationships, and even the narrative itself. In fact, since the human performers would have to reconsider how they coordinate and communicate with one another (and with their puppets) in rehearsals and during performances, they could potentially also have to reconsider their collaborative structure. The importance of these flexibilities to devised puppet theatre was a central theme of the sixth chapter, and to this list we should perhaps at this point add play flexibility, although it already inheres in the other flexibilities. Even though play is therefore a constituent of all of the flexibilities, they also, conversely, can provide it with some kind of structure.

This structure, too, has to allow for some flexibility, however. As was revealed in the sixth chapter, despite being—or perhaps rather because they are—"brother and sister," Ann and David Powell occasionally "argue," sometimes to the point of being "completely at loggerheads about something" (qtd. in Oppenheim), as Ann Powell herself has stated. Like bluemouth inc., a devising company (working in the human theatre) that was briefly examined in the fifth chapter, the Powells' "collaborative *structure* requires a democracy predicated on the ability to sustain and thrive in the tension of passionate and volatile exchange (including conflict and difference), in addition to (and, at times, rather than) the equilibrium of consensus" (Barton, "Introduction" xv). This holds true even in the context of play. During rehearsals for the 2008 workshop production of *Hard Times*, for example, David Powell, whose style of play and therefore devising leans more towards *paidia*, would often impulsively—albeit usually constructively—interrupt any sense of "flow" that had been realized in order to experiment with some new idea. This happened frequently enough, in fact, that, during what was only the third rehearsal, the director, Earle, declared, "I love it when David's voice goes off into the corridor." He had, of course, collaborated with the Powells before, as had Rajaram and, indeed, myself, as we discovered in the preceding chapter, so there was an existing level of familiarity with their respective idiosyncrasies. Still, whatever the group was working on as a whole at the time had to be put on hold to give David Powell time and space to try out whatever it is that he feels that he needs to try out. His interruptions not infrequently help to move the project forward or to take it in a promising new direction; his sudden decision to construct, on the spot, the "pop-up" maquette puppet representing McChoakumchild is one example that has already been mentioned (in the sixth chapter).

Although I do not recall this particular instance of experimentation sparking conflict, Barton shared with me in 2011 his own appraisal of Powell's impulsive tendencies. They are both among the artists composing Vertical City, a Toronto-based "interdisciplinary performance hub . . . [that] consists of an evolving group of artists exploring the relationships between theatrical performance, aerial movement, architecture and spatial engineering, soundscape design, and intermediality" (Barton, "Vertical City"). Barton, speaking to Powell's contributions as a puppetry consultant, along with his sister, for this group, described how quickly he moved in his work—so quickly, in fact, that when he perceives that the work is not moving as quickly as he would like or that others have taken it a direction of which he did not

approve, he reacts instantly, with little self-reflection. Such interruptions could understandably prove disruptive and jarring to the other collaborators, especially in a context in which, as Wells observes with regard to devising as a whole, "things [already] happen fast" (qtd. in Barton, "Making" 9).

Nevertheless, such disruptions, when productive, can be considered part of "the function of the dramaturg—to question habit, to complicate unreflective expediency, to dig beneath the surface of unearned presumption—[that] is . . . inextricably woven into the company's understanding of creation," to quote again from Barton's analysis of Number Eleven Theatre, keeping in mind that he himself states that this "is the case with most practitioners of physically-based devised theatre" ("Navigating" 112). Even if a deviser were to interrupt a rehearsal at the most inappropriate moment possible, with little to no apparent self-consciousness or respect for the other devisers present, such an act—surely a clear if not necessarily always agreeable manifestation of the spontaneity that is so regularly associated with devising—cannot help but compel the other collaborators to re-examine and perhaps even justify whatever it was that they were suggesting or doing. In short, if room can be made for these sorts of interruptions—in the physical space itself, but also in the process, although perhaps some kind of system could be established to allow others to signal when they think that a particular disruption is especially tangential and therefore deserving of postponement—then even they can incorporated into the means by which "physically-based devised theatre," with or without puppets, "enforces a heightened degree of self-reflection and self-evaluation upon practitioners" (115).

Caillois's twin concepts of *paidia* and *ludus*, not to mention his understanding of play more generally, therefore aid in clarifying and distilling much of what I have been arguing over the last few chapters, culminating in the conclusions drawn at the end of the sixth chapter, with respect to devising, puppetry (particularly tandem puppetry), Puppetmongers, and, perhaps it goes without saying, play. A more comprehensive review of the main points of this dissertation is nonetheless still needed. Total inclusivity would certainly not be prudent, since this conclusion would expand into another full chapter as a result; moreover, we could soon find ourselves lost in the details if this review is not structured around a major thread already running through this dissertation. To be sure, all that has come before this conclusion has been building towards addressing a fundamental question related to the place of spontaneity and physical freedom in devised puppet theatre. The historical and theoretical foundations that were laid in the first two chapters especially, as important as they were, were really only setting the context for such an investigation. There is a thread, however, to which all of the chapters are directly connected, namely that a focus on process brings perspective and that this is beneficial to critics, practitioners, and scholars alike. What exactly was meant by *process*, *perspective*, and *benefit* differed from chapter to chapter, sometimes from section to section within a chapter, occasionally even from paragraph to paragraph within a section. Even so, several significant emphases can be discerned across all

of these different contexts: the body, performance traditions, new work development, and the influence of historical and geographical factors.

Where We Have Been: A Focus on Process Brings Perspective

In the first chapter, several general processual trends in Canadian puppet theatre were identified. Probably the most important, in the context of both that particular chapter and this dissertation as a whole, was the tradition of innovative recycling that, I contended (following Morrow), has shaped much of contemporary Canadian puppetry, given that "theatre artists who chose to explore this ancient medium were forced to borrow concepts and techniques from the more established puppetry cultures" in the absence of a specific "'Canadian' puppet tradition" (Morrow 13). Acknowledging this fact would enable critics and scholars to avoid the ahistoricity that has hampered writing on Canadian puppetry in the past. Many practitioners are already aware of this tendency, since they are helping to perpetuate it, but a more thorough appraisal of both the puppetry traditions worldwide that could be studied and the ultimate sources of the "concepts and techniques" that they have borrowed from their contemporaries would only further enrich their practice. Similarly, the undoubtedly justified excitement that many critics, scholars, and especially practitioners must be feeling as Canadian puppetry seemingly races towards the crest of a wave should be tempered with the knowledge that, here, "puppetry is an art that sees fit to renew itself continually, as new generations of performers, sculptors, painters, writers, and audiences discover the possibilities of playing with material objects in performance" (*Strings* 8), just as it is in the United States, the context that Bell had in mind when he wrote the foregoing description. Puppetry in this country has not simply "renew[ed] itself continually" in isolation, however. The aforementioned cross-influences among puppet artists at both the national and the international level have themselves been influenced and facilitated by official civic, regional, national, and international puppetry organizations. These organizations have in turn been shaped largely by trends in Canadian puppetry, including the web of cross-influences, in terms of the composition of their respective memberships, their popularity at a given time, the activities in which they engage, and so on. Practitioners, scholars, and critics would all find something useful in the resources that these organizations offer—such as a forum for the exchange of ideas and sources of inspiration; a repository for information (written, orally transmitted, or embodied in physical artifacts) concerning puppetry, particularly as it has been practiced within the respective geographical area that they represent; and so on—and would do well to consider joining at least one of them.

