TRANSCENDING THE INANIMATE:
Evoking the sublime in puppet-based performance

Candidate: David Morton
Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Sandra Gattenhof
Associate Supervisor: Mr Sean Mee

Institution: Queensland University of Technology
Creative Industries Faculty, Drama

Submitted in partial requirement for the award of IF49 Doctor of Philosophy
July 2013

...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.

- Heinrich von Kleist, 1810

i. ABSTRACT

This study investigated the way in which contemporary puppet-based theatre can create deeply imaginative experiences for adult audiences and attempt to evoke the sublime. As a piece of practice-led research, the project was conducted through an iterative approach that consisted of two preparatory cycles for creative experimentation in puppet-based performance, data collection and evaluation, as well as a third development cycle for the creation of the final performance work. Alongside this, a theoretical investigation was conducted to inform, and in turn become informed by, the developing practice. Designed to interrogate the potential effects of double-vision, the study drew on theory surrounding the sublime, the uncanny, and a selection of theories commonly associated with Performance Studies, including liminality and intermediality, to create guidelines that can be used to manipulate the metaphysical thematics of future creative practice in the field of puppet-based performance.

ii. KEYWORDS

The following is a list of keywords that appear within this document or are associated with the thesis topic. These keywords have been listed for cataloguing purposes:

Creative practice as research, double-vision, illusion, intermediality, liminality, performance, Performance Studies, practice-led research, puppet, puppetry, sublime, theatre, uncanny.

iii. STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this document has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the document contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

Signed: 

Name: David Morton

Date: 6th August 2013

iv. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a huge number of people to whom I am indebted for the incredible support that I have received over the course of this project.

I owe a huge thanks to my partner Nick for his patience, kindness and love, and for keeping my life moving when my thoughts have been held elsewhere.

To my family, Bob, Libby, Louise, Janet and Will for your unwavering support, and Sunday dinners.

To my colleagues and dearest friends Whitney, Tash, Ben, and Sarah for sharing the ride and keeping the smiles coming.

To all of the staff in the Drama Department at QUT for your advice and encouragement.

To Kathryn Kelly for always arriving exactly when you were needed.

To the amazing artists and venues who have made the creative practice not only possible but a tremendous joy to be a part of.

To the Paine family, Darryl, Laura, Roz, Gabe, Ben, Jade and Alice for weekends away and rainy days on the coast.

To Sandra Gattenhof and Sean Mee, my supervisors, who have given wisdom and guidance on all things that the last four years have held.

And to my Grandma Betty, who showed me the joy to be found in losing my head in imagined worlds and whose memory I dedicate this work to.

v. CONTENTS

i.	Abstract	i
ii.	Keywords	ii
iii.	Statement of Original Authorship	iii
iv	Acknowledgements	iv
v.	Contents	v
vi.	Table of Figures	viii
1.0	**INTRODUCTION**	**1**
2.0	**METHODOLOGY**	**7**
2.1	Research questions	8
2.2	Qualitative research and practice-led enquiry	8
2.3	Reflexive practice through action research	10
2.4	Project design	12
2.5	Data collection and analysis	13
2.6	Collaboration statement	14
2.7	Ethical considerations	14
3.0	**LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW**	**17**
3.1	The Puppet	19
3.2	The Uncanny	24
3.3	The Doll	27
3.4	The Sublime	31
3.5	The Puppet revisited	36
3.6	Current Practitioners	45
4.0	**PREPARATORY CREATIVE PRACTICE CYCLES**	**53**
4.1	*The Timely Death of Victor Blott*	54
4.2	*The Harbinger*	62
4.3	Findings arising from creative practice cycles one and two	72

5.0 FINAL CREATIVE PRACTICE CYCLE – *THE HARBINGER* 75

5.1 Reversioning *The Harbinger* 79

5.2 Nurturing the uncanny life 79

5.3 Evoking the sublime 81

6.0 THE PRACTICE AND THEORY NEXUS – KEY INSIGHTS ARISING FROM THE STUDY 85

6.1 Nurturing the uncanny life 86

6.1.1 Allow for the world to be one of magic and fantasy 87

6.1.2 Ensure there is quick and clear reasoning for the use of the puppet embedded in the narrative and context 88

6.1.3 Keep the source of the illusion clear and give no cause for distrust 90

6.1.4 Enrol the puppeteers in the world to distance them from the puppet 92

6.2 Evoking the sublime 96

6.2.1 Engage the imaginative co-operation of the audience through clear narrative so they begin to self perpetuate the illusion/character 96

6.2.2 Embrace the fiction surrounding the puppet object and stretch the empathy of the audience 98

6.2.3 Actively steer the narrative towards the metaphysical and gesture to the ultimate notion that the puppet represents 100

6.2.4 Trigger a catharsis in the narrative that will force the puppet-soul to flee the material body and allow for retrospect 101

6.3 The location of the sublime 104

6.4 Conclusion 107

7.0 FINDINGS 109

7.1 Embracing the uncanny 110

7.2 Evoking the sublime 111

7.3 Poetics of the sublime thought 112

8.0 CONCLUSION 113

9.0 APPENDICES 117

10.0 REFERENCE LIST 121

vi. TABLE OF FIGURES

DESCRIPTION	SOURCE	PAGE
Figure One: Old Albert stares down at the little girl.	Dead Puppet Society, 2011.	1
Figure Two: Victor Blott attempts to catch a firefly.	Dead Puppet Society, 2010,	7
Figure Three: An action-reflection cycle.	McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 9.	11
Figure Four: Old Albert shares a story with the little girl.	Dead Puppet Society, 2011.	17
Figure Five: A landscape puppet.	Simon & Estrin, 2004, p. 218.	45
Figure Six: A moment of spectacle in Taymor's *The Lion King*.	Blumenthal, 2007, p. 224.	47
Figure Seven: Giraffes.	Blumenthal, 2007, p. 221.	48
Figure Eight: Zazu puppet and operator.	Taymor, 1997b, p. 186.	48
Figure Nine: The rhinoceros.	Handspring Puppet Company, 2002.	49
Figure Ten: The horse.	National Theatre, 2010, p. 34.	50
Figure Eleven: Old Albert rushes to the door of his shop.	Dead Puppet Society, 2011.	53
Figure Twelve: Victor Blott.	Dead Puppet Society, 2010.	55
Figure Thirteen: Victor prepares to die.	Dead Puppet Society, 2010.	56
Figure Fourteen: The old man.	Dead Puppet Society, 2011.	63
Figure Fifteen: Young Albert and Adelaide dream of a trip on a magic carpet.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	75
Figure Sixteen: Young Albert and Adelaide read a letter.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	77
Figure Seventeen: Old Albert teaches the little girl how to build a mechanical insect.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	85
Figure Eighteen: The operators stand with Old Albert.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	90
Figure Nineteen: The girl holds her face in Old Albert's hands.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	99
Figure Twenty: Old Albert demands the return of a tool.	Dead Puppet Society, 2012.	109
Figure Twenty-One: Victor breaks free of gravity and catches a firefly.	Dead Puppet Society, 2010.	113