By studying all of the above processes related to design, performance, history, and organization, we can begin to construct a frame of reference through which we can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canadian puppetry specifically. The actual puppet, as a phenomenon in itself, could still remain something of a mystery, however, without "a methodology," without "satisfactory theory" or

"satisfactory vocabulary" (Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics* 8). Tillis's interest in promulgating his own versions of these tools was first mentioned at the end of the first chapter, but it was not until the second chapter that they were scrutinized in any detail. At the heart of his synchronic analysis is a posited reception process that has served as the seed for my own analytical approach—even though my work took a decidedly more diachronic and contextualized turn—that is, his theory of the "double-vision created by the puppet." "[T]he audience sees the puppet, through perception and through imagination, as an object and as a life," he explains—in short, "in two ways at once" (64), for the puppet is concurrently "imagined to be alive . . . [and] perceived to be an object" (82). This is, in fact, its defining characteristic and that which distinguishes it from both the performing object and the human actor. The way in which a puppet is received by an audience is also, by extension, the pivot of Tillis's semiotic system of puppet classification. If a practitioner, scholar, or critic applies this rubric—the practitioner could even use it for reflecting critically upon her own work in rehearsal—"the puppet's abstracted signs can be located along a continuum of representation that ranges from the imitative to the stylized to the conceptual, according to the quality and quantity of the signs" (114). By correlating these "three basic points on the continuum of sign representation with the three sign-systems of the puppet" (118), namely design, movement, and speech, Tillis claims, one should be able to "ascribe general location to the signs" of a particular puppet "and understand the manner in which such ascription can be made" (119). Not only does this structuralist taxonomic system need to be grounded in some kind of historical and geographical context in order to be genuinely useful and accurate, however, but it also needs to be supplemented with some method of taking dramaturgical concerns into consideration, as it was not designed to do so. Much of the remainder of this dissertation was dedicated to filling in these gaps. That said, by the end of the second chapter, progress was already being made towards an answer to the question that Jurkowski poses with regard to "contemporary puppet theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 43) and "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" (42): Are we now "at the point of being able to talk about a unity of approach" (43) between the two, considering that, in both, "[t]he most important element is the creative process" (42)? This question would begin to be pursued in greater earnest in the third chapter.

At the centre of the process of creation in both of these theatres is the body, so it was fitting that the third chapter commenced with a comparison between the human performer's body and that of the puppet. Drawing upon the groundwork of Barton (who, in this respect, had himself drawn upon the work of Merleau-Ponty) and Tillis (who cited a number of sources of inspiration for his concept of "double-vision," particularly Zich, Bogatyrëv, Veltruský, Green and Pepicello, and Jurkowski), I framed these two types of bodies as opposites in one pivotal sense: the human performer is always trapped inside of her own body, while the puppet is always trapped outside of any live bodies that might be onstage, even if only conceptually, such as when a part of a human performer's body is "puppetized" and therefore, as Tillis puts it, "perceived apart . . . from the actor" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 19) and invested with its own

sense of life. This essential difference has significant consequences for both the creative process and the manipulation style, among other things, employed by a given puppet theatre company, for although the puppet (the wholly inorganic variety, at least) affords its manipulator the opportunity to exert more control over it than she can over her own body, some of the "flexibility" of the human body—that is, its ability to respond intuitively and spontaneously to commands from the performer's own mind or someone else's—is concomitantly lost. Scholars, practitioners, and critics must take into account this give-and-take relationship between control and "flexibility" not only when considering something as specific to puppetry as manipulation style but also when looking at the web of connections between puppetry and the larger domain of theatre, of which it is a part. Accordingly, I endeavoured to comply with this directive myself in the subsequent chapters; in fact, in this chapter, it was already guiding my analysis of the first of the two styles of manipulation—the two dominant styles in contemporary Canadian puppet theatre— that are examined in this dissertation. The semiotic and sometimes physical "otherness" of the puppet is at least partly responsible for the process of alienation that is intrinsic to puppetry. One school of puppet manipulation—inspired by Brecht; led, in Canada, by Mirbt; but seemingly allied with still earlier theorists, including Craig and Kleist, and arguably even rooted in the earliest forms of puppetry and of theatre more generally, given the ritualistic quality that is discernible in many of the works created by adherents of this school—has actively striven to cultivate further this aesthetic effect and reception process. Juxtaposing the theory and practice of this presentational or alienated school exposed several significant contradictions, including a conflicted attitude towards the relationship between actor and character, and towards the relative merits of the spontaneity of (as well as, by extension, those of creative contributions from) human performers and the ability, as a director, to control those performers from the outside to a degree, thereby making another layer of "manipulation" explicit. These tensions are not endemic to the presentational style of manipulation: they, and others, run through every style and every approach to new work development in puppet theatre, in one form or another. What truly sets one school or even company apart from another is how its members negotiate the tensions and restrictions associated with puppet theatre. In the fourth chapter, I outlined a style of manipulation—identified for the first time here—whose practitioners indeed negotiate these tensions and restrictions according to a methodology that contrasts with that which informs the presentational style in a number of important respects. Although, like any other style, it could hypothetically be practiced in any performance context, it is particularly well suited to the approach to new work development that became a focal point for the final three chapters: theatrical devising.

The aforementioned newly identified style of manipulation, tandem puppetry, clearly has some characteristics in common with the presentational or alienated style, but even when the two appear to overlap to some degree, there are still noticeable and consequential differences in emphasis. For example, although puppet operators adhering to either school are visible onstage, tandem puppetry practitioners

tend to be much less detached: greater stress is laid upon more traditional acting skills and upon the function of the puppet, as Jurkowski phrases it, "as partner of the actor." The two "co-operate to create a theatre character," with the puppet supplying "the mobile picture of this character" and the human performer providing "his voice, feelings and even . . . facial expression" ("Towards a Theatre" 39). As a result of this relationship, the puppet and performer are put on an equal footing with one another at the centre of both "the process of creation" (40) and the audience's perception and imagination. The latter consequence in turn results in a genuine exchange between the two, with the puppet sharing in the nature of the performer as a living thing and the performer sharing in the nature of the puppet as a (perceived) object. The boundary between these two bodies thereby becomes more permeable, facilitating the minimization of the still inevitable delay between a spontaneous creative impulse on the part of the performer and the realization of that impulse in some action or sound or both on the part of the puppet. The appeal of this telescoping of aesthetic and (frequently) physical space in the context of devising should be obvious by this point. Even so, although the adoption of the tandem style should give rise to a set of circumstances that will foster the "*processes* of experimentation and sets of creative *strategies*" (7) that Govan, Nicholson, and Normington equate with devising, it also comes with its attendant risks. Burkett may not be a practitioner of theatrical devising, but he is one of tandem puppetry—he thus serves as a reminder that, while these two approaches are highly compatible, they are not mutually inclusive— and Lyn Gardner's charge that, in *Billy Twinkle: Requiem for a Golden Boy,* he got "in the way of his own marionette creations; he dominate[d] them, rather than merely bringing them to life" hints at the challenges of regulating the permeable boundary between the puppet and the performer in tandem puppetry. Once again, however, a focus on process can bring much needed perspective—and not just for artists like Burkett, but also for critics like Gardner, and scholars as well. As I underscored at the end of the fourth chapter, by becoming more self-reflective with respect to the dramaturgical and performance processes that they employ, puppet artists could prevent themselves from "overwhelming"—as Gardner claimed that Burkett did in *Billy Twinkle*—their puppets, for they would become more aware of how they are generating meaning onstage in partnership with these objects and of how each dramaturgical decision influences the manner in which both of these halves are received by the audience. Similarly, critics as well as scholars would be able to gain some perspective on Canadian puppetry—thereby deepening their understanding of how it fits into the broader context of Canadian theatre as a whole, for instance—by shifting their focus away from artists and companies viewed in isolation from one another and towards "the creative process," which, as Jurkowski recognizes, "dominat[es] all other elements of theatre" ("Towards a Theatre" 42), even if a piece's "development from the first impulse to the final effect is executed by its creator" (43) or creators. In this way, scholarship and criticism could be directed towards more than just the construction of narrative histories of individual artists and companies (a still-prevalent

trend that was identified and criticized in the first chapter) and transcend the largely descriptive and often overly evaluative language that has hampered them thus far.

Near the end of the fourth chapter, I made a rather risky theoretical leap but one that readied us to vault into the context of the fifth chapter; as a matter of fact, it even anticipated one of the core processual themes of the sixth and final chapter. It entailed establishing a metaphorical parallel between the semiotic turbulence produced in tandem puppetry performances by the collision of at least two distinct sign systems—that of puppet theatre and that of the theatre of human actors—and the dramaturgical "turbulence" ("Navigating" 103) that Barton, himself developing further metaphorical concepts already borrowed from Eisenstein and Barba, analyzes in relation to "a physically-based devised theatre environment" (105). Although this may seem like a stretch, there is an almost visceral resonance between Number Eleven Theatre's refusal, as attested to by Barton, to smooth over the edges during the company's "ongoing process of creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that are then . . . brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" (109) and Puppetmongers Theatre's refusal to soften the semiotic "jolts" spectators might experience when they witness separate, albeit related, sign systems colliding in a performance. Barton's use of the term *collision* was restored to its original context in the fifth chapter, however, but before it could be elaborated on, some background on more conventional new work development processes (as they have manifested in English-speaking Canada) had to be provided. This constellation of processes has centred on the historical "obsession" (Filewod, "National Theatre" 424) with developing a national Canadian dramatic canon, which has prevailed since at least the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The lure of this literary project still holds considerable sway, even among a few of this country's best-known puppet artists. While these processes can be productive in one sense, they can also be stagnating in another, as is encapsulated in Hayes's term "workshopitis" (36). Devising was not presented as some kind of cure-all, however, nor was it suggested that text is abandoned entirely in this different domain. That said, it is true that Puppetmongers and other companies that also tend to invert the hierarchy of theatrical elements as it usually arranged by more conventional companies by not granting text "primary or 'sacred' status" (Barton, "Evoking" 1) do break with the dominant literary model for Canadian theatre by demonstrating that their priority is the creation and staging of new works, not the writing and publication of new scripts. Moreover, one should definitely not have inferred that devising is somehow "easier" or that it always makes for a more harmonious environment. Barton denounces the critical tendency "to intentionally and irrevocably interweave collectivity, collaboration and devising practice" ("Introduction" viii), and even the most collectively motivated of companies may have a "collaborative *structure* [that] requires a democracy predicated on the ability to sustain and thrive in the tension of passionate and volatile exchange (including conflict and difference), in addition to (and, at times, rather than) the equilibrium of consensus" (xv). On the other hand, a devising company can also function effectively with a dramaturg

and even a director situated outside of the performers' bodies and consequently outside of "the individual, physical acts of creation" (Barton, "Making" 6)—but not outside of the process itself—for the very same reason that a different company can function without such outside eyes: *devising* is not a mere synonym of either *collective* or *collaboration*, even if these terms are interrelated with one another. Whatever collaborative structure is adopted by a given company, the fact remains that, since theatrical devising often proceeds "without the central plan of a pre-existing playtext, [it] enforces a heightened degree of self-reflection and self-evaluation upon practitioners" (Barton, "Navigating" 115). A pivotal part of this self-reflection, which in fact enables practitioners to carry on with the rest of it, is a careful, honest, and ongoing evaluation of process. After all, the creative energy and material generated by "creating initially disconnected and unrelated sections of movement and text that are then, in a very real sense, brought into thematic, spatial, and rhythmical collision" (109)—to reintroduce Barton's description of Number Eleven's process in its original context—must be harnessed somehow, with or without outside eyes incorporated into the collaborative structure and devising processes. Even the strictest attention to process will not completely eliminate such dangers as habit, excessive pride, and so on; nevertheless, at the very least, it can bring more perspective—and perhaps even new perspectives—to "a context where intuition has been granted uncommon authority" (Barton, "Making" 11). In the realms of scholarship and criticism, greater familiarity with the structure and processes of a given company can empower one to delve beneath what might only be the "perceived accessibility" (125) of the surface layer of a particular performance, as Corbett has shown. Indeed, the entire audience shares this responsibility to some extent, for whether one is considering devised theatre or, as Jurkowski is, puppet theatre, it remains true that, as he advises, "both partners (sender and addressee) should do their best to learn the necessary codes, i.e. cultural codes and theatrical and dramatic subcodes." "The understanding of the message depends not only on the public and its ability to understand," he judges equitably, "but on the artist and his ability to be understood as well" ("The Sign Systems" 61).