1.0 INTRODUCTION



Figure One: Old Albert stares down at the little girl (Dead Puppet Society, 2011)

There is something unique about the experience of watching a puppet in performance; it places an audience in an uncertain middle ground, somewhere between the world of people and the world of things, and asks of the adult mind the same level of imagination conjured by a child at play. Perhaps this is because the puppet is subversive by its nature, resisting binaries of life and death that seemingly bind all other entities, or perhaps because it harks to some unknown or long forgotten understandings of the world that are reignited by the vision of an inanimate entity seemingly imbued with life. Either way, the impetus for this project grew from my developing practice as a maker of contemporary puppet-based theatre after witnessing innumerable moments where adults, after having intense emotional reactions to the performance of puppet characters, fell into a deep whimsical confusion as to how and why they perceived such things. I had always used the word sublime, in its colloquial sense, to describe the phenomenon, but after realising that this metaphysical ability of the puppets was becoming a key element in my practice I decided that it needed further investigation. The search for the sublimity of the puppets has taken me from an examination of manipulation techniques, to centuries old essays dealing with aesthetics, and eventually to my own childhood, all the while searching for that illusive spark of life that could be easier felt in the chest and seen with eyes than captured with words on a page.

The project eventually came to find its focus in the reception of the properly manipulated puppet in the minds of the audience, and the mechanisms that could be employed in the creation of puppet-based theatre to allow for the inanimate object to overcome notions of the grotesque and become a believable presence on the human stage. As such, the document that follows is not intended to be a history of the development of the form, nor a survey of the current reaches of contemporary puppet performance, nor even an instruction manual as to how to create puppet performance, but rather a collection of thoughts and ideas that surround the mystery and metaphysicality of the puppet and how this had been discovered and cultivated in my own practice over the last three years. Framed by theories of the uncanny, the sublime, and double-vision, and identified in the work of other practitioners, I came to position my practice within this tradition and the

strong links that it draws with imagination, the afterlife and other worlds. In my work I had always sought to maintain the air of magic surrounding the form and through this project have distilled a series of key qualities that can be used in the creation of puppet-based theatre works. I believe what I have discovered is a process that can allow for the creation of illusions of character that are powerful even against the well-developed rationalism of the adult mind and capable of generating sublime experience.

Initially, caught up in my own enthusiasm for the project, I made an attempt to overly interrogate the performance of the puppet into its constituent parts in order that a full survey could be taken of individual elements of the illusion. I had hoped that this would offer some insight into the power of the form and identify the locus of the sublimity in the objects. But although rigorous in its intent and in the nature of the data that it generated, it became obvious that by approaching the project it this way, the mysterious, somewhat metaphysical aspects of the puppet were being utterly decimated. In moving the project into its final iterations and preparing for the last rounds of data analysis, this approach was relaxed, and the data collection mechanisms altered slightly to allow for more personal responses, concerned more with feelings and emotional states than technique. Although this new focus somewhat neglected the finer elements of the craft that contribute to illusion, the result was a recovery of the soul of the puppet and an ability to understand the performance event as a whole. The benefit behind this approach was well summed up by Lyotard in his explanation that "the sublime could only be discussed in a sublime style" (1991, p. 94).

In acknowledging the apparently magical effects that lie in the perception of the form, and not seeking to overly rationalise these moments, the project sought to fill several gaps in knowledge. The first of these lay in the choice of theories used to examine the illusion of the puppet that have not been applied to this form before. In approaching a theoretical survey in preparation for the project, it became apparent that there was a broad range of theoretical constructs that could be used to examine the puppet and explain its duality, many of which had not been used in this way before. While these theories all covered very similar territory, the

nuanced differences that they offered served to generate an extensive vocabulary that could be used to discuss my practice, and allowed for more nuanced descriptions and analysis of the creative work. As a result, the project eventually adopted a multi-theory approach that is introduced in the literature review and continues throughout the document.

As a piece of practice-led research, the project consisted of two interconnected components; the developing creative practice (weighted at 75% of the overall project) and the theoretical investigation that supported its growth, which is captured in this exegesis (the remaining 25%). The pages that follow contain a detailed record of this exploration. Beginning with an outline of the project design and methodological considerations associated with the project it then moves on to the literature and contextual review that offers a summary of the multiple theories used. Through the use of literature concerning the puppet and its close relative, the doll, this chapter blends the philosophical concepts of the uncanny and the sublime with theories relating to contemporary performance to propose a hypothetical understanding of how the adult mind comes to understand the puppet in performance. Following this discussion, these initial theoretical insights are applied to the work of several practitioners working in similar forms to search for evidence to support this understanding.

The exegesis then turns its focus towards the practical components of the study providing synopses of the first two practice cycles and associated data analysis before moving on to identify several working principles for the evocation of the sublime in puppet-based performance to be taken into the final cycle of creative practice. The final two chapters then offer insight into the development of this work, as well as an analysis of the data collected from the final performance event to evaluate the capacity of the proposed working principles. It is expected that this knowledge will have use further afield as it works towards the generation of key principles based in engaging empathetic thought processes. Ultimately, the work was geared towards creating characters that drew as strongly on the lived experience of the audience member as the hand of the artist and tried to leverage

this level of investment to affect the overall experience of a dramatic or other creative work.

2.0 METHODOLOGY



Figure Two: Victor Blott attempts to catch a firefly
(Dead Puppet Society, 2010)

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches underpinning the research project. In particular it identifies the research question, the field of practice-led research and the processes that were used to generate, capture and analyse data.

2.1 Research questions

The impetus for this investigation rose out of previous creative projects in which members of the audience spoke of interpretive anxiety in their perception of the puppet characters. They spoke of these entities as though they had some real life force and of the strangeness of this feeling given that they knew the objects to be inanimate. This dual perception has been well documented by puppet theorist Steve Tillis who terms it "double-vision" (1992; 1996). By taking this theoretical framework, the project aimed to expand upon the current knowledge of double-vision through its application to the theories of the uncanny and the sublime in order to further understand and make use of its potential in a dramatic context. The core of the project was about understanding the key elements of double-vision through practice so that it might be amplified and made repeatable. In order to achieve this the project was guided by two interrelated research questions. These were:

How can the uncanny readings of a puppet be embraced to allow an adult to engage in the construction of the illusion?

What are the key elements that can be built into a puppet-based work to allow for the evocation of a sublime feeling?

In order to give a holistic response to these questions data was collected from both audience members and the artists involved in the creation of the works.

2.2 Qualitative research and practice-led enquiry

Historically, the practice of enquiry through research has been divided into two main categories; quantitative research that seeks to capture and use numeric data

"which measures and quantifies phenomena, constructing them in terms of frequency, distribution and cause and effect" (Haseman, 2006, p. 98), and qualitative research, which "prefers inductive approaches and necessarily encompasses a wide range of research strategies and methods, embracing the perspectives both of researchers and participants" with outputs more commonly expressed in words or written accounts (Haseman, 2006, p. 99). This research sat within the qualitative tradition that Denzin and Lincoln describe as:

> A situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible ... At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (2008, p. 4)

By making use of the interpretive, naturalistic approach identified by Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research practices can be applied to art-making, or more specifically performance-making disciplines. Indeed Haseman states that: "mainstream qualitative researchers established research strategies that informed research on practice" (2006, p. 100), where an outside eye is able to research artistic practice. However this mode of enquiry involves the "positioning of practice as an object of study, not as a method of research" (Haseman, 2006, p. 100). In response to this, a new paradigm of research that makes allowance for creative practice to function as a method of research has developed (Gray, 1996; Haseman, 2006).

Emerging from the more established field of qualitative enquiry, practice-led research is defined by Carole Gray as:

> Research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice [and] carried out through practice using predominantly methodologies and methods familiar to us as practitioners. (1996, p. 3)

It provides a framework through which a practitioner can approach enquiry into their own practice and the way in which they engage with that practice. Importantly it also makes allowance for the use of the practitioner's artistic methodologies as both tools for research and as the expression of the research. Haseman states that:

> Practice-led research employs its own distinctive research approach with its own strategies and methods, drawn from the long-standing and accepted working methods and practices of artists and practitioners across the arts and emerging creative disciplines. (2007, p. 148)

The practitioner involved is therefore able to research their creative work by making use of the same tools they use to create such work. In this way the researcher is inherently heavily involved in the subject of the research, however Gray & Malins make allowance for this, explaining that "in the role of the "practitioner-researcher", subjectivity, involvement, [and] reflexivity is acknowledged; the interaction of the researcher with the research material is recognised" (2004, p. 21). Indeed the field is closely linked to constructivist enquiry as "knowledge is negotiated – intersubjective, context bound and is a result of personal construction" (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 21). It does mean, however, that the methodology surrounding such research must be intelligently constructed. Gray and Malins call for it to be "explicit and transparent (documentation is essential) and transferable in principle (if not in specifics)" (2004, p. 21).

This project sat within the tradition of practice-led research because of the way in which it took my own creative practice as the focus of the study. In addition to this, the findings and conclusions drawn from this creative practice were used in the creation of each of the subsequent pieces; hence the practice also became the expression of the research. In order to properly embrace this iterative structure of enquiry, the project made use of the recognised method of action research to structure the investigation.

2.3 Reflexive practice through action research

In order to develop a structured framework through which to conduct the practice this project enacted a series of action research cycles that were anchored in reflective practice. The process of ongoing reflection both on and in practice is key to the field of practice-led research. Stringer explains that "action research is a

systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives" (2007, p. 1). Grounded in an iterative approach, action research is divided into a series of repeating cycles. Figure three (below) illustrates one of these cycles and identifies the six key steps which occur in each, namely to observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify and move in new directions.

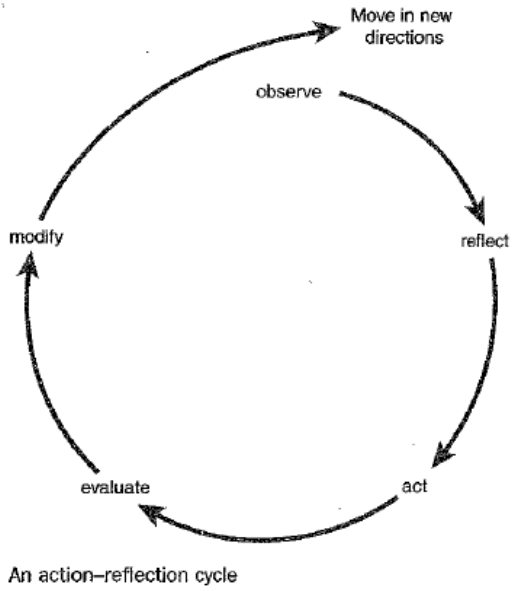


Figure Three: an action-reflection cycle (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 9)

The cycle is repeated, allowing the individual to constantly hone the subject of the research or practice. McNiff and Whitehead purport that "action research is about practitioners creating new ideas about how to improve practice, and putting those ideas forward as their personal theories of practice" (2006, p. 9). By structuring the project in this way each action research cycle became a loop that enabled reflective practice. Donald Schön explains that through this mode of thought the practitioner can:

> Surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience. (2006, p. 61)

In order to harness this reflective practice, both for the creative practice and surrounding study, the project employed three major iterations for the collection of data. Each research cycle was a site of creative practice that culminated in a live

theatrical performance that was approached and analysed through the key steps of the action research loop (refer to figure three on previous page). This is further explained in the following sections on project design, and data collection and analysis.

2.4 Project design

In blending critical creative practice with theoretical understandings the project made use of three major research cycles. This aligned with Gray's statement that "a characteristic approach of the "artistic" methodology is a pluralist approach and use of a multi-method technique, tailored to the individual project" (1996, p. 14). Through this structure, the theory and responses from the audience and the creatives involved in the creative projects influenced the direction of each subsequent work.

The first of the creative cycles was the further development of *The Timely Death of Victor Blott* shown as a part of the Metro Arts Independent Season in early 2010. In this iteration, observations and reflections from the initial development of the work undertaken in 2009 as part of my honours project were enacted. This work was intended to function as a pilot study for the project and serve as an initial source for the collection of data from which to derive initial findings and spark the cumulative action-reflection that formed the spine of the project. Makyut and Morehouse describe this as an "emergent design" (2004, p. 44).

The second cycle involved the creation of a new work entitled *The Harbinger* that was designed to test the initial findings of the first cycle. Rather than simply focussing on the strengths identified within the pilot study, this round of practice was intended to push the boundaries of the project into new areas to ensure that the positive data identified by the first iteration was in fact a locus of interest and not a general state.

The final cycle involved a reworking of *The Harbinger* in order to generate a work that demonstrated the findings of the research project, activated the sublime through double-vision, and tested the working principles that were outlined in the preliminary findings.