This responsibility may seem to become even more challenging—and essential—in contexts in which the two aforementioned alternatives, devised theatre and puppet theatre, overlap. Furthermore, devised puppet theatre practitioners encounter a new problem related to the boundaries between bodies. By means of an intervention by director or dramaturg or both, the corporeal boundary identified by Merleau-Ponty that keeps devising performers in the human theatre trapped inside their own bodies can be made more permeable. If these roles are not assigned to specific individuals, "dramaturgically-minded" devised theatre practitioners can even achieve this result themselves by providing feedback on each other's work, even if collaborating with a director or dramaturg can provide "a localization (and thus, perhaps, stabilization)" of this "element of self-examination" ("Navigating" 115), as Barton observes. So then can devising performers in puppet theatre somehow address the bodily problem unique to their own domain? That is, can they likewise make the boundary that traps them outside of the bodies

of their puppets more permeable as well? The sixth chapter spotlighted how Ann and David Powell of Puppetmongers have confronted both the issue of "perceived accessibility" (Corbett 125) or "the mask of the performance and what lies beneath" (127) and the phenomenological boundary between puppet and performer by tapping into not only the "flexibility" of the live human body but also the controllability of the puppet. After all, they, along with a number of other Canadian devised puppet theatre practitioners, have demonstrated that an investigation such as this should not only examine how spontaneity can be achieved despite the puppet. Although the flexibility of the human body is indeed crucial to the Powells' approach to navigating these borderlands between clarity and obscurity, and between spontaneity and the object, there are five more broadly defined "flexibilities"—collaborative, narrative, design, movement, and space flexibility—that are the true engines of their developmental processes. These flexibilities may also be hallmarks of theatrical devising in generally, but they have all been transformed by the time they have passed through the object-centred prism of puppetry. In the case of Puppetmongers in particular, they have also been informed by a well-developed and nuanced sense of play.

Devised Puppet Theatre: Objects, Spontaneity, Freedom, and Control

So now that we have retraced this trail through all of the preceding chapters, where has it taken us? I noted near the outset of this conclusion that we would now, apparently for the first time, attempt to answer the question to which all of the analysis in this dissertation has led: Does the focus on the object in puppet theatre restrict the spontaneity and physical freedom that are so central to theatrical devising? I was, in a way, being disingenuous, however, as the foregoing review reveals, for this question has in fact already been answered. The simple answer, as the reader has probably already deduced, is in the negative. By adhering to the five flexibilities of devised puppet theatre and contributing to an environment of play, practitioners not only can preserve the spontaneity and freedom that are so often associated with devising but also discover new inroads into them that can only be uncovered through the mediation of the puppet.

Although this answer, while simple, remains accurate, practitioners, scholars, and critics must all still continue to be cognizant of the constraints that are imposed by puppetry as a theatrical form. These constraints should not be thought of as limitations as such, however, for they actually define puppetry *as* a particular form of theatre, and, to expand on a conclusion drawn at the end of the third chapter, puppet theatre companies and artists can reveal much about the creativity and experience that they respectively possess through how they negotiate these constraints. They can even be turned to advantage, as we have seen throughout this study but especially in the sixth chapter. To cite just one example, the ontological status of the puppet as necessarily existing outside of the body of the human performer means that it can "perform such non-human actions as flying, vanishing, and changing their shape . . . with perfect simplicity and charm" (65-66), as Arnott remarks. One can take this line of argument further, however, and in a very different direction than Arnott does. Instead of emphasizing, as he (along with several

others, including Craig) does, how this degree of control over design and movement allows for an unparalleled "unity of conception" (97) from the individual artist's perspective, one could frame it as that which enables the puppet to become a conductor of spontaneity, experimentation, and productive collaboration. The maquette puppet, a devising tool that is frequently brought into play, so to speak, by the Powells, epitomizes this perception and potential function of the puppet, whether it is constructed out of materials that happen to be on hand or selected as the most appropriate and effective choice out of the existing objects that are available in the immediate vicinity. We therefore have come across a function of the puppet that should be added to the list that Jurkowski proposes in "Towards a Theatre of Objects," one that in fact qualifies his claim that, for contemporary puppet artists, "all interest lies in the process of creation," which relegates the puppet itself to being "at most a participant of the actor's work" (40). On the contrary, we now know that the puppet can be an indispensable catalyst for this process, most notably in the context of devised puppet theatre. It is precisely this link between the object and the process of creation that makes it impossible "to talk about a unity of approach" in an absolute sense "for puppets' and actors' theatre" (43), to bring up Jurkowski's question once more.

Thus, we have come back to the apparently inescapable theme that has been highlighted throughout most of this chapter: a focus on process brings perspective. Before this conclusion and dissertation come to an end, I would like to examine where we—scholars, practitioners, and combinations thereof—might go next.

Whither Devised Puppet Theatre (Scholarship)?

Whatever directions devised puppet theatre scholarship and practice might take in the future, surely some sort of methodological and analytical tool could serve as a useful sextant. I have endeavoured to supply such a tool, in the form of the five flexibilities—clustered around the concept of play, or more specifically, the borrowed twin concepts of *paidia* and *ludus*—of devised puppet theatre. I do not presume to present this tool as already fixed in a final, ideal form, however. Indeed, much like the developmental processes and devised productions that it can be used to analyze, it can and should be considered fluid and subject to further revision. For example, Puppetmongers has, of course, served as my principal test case with respect to the application of these five flexibilities, but a wider body of subjects clearly needs to be assessed in this manner. Aside from whatever might come to light about the specific companies and artists examined through the use of this tool, we would also learn much from the further evaluation of the tool itself. Analyzing newer—and, to be frank, younger—companies and their respective bodies of work would most likely be particularly illuminating. Do the same flexibilities obtain in this new context, and to the same degree? Do they manifest themselves in different ways? Perhaps even entirely different flexibilities have emerged as well, although I believe that the flexibility categories that I have proposed

are inclusive enough to subsume most if not all such developments as "subflexibilities" while at the same time remaining sufficiently distinct from one another to be useful in analysis.

The aspect of my theoretical platform that I would really like to see fleshed out more fully is my introduction of the concept of play into the discourse surrounding devised puppet theatre. In borrowing from Caillois, I have opened up an avenue for the exploration of other novel ways in which the social sciences and theatre and performance studies could be married. Even if, as one considered the possibilities, one confined oneself to only additional possible implementations of the concept of play, a multitude of promising options would nonetheless become apparent. For example, an intercultural comparison of the manners in which play has been incorporated into devising processes, specifically in the context of devised puppet theatre, would be an ambitious and valuable next step. Caillois himself outlines some of the different cultural understandings of play, as well as some associated "ways of playing" (53) that differ markedly from *paidia* and *ludus* (27, 33-35). He boldly proclaims "that the destinies of cultures can be read in their games" (35), and while this contention may be too fatalistic, we have repeatedly witnessed, over the course of this dissertation, the significance of the Canadian context with regard to puppetry practice in general and devised puppet theatre practice in particular. In fact, given the complex, exciting, but sometimes fraught mix of cultures that is Canada, the author or authors of such a study could focus exclusively on practitioners located within our own borders and still find enough material to assemble a compelling and enlightening piece.