2.5 Data collection and analysis

The project made use of several distinct methods of data collection. The first of these was a series of surveys used to collect a wide range of surface data from the audience (a copy of this survey is available in the appendices). In later iterations this surveying was also bolstered with a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with audiences. These responses were then coded by making use of the key themes that emerged from the data as categories for data analysis. Wengraf explains that semi-structured interviews are:

> Designed to have a number of interview questions prepared in advance but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open that the subsequent questions of the interviewer cannot be planned in advance but must be improvised in a careful and theorised way. (2004, p. 5)

Schensul, Schensul and LeCompt expand upon this by identifying the strength of this method of data collection as:

> Semistructured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, open-ended interview with the directionality and agenda of the survey instrument to produce focused, qualitative, textual data. (1999, p. 149)

They continue on to explain that this method of data collection is useful in the "development of exploratory models and the preparation for more systematic forms of investigation" (Schensul et al., 1999, p.149).

The importance of collecting data using both surveys and interviews, lay in the potential for the triangulation of data gathered. Maxwell explains that this "reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method" (2005, p. 93). Further to this, Ely explains that:

> Checking data obtained by a variety of methods is one way of contributing to trustworthiness. Watching for the convergence of at least two pieces of data, for triangulation of findings, can be as suspenseful as it is important. (1991, pp. 96-97)

By adopting this multi-modal approach I functioned as a methodological bricoleur "performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 8).

2.6 Collaboration statement

Due to the nature of devised performance, the works that were generated throughout the life of the project had an inherently collaborative element. As such, individuals who were invited into the team, in both technical and creative capacities contributed largely to the development of each work. This difficult balance needed to be managed for the sake of both the academic rigor of the project and the protection of these individuals' artistic rights. In order to maintain the usefulness of each production for the research my role as embedded researcher translated to that of the director, or auteur, of the developing works. In this way I was able to maintain clarity of artistic vision across major creative decisions. In order to protect the intellectual property of the other members of the creative team each was legally contracted to be involved in such a way that they were given full credit and ownership over their creative product, especially through publicised information regarding the works.

2.7 Ethical considerations

Prior to the commencement of the project, ethical clearance was obtained from the Queensland University of Technology Ethics Committee and the project assigned the ethical clearance number 1000000381. To protect the identity of all individuals who participated in the data collection, both survey responses and interview transcripts were anonymised prior to inclusion in the exegesis. In the data analysis, survey responses are cited with the survey number and the year in

which the data was collected. Similarly, data gained through interview is cited with a letter to represent the individual, and the year in which the survey was conducted. Survey matrices and full interview transcripts are available in the appendices that correspond with each of the three productions.

3.0 LITERATURE AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW



Figure Four: Old Albert shares a story with the little girl (Dead Puppet Society, 2011)

In order to give a proper theoretical outline of the scope of the project, as well as identify the gap in knowledge that it sought to fill, this literature and contextual review is comprised of four major sections that introduce a variety of theories. Firstly, the review seeks a working definition of the term puppet as it can be applied to widely varied contemporary practice and raises the central notion of double-vision as a means for the audience's perception of the puppet. It then begins an examination of the uncanny, and drawing on the abundant literature that ties this theory to dolls, in addition to some more recent publications that draw direct links with the puppet, works towards the application of this theory to contemporary puppet-based theatre. Following this, the review moves into the area of the sublime, which has not previously been applied in its theoretical sense to the performance of puppets. In order to do this, the discussion revisits the puppet and generates a series of guidelines for the generation of the sublime in puppet-based performance through the incorporation of the theories of liminality and intermediality. The review concludes by conducting an application of these theoretical understandings to the work of current practitioners whose work has influenced my own.

It should be noted that while it deals with the use of puppets in performance, neither this review, nor the project as a whole, was intended to address the historical development of the form nor document the enormous variation that exists in current practice as these areas have already been well addressed by theorists. Shershow explains that "an extensive body of literature, beginning at the nineteenth century, documents the astonishing geographic and ethnographic variety of puppet theatre" (1995, p. 1). The most recent edition to this canon was the book *Puppetry, a world history* by Eileen Blumenthal (2005), which goes to extraordinary lengths to portray the sheer breadth of current puppet practice. Focussing rather on my own practice, and the links that can be drawn between my work and the wider puppetry community, this project aimed to address a different gap in the literature surrounding the form identified by Stephen Kaplin when he describes that most academics "approach puppet theatre from without, stressing the distance separating puppets from the mainstream of Western theatre" (1999, p. 29). A stance that Blumenthal suggested has come about because of theatre's

century long love affair with realism (1997). In order to address this the project aimed to bring the form back under the wing of Performance Studies and make use of theories commonly associated with this discipline in its investigation of contemporary puppet-based theatre giving rise to the multi-theory discussion that follows. Before I began, the question needed answering; what, in our age of technological advancement and seemingly infinite storytelling possibilities, had the puppet object become?

3.1 The Puppet

The essence of the puppet is one of constant flux and shape shifting. This short section endeavours to convey the way in which these seemingly mundane, outdated, and even frequently outcast objects, can wield an intense metaphysicality and in the eyes of those that fall victim to their illusory power, generate a life force all of their own. Kenneth Gross put this very simply when he stated that "the puppet is an ambassador or pilgrim to human beings from the world of things" (2011, p. 571). A statement that bears a similar degree of poetry to Roman Paska's musing that "the puppet is out on a limb between the angel and the machine" (1990, p. 41). Paska purports a strange paradox in which an entity can be at once the lowest of mindless mechanical devices and the symbolic height of humanity; his statement seems to carry with it the sense of the agelessness of the form. Indeed for modern audiences the puppet object can often feel as though it comes from a long forgotten world, a place of "ancient beliefs in the supernatural…in the power of humans to become or make gods…in their ability to discover a divine soul in dead matter" (Gross, 2011, p. 1704). The life of puppets is tied closely to early animistic thought that we have supposedly surpassed through modern scientific thought.

In its earliest forms, the puppet played a strong part in the creative and religious aspects of early culture. Blumenthal explains that the form had its origins with the creative expressions of prehistoric man (2005) and Bell identifies that "puppets, masks and objects have always had a strong connection to folk theatre, popular

theatre, and religion" (2001, p. 5). Both of these statements highlight the degree to which the puppet has traditionally belonged to forms of more popular art, preferring the company of the common man than the exclusive circles of high art. Gross suggests that the reason for this is that in their early forms puppets were used not just for entertainment but rather as sacred objects in religious ritual. He explains that "puppets were brought to life precisely to provide homes for the souls of the dead; they served as a means to repair loss of life or to keep ancestral spirits alive, to give them a way to speak to the living" (Gross, 2011, p. 425). It is no stretch of the imagination to see these early puppets holding a tremendous power in their apparent life when one thinks of the awe that often greets their modern relatives, the statues and icons, that stand unmoving in modern religious buildings. Even without strong religious belief I always feel a sense of majesty and passive domination when confronted by these iconic figures. There is a sense of eternity garnered by this sort of creative expression in the way that these objects through the robust nature of their form possess a resistance to the effects of time that we with our frail bodies of flesh could only dream of.