Another investigative route to take, one related more closely to the formal qualities of puppetry, would be to look for any differences between how individuals play with objects when they are on their own and when they are in groups. This too has a cultural dimension that should be elucidated, but the direction that I myself would like to pursue further in the near future would follow up on Barba's recommendation that devising performers begin "their improvisations alone," for what matters most at that stage is "their particular response[s] to the material that has been presented." As was discussed in the fifth chapter of this study, he argued "that when improvising with a partner you have to work in real time and the work can often be merely illustrative." "When working alone," on the other hand, "time and reactions often appear to work differently; the actor can go much further alone as he or she inhabits what Barba calls the realm of 'dreaming awake'" (33), Jane Turner summarizes in *Eugenio Barba*. Thus, a more extended analysis of the possible advantages of having each member of a devised puppet theatre company begin the process of creation by working independently, supported by a broad survey of such companies with respect to their established practices in this regard, would do much to continue this trajectory of my research. This would seem to be a particularly appropriate strategy when devising an autobiographical production, such as *And Now We Are Here*, one of the Puppetmongers productions examined in the sixth chapter, and even more so when devising such a production using objects that are themselves endowed with autobiographical significance, a technique with which I myself have some

experience. The aforementioned proposed survey might also bring to light alternative versions of "the long collaborative process of establishing connections and conversations among the individual sequences" (Barton, "Making" 5) that was analyzed in the fifth chapter, which may or may not require or accommodate the presence of an outside eye, such as a dramaturg or director.

Although the beating heart of devising theory and practice has long been the UK, Canada no longer lags too far behind. Barton draws attention to "both the steadily increasing level of devising practice nationally and the parallel growth in interest among practitioners, audiences, students and scholars" (Barton and Wells 3). Given this twofold upswing, coupled with the concomitant fact that "processes of devising are now . . . firmly embedded in our training and educational institutions," we may well feel compelled to ask, as Heddon and Milling did nearly a decade ago from their own perspective as scholars based in the UK, "[C]an we really continue to claim for devising any 'marginal' or 'alternative' status? And why should we wish to do so?" (6). Even so, the sheer range of devising processes that have been covered in this dissertation—not to mention Heddon and Milling's own text, as well as the others that have been cited herein and still others that the limitations of available time and space have precluded me from addressing—has demonstrated that not all of these techniques and tactics could have migrated from the margins to the centre of theatre practice. This becomes especially evident when devised puppet theatre is chosen as our point of reference, since, as was stressed in the sixth chapter, it is a doubly marginalized form of theatre, triply so in the case of its Canadian incarnation.

Moreover, if more specific contexts are taken into consideration, such as the collaborative structure and collective ideology underpinning Puppetmongers as a devised puppet theatre company, one can readily perceive that, whatever reasons the members of such a company may have for, as Heddon and Milling put it, "continu[ing] to claim . . . any 'marginal' or 'alternative' status" (6) or refusing to claim that status, there remains an "ideological reality" with which they must contend, as Barton notes. These "*material* conditions" (Barton, "Introduction" x) are related to space, funding, popularity with audiences, and other factors that have been scrutinized throughout this dissertation, but they may have little to do directly with actual devising processes as such. We should remember Barton's affirmation of the importance of preserving "a . . . distinction between collective and collaborative philosophies and frameworks, on the one hand, and devising techniques, on the other" (xvii). In pointing out this "distinction," Barton is seeking to qualify Oddey's assertion that, by "the early 1990s, the term 'devising' ha[d] less radical implications, placing greater emphasis on skill sharing, specialisation, specific roles, increasing division of responsibilities, such as the role of the director/deviser or the administrator, and more hierarchical company structures" (9).

Having scrutinized the ways in which a number of devised theatre practitioners (including several who concentrate on puppetry in their practice, such as the Powells) develop new works and the conditions under which they do so, we can therefore perceive organizational and processual strategies—production-

role specialization and an understanding of collaboration that allows for and even encourages conflict and confrontation being among them—to be tempering one of the central ideological motivations that Shank associated with the "creative collective" (4) in 1972: "The group, rather than the individual, is the typical focus of the alternative society, and this is reflected in the structure of the new theatre organizations, their manner of working, and their theatre pieces" (3). Navigating a troupe through such concepts and proposed strategies is a difficult undertaking that, like many devised productions, is never really "finished," strictly speaking. It requires considerable self-reflection, discussion, and even disputation. The goal is neither to embody some abstract ideal of collectivity nor to discover the "best" strategies for theatrical devising, as these are not fixed frames of reference. On the contrary, the principal objective—especially early in the life of a company or project, although this objective can never actually be reached with finality, as has already been implied—should be to engage in the kind of processual devising that was mentioned towards the end of the sixth chapter. To quote once more Weinberg's expression of this objective—first introduced in the fifth chapter of this study—in the context of "collective organization," it should be "a process by which each group can create a particular working methodology that is likely to be responsive to the needs of its members and to the task and that maximizes both freedom and responsibility" (16).

As conflictual as this process can be—especially if the members of a given company call into question, as Barton does, "the equilibrium of consensus" ("Introduction" xv) that tends to be the ultimate result of the collaborative systems outlined by Weinberg and Shank—a troupe can still find a sense of unity through both an insistence on the unrestrained articulation of "the needs of its members" (Weinberg 16) by means of what Barton sees as the "structural and procedural *mobility*" of the collective approach and "a commitment to the hands-on 'task' of actually, however modestly, changing the world" (xiii). It may seem paradoxical to be equally concerned with the needs of the individual and those of "the world" as a whole. We should call to mind, however, Ann Powell's assurance that "[e]verybody argues" (qtd. in Oppenheim), including her brother and herself, and juxtapose that with their express hope that their "work will contribute to a humanist, supportive and accepting society" (Puppetmongers Theatre, "Mission").

Paralleling the methodological exploration and experimentation in the domain of devised puppet theatre practice is the terminological exploration and experimentation in this dissertation. Several "tricky term[s]" ("Introduction" x), to cite Barton's designation for one of them, the word *alternative*, have been kept in play—in all possible senses of that phrase—throughout this study. Indeed, despite the lengthy history of puppetry practice more generally in this country, not to mention the perceptible spike in its popularity at this time, a vocabulary to discuss it that takes into consideration our specific context is only now developing. I believe that I have now made some original contributions to this vocabulary and offered some clarifications as to how it can be applied, although I readily concede that much of the groundwork that I have laid has amounted to an appropriation and reapplication of concepts and propositions gleaned from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. In the end, this may prove its greatest

strength, for perhaps now, we can echo with greater confidence Morrow's words, themselves taken out of their original context (the trailblazing work of Mermaid Theatre and several other Canadian puppet theatre companies) and, in a more scholarly instance of the Canadian tradition of innovative recycling, affirm that, "by experimenting with proven techniques and adapting them to the processes which define our own theatre, we may be well on our way to creating an approach"—to Canadian puppet theatre scholarship, in this case, particularly in relation to devising—"which can be identified as truly Canadian" (14).