The puppet speaks to a similar notion, it has a body of wood or metal, cannot feel pain, and spends most of its time limp and lifeless; a somewhat disturbed image of the elegant stance adopted by their stone and bronze relatives. But the puppet can far surpass them because it stands not just as a representation of life, but seems to come to life, indeed "there is always more life in the puppet to be lived" (Gross, 2011, p. 1432). In a sense then this little creature can become immortal, brought to life by different hands through many generations of operators. Ultimately, the life of the puppet is only possible because the puppeteer lends a part of his or her own volition to the object for a time, so the act is also inherently human. Gross explains that this act of imparting life is an act against the inescapable nature of death, "in a world where living things—bodies, spirits, words, meanings—always fall into a death" (2011, p. 2411). The puppet therefore becomes an act of defiance, a comforting gesture that if we might bring these other tiny beings to life, there may be some hope for the souls in our own imperfect bodies.

However with this knowledge of the beginnings of the puppet object and the death defying metaphysics that lie behind its use we are still no closer to a concrete definition. Blumenthal even warns against trying to establish such a statement as "trying to fix the limits of puppetry is a hopeless exercise. The borders are misty. And porous. And elastic" (2005, p. 229). This sentiment is echoed by Beeman who explains that the very term *puppet* is in itself limited because the preconceptions that surround the term "conceals the enormous variety of objects that people regularly manipulate in performance" (1993, p. 382). It is possible, however, to give a more general idea of the notion of the puppet by steering away from this 'limit fixing' and preconceptions of the form by looking rather for the elements that are common across all performing objects.

Viewed in this way the literature became more generous. Frank Proschan, for example, defines puppets as "material images of humans, animals or spirits that are created, displayed or manipulated in performance" (as cited in Bell, 2001, p. 5) which goes some way towards identifying the central characteristics but excludes those everyday objects manipulated in performance intended to be nothing other than themselves come to life. This exclusion is avoided by Tillis who makes the even more general suggestion that the puppet is "a material object that, through the signification sited upon it, gives the illusion of life" (1996, p. 111). Thus for Tillis, the term *puppet* requires only a material object that appears to come to life. For the sake of the project this was how the term was viewed. Even more importantly, however, Tillis explains that the notion of *puppetness* relies on the central deceit behind this act as the object "pretends to be something that it is not" (ibid.). The core of the performance of the puppet thus lies in its pretence.

Several other authors have mentioned this latent contraction behind the perception of the performance of the puppet. Williams explains that "most discussions about the spectatorship of the puppet present it in terms of illusion—belief in a puppet's magical life—and distancing—awareness of its objectness" (2007, p. 123). Tillis himself in an early article likened the phenomenon of the performing puppet to that of the actor and explained that the "actor pretends to be some*one* other than he or she is; the puppet pretends to be some*thing* other than

it is, by pretending to have life" (1992, p. 38). One can see then how the performance of the puppet might become a powerful act as it is concerned with a more blatant transformation than actor-driven theatre. Tillis extends on this with the statement that "in puppet performance, an inescapable tension exists within the puppet itself, which is at once a material object…and a signifier of life" (1996, p. 115).

This notion of a perceived doubleness is common across the writings of all of these authors, although it goes by different names and captures different qualities. This aspect of the puppet performance doesn't rely upon the content explored in a work but is inherently bound up in the use of the form itself. Williams attributes this to the way in which "puppetry explicitly requires audiences to explore the ambiguous boundary between the living and the non-living without necessarily equating them with the animate and inanimate" (2007, p. 127). Jurkowski explains that belief can be built in the life of the object but first "we have to pass through the preparatory psychic process of allowing our imagination to work" (1998, p. 5). Once this state is reached Paska states that the "illusion [is] typically thought of as encompassing the subordinate sense of the puppet" (1990, p. 38) showing how the imagination allows the material object to become something else. It is in this moment-by-moment balance that Blumenthal positions one of the key delights of puppetry. She explains that in actor-based theatre:

> Spectators accept the stage action as real but never totally forget that they are watching people pretending. In puppetry, this suspension of disbelief becomes a high wire act as the chasm separating the two simultaneously believed realities becomes stupendous. (Blumenthal, 1997, p. 16)

This contradiction between the material puppet and the imagined puppet and the potential emotional power that can be drawn from the inherent inconsistency became the central guiding theory of the project. For the sake of ease of discussion the term "double-vision" coined by Tillis (1992, p. 7) was used.

Thus far this discussion has endeavoured to come to a definition of the puppet, identified its beginnings as a ritual object, identified its contradictory nature, and introduced the key notion of double-vision. In recent literature, only two studies

have been published that have tied this thinking to the reception of the puppet by an audience and in both cases these audiences were children. Although this means that they bear only partial relevance to this study the authors still made some pertinent conclusions. The first of these, Sauter, concluded that:

> In their perception of the performance, most children neglected the reality of the theatre—the puppeteer, the technique, the props—and concentrated literally on the "building of the character". Despite their consciousness of the theatrical process during the performance, they felt free to transpose the embodied into the referential. (2000, p. 195)

Sauter suggests that children are able, for whatever reason, to look beyond the physical reality of the puppet and engage strongly with their imaged version of the character. The second study, conducted by Reason, drew a similar conclusion that children "responded to the puppet as real, rather than material and unreal" (2008, p. 345) when they were asked to make visual representations of what they saw. Interestingly though he further complicated this by explaining that:

> Children do have the ability to juggle contradictory interpretations and to see simultaneously on two levels—the ability, in short, to perform dual readings. This ability allows children to pursue and preserve the magic of the illusion if they desire, but also do so in an empowered and enfranchised manner. (2008, p. 353)

There are clear links between this statement and the notion of double-vision even though they are not explicitly drawn by the author.

Although Reason's study demonstrated a solid example of double-vision in the reception of puppet-based performance by children, he made a further claim that sat strongly at odds with the aims and findings of this project. He stated that in differing to the responses of children "adults may well respect the skills constructing the illusion but will always compare the puppet to the human actor and see its representational limitations" (Reason, 2008, p. 343). Whilst this might ring true for the sort of performance that Reason was using as the focus for the study this conclusion is based on massive, albeit widespread, assumptions as to the representational possibilities of puppets and stands in direct contrast to the emotional responses that many contemporary puppet-artists have been able to evoke for adult audiences. If Reasons statements were true I hazard my own assumption that mainstream works such as *The Lion King* by Julie Taymor and

War Horse by The National Theatre would not have been met with such critical and public acclaim. Confronted with material like this that confined puppets to the world of children, the project aimed to create a theoretical argument proven through practice that a puppet-based performance event could engage adult audience in full imaginative engagement.