Although the critical vocabulary needed to engage with Canadian puppetry in productive and nuanced ways is truly only now developing, we must not be content to parrot Jurkowski by still claiming, nearly thirty years after he revised his 1984 article "Towards a Theatre of Objects," that "[t]oday there are no answers," leaving us with "only questions." We too will undoubtedly continue "to observe the puppet theatre over the coming years" (43), but now is assuredly the time for answers, even if they lead to further questions. The purpose of this dissertation is to act as a preliminary "road map" to allow for later excursions further afield by others and myself. Canadian puppetry is so dynamic and fluid—just as it has always been—that, while making specific predictions would probably be too rash and not especially constructive, it is still stimulating to consider possible future developments. Attempting to anticipate how puppet theatre scholarship will navigate the changes to come is similarly exciting.

One thing, at least, can be predicted with a reasonable degree of surety: there is little chance of either the study or the practice of devised puppet theatre being relocated from the margins to the centre. Puppetry in general here, notwithstanding its historical integrality to Canadian theatre as a whole, is only beginning to show signs of the kind of entrenchment "in our training and educational institutions" (6) that Heddon and Milling associate with devising in the context of the UK. For better or for worse, there are even fewer such signs that can be discerned in the case of devised puppet theatre. In English-speaking Canada, the most obvious indication of steps being taken in this direction is the Puppetry Intensive programme at Humber College at its Lakeshore Campus in Toronto. One of the stated objectives of the programme, which is led by Heather Kent, is to promote an awareness of and interest in the advantages of a collaborative framework. According to the mandate of the programme, it "exists to provide a program for training, creation, experimentation, and collaboration in the art of puppetry" (School of Creative & Performing Arts, "Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum"). Collaboration is therefore not presented as an intriguing but ultimately optional and secondary approach; on the contrary, it is situated at the core of the programme's curriculum, although in its promotional material, evidence of "the unquestioned folding of one factor entirely into the other," that is, to quote Barton again, "collective and collaborative philosophies and frameworks" into "devising techniques" ("Introduction" xvii) can easily be found. Terms such as "ensemble creation," "ensemble dynamics," and "ensemble creation process" ("Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum")—which would seem to correspond approximately to *collective creation*,

collaboration, and *devising*, respectively—are used in such close proximity to one another that there is insufficient space to clarify how they are being deployed singly and in conjunction with each other. After all, as Barton observes, "the proximate positioning of concepts can be as illuminating as that of living bodies"—as well as those of puppets, we should add—"in performance" (xxii).

The Humber College Puppetry Intensive actually only runs for just under two weeks (School of Creative & Performing Arts, "Puppetry Intensive"), and it is not a degree- or diploma-awarding programme. Moreover, the inaugural session of the programme was only in 2013. Certainly, its influence can already be felt within the Toronto puppetry community. It has, for example, managed to attract as instructors the Powells themselves, among others. Still, it is difficult to conceive of the Puppetry Intensive reflecting or shaping, much less institutionalizing, devised puppet theatre practice and scholarship across the province, let alone the country. This is not intended as a condemnation of this programme in particular, however, for entrenchment on such a scale is probably not even possible anyway, as was shown above, and even if it were, the potentially deadening consequences could hardly be thought of as unequivocally salubrious. Indeed, perhaps we should be thankful that it is difficult to conceive of any such programme—regardless of how long it had been existence; who had joined its faculty; how much time it took students to complete it; or what its status was with regard to degree, diploma, or certificate accreditation—institutionalizing devised puppetry as a whole to a degree sufficient to become a cause for concern.

Furthermore, one cannot deny that Kent and the rest of the faculty of the Puppetry Intensive do point the way forward in at least one important way: as has been advocated throughout this dissertation, albeit in more general terms, they have ensured that their "curriculum is rooted in the values of . . . [the] Theatre Performance and Production Programs" at Humber College, "both of which are proud to offer training in contemporary devised theatre and performance creation, and who work closely together to offer unique opportunities for collaboration in the creation of original work." In other words, they position puppetry as a distinct but integral part of theatre performance and production more generally, which is, as we know by now, an accurate representation of it. This theoretical perspective is expressed in their invitation to "participants from all backgrounds to come with their diverse ideas, to collaborate in this open medium of creation" ("Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum"). They cast a broad net indeed, declaring that their programme "is open to puppeteers, artists, composers, teachers, writers, performers, designers, dancers, technicians, or anyone interested in integrating puppetry into their creative practice" ("Puppetry Intensive").

Such an inclusive perspective must surely be applauded. At the same time, however, it should also be viewed with some scepticism, at least with respect to how puppets might be incorporated into the future work of students who do not see themselves as puppet artists before all else, for there is a potential parallel between what could be interpreted as a catch-all definition of *puppet artist* and the overly

comprehensive definitions of *puppet* offered by Proschan (among others) that were criticized in the second chapter. Inclusion, regardless of the intentions behind it, can result in dilution, so that, to expand on an argument I made in the third chapter, any stage object that is given some movement or speech starts to look like a puppet, and whoever is imbuing it with these things starts to look like a puppet artist, even if a close relationship between the object and the performer and a successful engagement with the audience's double-vision, to use Tillis's term again, are both lacking in a given performance. When witnessing a performance that is unfocused in this way, one cannot help but have more sympathy for Jurkowski's identification—which itself has been challenged in this dissertation—of a contemporary trend towards "the degeneration of the puppet" and of the puppet artist, we should further state, that seems to be in evidence whenever a performer is seen to be "paying no attention to . . . [an object] as a true acting subject" and ultimately even exploiting it "as an object as such." The object is thereby "deprived of theatrical life, even of the attendant belief in it of actors or public," and thus "seems to be useless" and, indeed, "completely dead" ("Towards a Theatre" 40).

Burkett is dismissive of the work that can be created once "[t]heatre has co-opted puppets." Although this could be construed as the defensive stance of someone protecting the territory that is only to be shared with a select group of initiates, he expresses sentiments similar to those of Jurkowski when he attacks what he refers to as "[p]rop puppetry" or "puppets as decoration," which he was already framing as an epidemic problem in Toronto in 2003, a decade before the Humber College Puppetry Intensive held its class. His remarks are unintentionally ironic in a way, given that, in the same article by Nicholls, he cites "freedom" as one of the advantages of developing puppet theatre productions in Calgary, as was noted in the first chapter: "There isn't a community out there telling you 'we do it *this* way not *that* way.'" He appears to be suggesting implicitly that such a community does exist in Toronto, but since he characterizes that community as largely a conglomeration "of hobbyist puppet clubs" (qtd. in Nicholls, "Puppet State" 39), one is left to conclude that it is unlikely that a member of one of these clubs would challenge Burkett himself with regard to the way in which he "does" puppet theatre.