3.2 The Uncanny

The project sits in a field of practice where although the power of the puppet over a child is widely recognised, the emotional effect that it can accrue in an adult mind is often marginalised. With this in mind, however, the earliest beginnings of puppet-based performance have been shown to have had ritualistic significance and a tie to animistic thought. This stands as a possible explanation as to why children are more susceptible to the illusion of the performing puppet object; because they have not yet been conditioned to see the world through rational eyes armed with the arsenal of reason that comes with age. If this is the case then it explains why so many adults greet the presence of a puppet with a degree of uncertainty, because it stands as a reminder of an earlier worldview that they have long since repressed, one in which there is the potential for "confusion between animate and inanimate processes" (Simms, 1996, p. 668). This regression towards earlier ways of thinking and the breakdown of the strict logic with which we view the world can be an unsettling experience and is termed the uncanny.

The uncanny was first coined in 1906 by Ernst Jentsch. Jentsch explained that the word, derived from the German *unheimlich* loosely meanly *un-homely*, is used to describe a position wherein an individual is "not at ease in the situation concerned, that the thing [being observed] is or at least seems to be foreign to him. The word suggest a lack of orientation" (1906, p. 2). It is a term that can be used to describe the uncomfortable feeling that one experiences when confronted with an object that displays "physical uncertainties" (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8). As to what these uncertainties might be, Jentsch explains that:

> There is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is inanimate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate. (1906, p. 8)

The uncanny has links to the supernatural world, and the fear of things like zombies and artificially intelligent robots, but can also be applied to the puppet and account for the feelings of distrust that adults can attribute to these uncertain objects. Indeed Jentsch states that:

> This peculiar effect makes its appearance even more clearly when imitations of the human form not only reach one's perception, but when on top of everything they appear to be united with certain bodily or mental functions. (1906, p. 10)

This description captures the state embodied by the puppet in performance as it is a material object that is not only a potential imitation of the human form but also one that appears to come to life. The application of the theory of the uncanny in its simplest sense as an uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty can be used to describe how the puppet might affect the adult mind.

Building on the earlier writings of Jentsch, Sigmund Freud described the effects of the uncanny and how it is able to break through the rigid logic of the adult brain. He explained that:

> …a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny sensations is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one. (Freud, 1919, pp. 8-9)

Furthering this, Freud also wrote that the appearance of an uncanny feeling and the presentation of the entity that triggers it have the ability to take:

> …us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe, which was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings, and by the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes. (1919, p. 12)

If instances of this sort of early mindset are possible to generate through the evocation of the uncanny, then one can see how the adult mind may be able to reconnect with the animistic thoughts of its childhood self and shake the reason that usually holds such thoughts at bay. Indeed the generation of the uncanny experience according to Freud lies in the struggle that the brain must deal with in

perceiving the discordance between reality and reality as the imagination presents it. He explains that:

> …an uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes... (Freud, 1919, p. 15)

Again, there is a direct correlation between this statement and the performance of the puppet and the way in which it apparently crosses the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate. As a result it puts the audience in a position where their imaginations tell them that an entity that they know to be an inanimate object appears to come to life.

The performance of the puppet satisfies many of the criteria laid out by these two authors as to what sort of entity can trigger an uncanny experience. In his description of this phenomenon, however, Freud also offers an important reasoning as to why this feeling can still affect us as adults. In alluding to this, he explains that the "uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign [as Jentsch suggested], but something familiar and old—established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (Freud, 1919, p. 13). Freud therefore suggests that the experience of the uncanny is evoked not by a new experience, but by one that is familiar and forgotten, and given the sentiment of his statement, forcibly forgotten. Later in the same essay he expands on his explanation, writing that:

> Nowadays we no longer believe in them [animistic thoughts], we have *surmounted* such ways of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new set of beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to support the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny… (Freud, 1919, p. 17)

Freud identifies the way in which the rationality of adult thought can be undone, through appealing to early, more animistic thought patterns that will resonate and attempt to resurface within the individual.

The puppet has obvious ties to animistic thought that the rational brain, by its very nature, is opposed to due to the way in which it attempts to bridge the gap

between life and death. But there seemed to be something more personal about the connection with the puppet that validated a deeper investigation. In the absence of the rigorous application of the uncanny to the performance of the puppet the project took a side-step into the world of the doll, the cousin of the puppet, who was the closest friend to many of us during childhood and who has been well documented as a herald of the uncanny.

3.3 The Doll

In steering the discussion of the uncanny effects of the puppet and its tie to Freud's notion of surmounted thought processes, the doll seemed like a logical place to turn not just because of her physical similarity to a puppet but also because of the early belief that we had in the lives of our toys. As children we were able to build intense relationships with these objects as a result of the explicit power of our imaginations and lack of rational logic that would later come to impede them. Rilke suggests that through the doll "our imagination became inexhaustible" (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 672) and in this way Van Winckel explains that "the doll's life displaces real life, ordinary life. In the doll's world nothing begins or ends, but is only picked up in the midst of continuing" (2005, p. 612). For the child the doll is perfect in its materiality because it allows the developing person a chance to practice their person-ness.

The doll itself offers very little but allows the world of the child to come to the fore. Van Winckel observes that "the child dreams the doll's life even as the doll it would seem, dreams the dream the child has entered" (2005, p. 612). The doll becomes the perfect medium, a figure for the child to enrol and use in whatever way they will. As a result of this Rilke remembers that with the doll:

> We were forced to assert ourselves, for, had we surrendered ourselves to it, there would then have been no one there at all. It made no response whatever, so that we were put in the position of having to take over the part it should have played. (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 671)

So in a way the doll became a part of us; a being whose presence we perceived as very real that was in fact comprised of nothing more than the efforts of our early imagination.

Aside from these overtly joyful aspects of the doll, in the supreme innocence of the play of the child, Rilke suggests that the figure of the doll eventually came to confront the child with a much darker reality. He speaks of the imaginative relationship with the doll as though it bore the weight of some sacred pact and in a poetic phrase recalls that:

> For hours, for whole weeks it might satisfy us to drape the first deathly silk of our heart into folds around this quiet mannequin, but I cannot imagine it otherwise than that there were certain endless afternoons when we grew tired of our doubled ideas and when we suddenly faced her and expected something. (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 672)

Rilke's statement not only echoes the notion of double-vision in the play-based relationship between the child and the doll, but in addition, given the single imagination driving the play, illuminates the dreadful possibility of what happens when that imagination tires. He goes on to explain that for the child "the doll was the first to inflict on us that tremendous silence…which was later to come to us repeatedly out of space, whenever we approached the frontiers of our existence" (Rilke as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 669). Because the singular imagination is finite, and eventually:

> The imagination ceases to perpetuate itself, when boredom sets in, the world that we had taken for granted suddenly takes on dark and unfamiliar hues. Behind it we sense a threatening emptiness which begins to permeate the solid floor. (Rilke as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 672)

Rilke suggests that as the imagination began to tire and the doll confronted us with her reality as an inanimate object, it stood at such odds with our image of her and seemed such a betrayal, that we would ultimately reject her.