Burkett's characterization of the Toronto puppetry community was, however, as inaccurate then as it is now. Indeed, a programme such as the Humber College Puppetry Intensive can not only grant students the freedom to explore this art and to press against accepted definitions and conventions but also provide them with the tools and skills needed to make more effective use of puppets in their work. "In a more mystical sense," to take Tillis's argument in a different direction, each of those students would also learn "to show humility in the presence of his or her creation," or so one hopes, and not only through "learn[ing] the movement potential of the puppet" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 162). Despite my frequent interrogation of Jurkowski's argument, I do admit that the skilled "puppeteer serves the puppet — that is . . . serves its magic" ("Towards a Theatre" 42), at least to the extent that the puppet is not reduced to the status of a "prop, or accessory for the actor" (39), or worse still, "an object as such" (40).

In the end, the most the instructors at the Humber College Puppetry Intensive or anywhere else can hope to do is impart at least some useful skills, theories, historical examples, and so on to their students; the students themselves are responsible for what they do with this information. That is, just as the "laziness" that, Arnott claims, the "irresistible attraction" of puppets "engenders . . . in the puppeteer" (40) is, as well as any "mediocre puppetry that results from it," in reality "the fault of particular artists, and not of puppetry itself" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 66), as Tillis makes clear, so too is any such "laziness" or "mediocre puppetry" on the part of a given student very likely her own "fault" to a great degree. Of course, as in any field, no puppetry instructor can be equally proficient in every ability on which her students might have to call once they have gone on to start creating their own work. Consequently, no puppetry training programme can be equally well suited to all potential students, regardless of the particular interests of each of them. If an emerging puppet artist wishes to perform as well as build, for example, Burkett has some characteristically forthright recommendations as to how best to proceed:

> Become an actor. . . . You can always learn to make *papier mâché*. You can always find someone to build something. Surround yourself with actors and writers—the real theatre. . . . And if you are keen, you can build puppets on the side. Learn to breathe and use the voice, then find out about puppets. ("Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 119)

His use of the qualifier "real" may strike one as judgmental, as the implied comparison seems to suggest that puppetry is not, in fact, "real theatre." At its core, however, I think his advice is simply emphasizing those elements of puppet theatre that are actually, as Veltruský observes, "elements of acting" (73).

Interestingly, the Humber College Puppetry Intensive shares some of the same emphases with regard to training with Burkett, in spite of the fact that it was built around such concepts as collaboration and the ensemble. Rather than, as Burkett does, stressing that one ought to "teach . . . young puppeteers how to act vocally" ("Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 118), the faculty of the Puppetry Intensive take a very different tack by focusing much more on movement and manipulation, with vocal work and the creation of "a text-based narrative" taking a back seat. Still, "[i]nitial training" at the Puppetry Intensive "focus[es] on understanding breath: its impulse and its link to intention and action," and the faculty foreground more than Burkett does the need for their students to have "invested this understanding into their own bod[ies]" as part of their training, so that "the puppet . . . become[s] an extension of its operator who must see, hear, and breathe through its body" ("Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum"). As Jurkowski would say, the role of "the puppet as partner of the actor" ("Towards a Theatre" 39) is therefore what is highlighted, and the Powells' inclination towards and innovative implementation of tandem puppetry makes them eminently suitable as instructors for such a programme. The programme itself "was designed in consultation with some of the top professional puppet artists in North America," including the Powells, and while the Puppetry Intensive is clearly buttressed by the combined practical experience of several accomplished puppet artists, its theoretical underpinnings are largely drawn from

the human theatre, with a particular emphasis on systems of movement: "Laban, Tadashi Suzuki, LeCoq [sic], and viewpoints [sic]" ("Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum").

By following a team-based teaching approach, the faculty of the Humber College Puppetry Intensive sidestep one of the pitfalls that Burkett associates with puppetry training programmes in general, namely students being confined "to one style of performance, because they are following a teacher" ("Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes" 118). Similarly, as Shawna Reiter of CLUNK Puppet Lab, another instructor for the programme, reveals, no one form of puppetry is exalted above all others by the faculty, unlike some of the authors who have been discussed in this dissertation, such as Arnott with his marionettes. Rather, they encourage their students "to find the most effective ways to create characters." The ultimate goal, according to Kent, is for the "mentors," as she refers to the instructors, to introduce their students to "the art of storytelling with puppets" in order to guide them as they "find . . . [their] own creative process[es]" that can then be brought into service as they continue—if all goes well— "to make . . . piece[s] of theatre using puppets and telling . . . [their] own stor[ies]" (School of Creative & Performing Arts, "Humber Puppetry").

There is an important connection back to Jurkowski to be made here, for the Humber College Puppetry Intensive would seem to be evidence of the contemporary trend that he discerns, namely that the "process of creation on the stage has become more important than the puppet by itself." Thus, now "anything may be called a puppet, because 'being a puppet' means for many people 'being transformed'" ("Towards a Theatre" 40). Although these developments have indeed taken place, neither did so particularly recently, even if the Canadian context alone is considered, for we must recall the role that Puppetmongers played in originating and popularizing work of this nature in Canada, beginning with *The Brick Bros. Circus* in 1978. By now, one should hardly be surprised to hear Reiter assert that, even in the institutional setting of a programme like the Puppetry Intensive, "really good puppetry" can be created using either "a simple beanbag sack or a fully articulated tabletop puppet" (School of Creative & Performing Arts, "Humber Puppetry"), for example. As we are also aware, the Powells were "among the groundbreakers" (D. Powell, "Re: Almonte Performances") of tabletop puppetry as well.

"Once you've got the story, you can tell it with anything" (qtd. in McKeown, "No Strings"), Ann Powell has contended, a statement with which Reiter undoubtedly would agree. Even so, Puppetmongers is at least as well known for its productions featuring constructed puppets as it is for its object theatre pieces. Likewise, the design and construction of puppets are also covered in the Humber College Puppetry Intensive curriculum, beginning, in fact, with the use of maquette puppets, for the "[s]tudents first work with paper and tape to explore puppet forms – unbound by limitations of what a puppet can be" (School of Creative & Performing Arts, "Puppetry Intensive: Curriculum"), thereby following in the footsteps of the Powells and several other devised puppet theatre practitioners. Thus, more caution is needed than Jurkowski exhibits when he proclaims that "the actor has replaced the puppet player"

("Towards a Theatre" 39), for a puppet artist often has to call upon an array of skills that have little to nothing to do with acting as such. The requirement that the stage objects that are to be the centre of attention for both spectators and performers must be designed—even if this only entails selecting a number of found objects—and possibly even constructed obviously sets the "doing" of puppetry apart from acting. Veltruský, as was noted in the fourth chapter, makes the less obvious point that "[t]he manipulation of puppets is a human action that . . . is not a form of acting properly so called," since "[i]t does not by itself represent human or anthropomorphic beings and their actions and behavior; it makes the puppets represent them" (74). The work of puppetry can therefore never correspond exactly to that of acting, notwithstanding that "[i]n some respects the two coincide" and that "the area of their overlapping keeps expanding and shrinking from one form of puppetry to another" (73), as Veltruský acknowledges.