In speaking of the power that a doll has over an adult who had loved it so dearly as a child Rilke paints a morbid picture:

> She would lie before us, finally without disguise as that gruesome alien body for which we have wasted our purest warmth; as that superficially painted drowned corpse, lifted and carried by the

> floods of our tenderness until it dried out and we forgot it somewhere in the bushes. (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 670)

In being confronted again by this object, perhaps last encountered years before, an uncanny experience could result as the deeply suppressed existence of the doll, and more so its imagined existence, came once again to the mind. Jentsch explains that it is characteristic of the uncanny for "that which man himself semi-consciously projected into things from his own being begins now to terrify him" (1906, p. 13) because "he is not always capable of exorcising the spirits which were created out of his own head" (ibid.). Thus the doll, when rediscovered in adulthood, might once again appear to have a power of its own, reclaiming once again without permission the facilities of imagination that had given her life in the first place.

For the adult, just as with the child, the doll ultimately symbolises a confronting existential conundrum; that she who we thought was so powerful is nothing but an object might mean that our selves, which we regard with a similar sense, may also be nothing. Rilke puts this again in his poetic tone whereby:

> The doll becomes the harbinger of a universe unresponsive and indifferent to the human cry for meaning. In her the absurdity of life finds its first dark abode. The "hollowness in our feeling" and "pause of the heart" bespeak an instant of utter terror … The great fear which the doll inspires is the fear of a silence and the emptiness at the heart of our existence. It grasps the possible absence of transcendence, the possible unreality of a spiritual invisible realm, the possible meaninglessness of our life beyond the clearing of the present. (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 673)

But the very fact that this little object can cause us to have such vivid and deep emotional reactions to her betrayal, that it could possibly be treated with distrust and anger as though it somehow had the capacity to make the choice to hurt us, suggests that we perceived a lot more than just the object itself. Without this other, this absent entity, there could be no cause for our response.

In essence the material body of the doll served only as a canvas for the projection of our thoughts, and the product of our young imaginations was infinitely vaster, more complex, and more compassionate than the material reality. Rilke captures this when he recalls that:

> We were not thinking of you at all. We were thinking of something quite different, an invisible something, which we held high above you and ourselves, secretly and with foreboding, and for which both we and you were, so to say, merely pretexts, we were thinking of a soul: the doll-soul. (as cited in Simms, 1978, p. 673)

The doll can therefore be seen as the medium through which we consorted with the doll-soul, as an imperfect, worldly vessel through which we could connect with her. It is almost reassuring to have this other entity brought to light to validate to some extent the feelings that we once had towards these objects. Unfortunately though, according to Rilke, the doll-soul ultimately does not survive in light of the material shortcomings of the doll itself. He laments that "in the end, we have quite destroyed you, doll-soul, whilst thinking to care for you in our dolls: they were after all the maggots which ate you away" (Rilke as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 674).

We have seen then that the uncanny and its associated feelings of distress can result because of our early relationships with our toys and the ultimate failings of their material bodies against the sheer potential of our dreams and desires. It figures that the developing mind, learning about the impossibilities of the life of inanimate objects would repress this early experience, surmounting our old ways of thought with the new, based in logic and reason. But this project is neither about the doll nor its absent ghost; it is about puppets, and by extension, the puppet-soul, and the puppet-soul is a different creature. Unlike that of the doll it is not immobile, it is built with many imaginations, it is given a place and a context, indeed its entire existence is cushioned with a pretence of life. The doll-soul might have been tied to an object ultimately bound to imaginative shortcomings and oblivion, but the puppet-soul resides in one full of energy that tries with all of its might to escape the nothingness where it knows that it belongs. Whilst the doll-soul might be forever caught in the realm of hopeless projections, the puppet-soul has the ability to far surpass this strange world of dark memories and existential fear and transcend, taking with it the boggling contradiction of its uncanny life.

3.4 The Sublime

In the creation of my work the theory of the uncanny offered a solid foundation through which to view the ambiguous interpretive position of an audience watching the performance of the puppet and illuminated the link between this thought process and that of childhood play. Additionally, I felt as though it clearly described the imaginative state of an audience in the early stages of belief in a puppet character, cautiously weighing the strength of their imagination with the known reality of the materiality of the puppet. But this fell short of the enthusiasm of practice (Haseman, 2006) from which the project had grown, and didn't adequately describe the emotional overflow that I had witnessed in audiences who moved beyond an initial consideration of the puppet characters and came to care for them. With narrative drivers and a theatrical context geared towards inviting the audience to deeply connect with the puppets it seemed to me that there was only so long that they could remain simply uncanny, or *unhomely*, as my work actively asked the audience to find a place of surety in their perceptions of the puppets and ultimately contribute to their perception of the character through their own emotional projections. To meet this shortcoming of the uncanny the project turned towards another theory that deals with the psychological effects of unresolvable binaries, the sublime.

Just like puppets themselves, the theory of the sublime is very old. Lyotard, who has written extensively on the place of the sublime in postmodern art, explains that Boileau introduced it "via his translation of Longinus, which was slowly elaborated from the end of the seventeenth century onwards in Europe, of which Kant and Burke were the most scrupulous analysts" (1991, p. 84). Beyond this there have been numerous scholars who have written about the place of the modern sublime. Central to this contemporary understanding is the idea that "the sublime is "now" not just in the sense of its modernity or relevance, but also in terms of its impact on sensory perceptions and cognition" (Malpas, 2002, p. 204).

For the sake of discussion let us return to Kant who first outlined several key elements of the sublime that largely comprise the theory as we know it today. For

Kant, the sublime was concerned with "an indeterminate concept of reason" (2008b, p. 47) and the effects that this has on the mind of an individual. He explained that "its feeling is sometimes accompanied with a certain dread, or melancholy; in some cases merely with quiet wonder; and in still others with a beauty completely pervading a sublime plan" (Kant, 2003, p. 47). According to Kant, the reason that the individual fell victim to the experience of the sublime was when certain stimulus meant that:

> A feeling comes to him [the individual] of the inadequacy of his imagination for presenting the idea of a whole within which that imagination attains its maximum, and, in its fruitless efforts to extend this limit, recoils upon itself, but in doing so succumbs to an emotional delight. (2008a, para. 21)

For the individual then, the feeling of the sublime is one of the failures of the imagination that ultimately results in delight. Or in Kant's words

> A feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain its estimation by reason and a simultaneously awakened pleasure arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of the greatest faculty of sense being in accord with reason. (2008a, para. 32)

This experience is bound to the relationship between the thought centres of imagination and reason whereby the former feeds the latter with information that allows for a rational understanding of the world. When confronted by certain entities, however, the imagination is not able to sufficiently represent said entity and succumbs to the failed delight of the sublime in leaving reason unfulfilled. Kant explains that as a result of this, "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging subject, and not in the object itself" (2008a, para. 29). In this manner, the feeling of the sublime comes about when the mind becomes aware of its own perceptual shorcomings.