If the actor cannot completely replace the puppet artist, then one must also recognize, with due respect to Craig and his Über-marionette, that the puppet could never completely replace either of them, as was explained in greater detail in the fourth chapter. The two primary variables in the puppet theatre "formula," the puppet itself and the human performer, must both be taken into account when devising a performance or in fact when designing a course or programme in devised puppetry. As was mentioned in the sixth chapter, training itself is one of the "different spaces" in which "[t]heatre takes place," according to Knowles, but it is a space from which one should not wish to escape, as it were, for he posits "initial and ongoing training" ("Survival" 1) as an ideal. He quotes Walling, who, at the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium, referred to such training spaces as "healing spaces," since she believed that there was, and presumably still is, "a lot of disease in professional theatre" (qtd. in Knowles, "Survival" 1). Walling conceived of "training as a lifelong process to promote personal and professional survival," as opposed to merely "a preliminary phase that prepares students to 'enter the Profession,' as if 'the Profession' were the equivalent of a room with fixed walls and furnishings into which initiates must fit themselves." Theatre itself—including devised puppetry, I feel obliged to point out—should instead be thought of as "a continually evolving creative activity that develops in time with the development of its practitioners" (Farfan 2). Walling, in the published version of her own address at the Survivors of the Ice Age Festival and Symposium, in fact situates "training practices" at the heart of "moving theatre," her term for Vancouver Moving Theatre's "presentational style of performance," which typically features "the simultaneous performance of music, movement, and physical theatre," among other elements. Walling herself does not actually deal with the subject of puppetry at any great length, although she does appear to disclose a certain bias against it, which is surprising, given her evident frustration at the fact that her own company's "work has been labeled – and sometimes dismissed as – mere theatricals and spectacle" because of its composite nature and "the high-art taboo against popular entertainment" (Walling 2), along with other similar "taboos." In another passage that should put the reader in mind of the "vicious circle" (40) posited by Arnott, Walling equates a company "specializing . . . in children's

theatre or puppet theatre" with it having "successfully develop[ed]" one of the available "tidy marketing niches" (6). Choosing to make puppetry the focus of one's artistic practice is therefore apparently little more than a business decision.

Although the focus on the perceived object in puppet theatre necessitates the integration into this "lifelong process" of specific "forms of training" that neither Walling—predictably, considering what seems to be her opinion of puppetry—nor any of the other Ice Age participants addressed, the wide range of forms that Walling did recommend make for an interdisciplinary approach that not only makes sense in the context of the multimodal work of her own company but also suits the inherently interdisciplinary nature of puppetry just as well: "music lessons; training in . . . dance . . . ; professional ensemble work in dance, physical theatre, and percussion; on-the-job training in such diverse areas as company administration, teaching, and co-ordinating professional and parenting responsibilities; research into non-Western performance traditions" (Farfan 2), and so forth. Analogous to this is the fact that scholars and critics of puppetry should be equally well versed in the "language" of puppetry and that of theatre more generally. Beginning with the very first chapter of this dissertation, we have seen how vital a theoretical and historical awareness of puppetry is to producing accurate, balanced, and insightful scholarship and criticism. However, this specialist knowledge should not be divorced from a deep but necessarily more generalized understanding of theatre as a whole. After all, if one possessed knowledge of only one of these domains but then ventured into the other, Bogatyrëv's linguistic metaphor, which we have encountered several times before, would probably reflect the reality of the situation: "The perception of one semiotic system in comparison to another system is an especially interesting problem. Thus someone familiar with only one language often regards a related language as a distorted version of his own native tongue" (47).

The ultimate objective is neither to consider or discuss puppetry in isolation from the wider world of theatre nor to ennoble it gratuitously and set it above the human theatre. What is not needed is blunt advocacy scholarship. The puppet is not an endangered species, certainly not here in Canada, and it is not overly precious: it imposes its will on its manipulators, and it imposes its will on those who study it, demanding to be taken on its own terms. We must keep in mind, however, that—contrary to what Burkett appears to be suggesting in the passage quoted above regarding his advice for aspiring and emerging puppet artists—"puppet theatre is real theatre," as Kolár underscores. Once the puppet has been brought to life through the intervention of a human performer, it reveals to us that it is not the product of a quaint craft nor, as Kolár maintains, "of visual art" (31) in itself. Admittedly, "the visual element" (Kolár 32) in puppet theatre is indispensable, arguably even more so than it is in the human theatre, given that puppetry requires stage "object[s] . . . given design, movement, and frequently, speech" (*Toward an Aesthetics* 65), to cite from Tillis's definition of *puppet* one last time. Nevertheless, in both puppet theatre and that of human actors, "the visual element is an ancillary factor" (32), Kolár insists in an argument not unlike

Jurkowski's concerning the precedence of the "process of creation" ("Towards a Theatre" 40) in both "contemporary puppet theatre" (43) and "the actors' theatre of the avant-garde" (42). Kolár's evaluation is more neutral, however, perhaps even positive, as he concludes that "the visual element" and thus the puppet itself are "subordinated to" the vision and "intentions" of the puppet artist; this "visual element" is therefore, "in a sense, a form of applied art" (32).

At the talkback with the audience that followed the public performance of the workshop production of *Hard Times,* David Powell introduced me to the audience in my capacity as an observer at their rehearsals in a rather informal and humorous manner: "And this is Jamie, who we like to throw things at." It certainly elicited laughter from both the spectators and myself, with its reference to both physical violence that, of course, never took place and my then subordinate status in the rehearsal space in relation to the collaborators working on the project, which was in fact very real. Even so, I now find myself wielding a rather different kind of power over the Powells, their guest collaborators for *Hard Times*, and indeed every other Canadian puppet artist whom I have mentioned in this study, in that I am in a privileged position to be able to record here my conclusions after having attempted to make sense of the more abstract "things" that have been "thrown" at me by the Powells and others by means of various modes of expression: interviews, live and documented performances, articles, and so on. I have nonetheless also endeavoured "to show humility in the presence of" (162) these artists; the authors upon whom I have likewise relied but also with whom I have disagreed on a number of points; and the puppet itself, to restore the words I just quoted from Tillis's *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art* to their original context. These "presences" were all largely imagined ones during the act of writing itself. Still, I am left with the distinct impression that all of those "things" that I myself have been "throwing," those things for which I have been calling—a focus on perspective, the energetic pursuit of interdisciplinary conversations, and the like—are ultimately being demanded by the art of puppetry and all who compose it, including the puppet itself, as unassuming as it often appears to be at first glance.

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