In addition to the writings of Kant on the subject, numerous modern theorists have contributed to the development of the theory of the sublime. Similarly to Kant, Battersby explains that:

> In the experience of the sublime the audience or observer was said to derive pleasure from being (temporarily or potentially) overwhelmed by an object or entity that seemed infinite or vast, powerful or terrible, exceeding the capacities of the human to imaginatively grasp or understand it. Breaking with conscious

> control and individual personality or preferences, the pleasure-in-pain that was integral to the sublime seemed to take man temporarily beyond the human; but the pleasure was generated by an object—not by a god or by the divine—and opened a kind of split within the subject before consciousness and reason re-establish control. (2007, p. 1)

Akin to this, Rogozinski makes mention of the sublime as "the feeling of the infinite" (1993, p. 149) and Nancy labels it "the self-overflowing of the imagination" (1993, p. 40). In applying the sublime to the study of contemporary performance in particular with its understood conventions of presentation, Broadhurst constructed the definition of the theory as:

> The tension between joy and sorrow: the delight of having a feeling of totality inseparable from the pain of not being able to present an object equal to this idea of totality. Spectators are not simply engaged in passive contemplation but are called to do what, according to Kant, cannot be done, to present the unpresentable, to surpass what is possible … to strive continually towards a judgement that can never be guaranteed. The sublime indicates that there can never be security in mere contemplation, for the signs presented demand more than this. (1999, p. 30)

Broadhurst's definition is of particular use because of its instant applicability to the performance of the puppet where the totality of the perceived character sits at odds with its actual existence as an inanimate figure. Hence the puppet in itself demonstrates this presentation of the unpresentable as the inanimate figure appears to come to life.

Jean-Francois Lyotard wrote prolifically on the place of the sublime in postmodern arts practice. Similarly to Kant, he sees the experience of the sublime coming to pass when "the imagination, even at its most extended, does not succeed in presenting an object that might validate or "realise" the idea" that an individual is presented with (Lyotard, 1991, p. 100). In applying this theory to postmodern art, however, he extends upon the writings of Kant in the creation of his notion of the *differend*. According to Malpas in his reading of Lyotard, this takes place when an entity:

> …is irreductable to speculative comprehension … these occluded aspects and possibilities are what he calls differends: moments where something cries out to be put into phrases but, because of the calculative-technological structure of the hegemonic discourses of

> society, there is no language in which they can be spoken. (2002, p. 207)

For Lyotard, the sublime can be found in modern art that seeks to create new modes of expression and abandons traditional modes of communication, and as a result ruptures preconceptions and creates something unnameable by current social understandings. He explains that:

> The arts, whatever their materials, pressed forward by the aesthetics of the sublime in search of intense effects, can and must give up the imitation of models that are merely beautiful, and try out surprising, strange, shocking combinations. (Lyotard, 1991, p. 100)

This is an advocation for the place of the experimental in the creation of sublime experience in art and relates to the way in which a puppet performer offers a different mode of presentation to a human actor. By extension, presenting a puppet character to an adult audience not acclimatised to the use of the form offers the potential for the rupture of preconceptions regarding the representation and perception of living figures on stage.

Lyotard describes the effect of this experimentation as an ascesis, whereby an individual actively seeks to move beyond their established thought patterns and into a realm of increased representational possibility. Along these lines Malpas explains that the potential for sublime experience in art is:

> …hidden in ordinary perception, which remains under the hegemony of habitual or classical ways of looking [realism]. They are only accessible to the painter [artist], and can therefore only be re-established by him, at the expense of an interior ascesis that rids perceptual and mental fields of the prejudices inscribed even in vision itself. If the viewer does not submit to a complementary ascesis, the painting will remain senseless and impenetrable to him. (2002, p. 207)

Although Malpas is writing about the art of painting, the ability to suggest this ascesis is potentially stronger in the living world of performance where the context of the work can influence the way in which the audience engages with the puppet object. In a work where this ascesis of though is achieved, Lyotard explains that:

> The artist ceases to be guided by a culture which made him the sender and master of a message of glory: he becomes, in so far as he is a genius, the involuntary addressee of an inspiration come to him from an "I know not what". The public no longer judges according to

> the criteria of taste ruled by the tradition of shared pleasure. (1991, p. 96)

In the presence of this sort of creative product a presentation of the indeterminate might be possible as both artist and audience are walking in a landscape of uncertainty outside the normal confines of representation in artistic practice.

Across all of these authors with their slightly varying definitions of the sublime the pervading similarity lies in the phenomenon occurring as a reaction that the individual encounters when faced with the ultimate and our inability to comprehend it. For the art maker this poses somewhat of a conundrum as trying to represent the ultimate in any particular form undermines its infinite nature. Lyotard reminds us of this explaining that "this feeling alludes to something that can't be shown or presented" (1991, p. 89) and reminding us once again that "in the sublime, on the contrary, form plays no role at all" (1994, p. 78). This statement holds a somewhat veiled answer to how one might be able to represent the sublime in an arts practice through a process of allusion rather than direct representation. Lyotard expands upon this as he describes that:

> Kant outlines, rapidly and almost without realising it, another solution to the problem of sublime painting [art]. One cannot, he writes, represent the power of infinite might or absolute magnitude within space and time because they are pure Ideas. But one can at least allude to them, or "evoke" them by means of what he baptises a "negative representation". (1991, p. 85)

While the sublime can only be experienced in an encounter with the 'ultimate', a formless, pure thought that exists only in the mind, these theorists propose that it is possible for a work of art to evoke a sublime experience through its gesture towards that ultimate. This bears a remarkable similarity to the way in which the flawed form of the doll points the imagination of the child towards the doll-soul, another pure thought that was initially untainted by the materiality of the figure through which it was perceived.

3.5 The Puppet Revisited

From the literature surveyed it seemed that the uncanny and sublime worked in close relation and shared much ground regarding ways of seeing an uncertain object. In order to seek more clarity on the ways in which these theories might be applied to puppet-based performance, as well as begin to differentiate their roles in the audience's perception of the performance event, the project turned to material related to the form that hinted at these modes of imaginative engagement. Initially, it was clear that there was a close relationship between the puppet and the doll and that the puppet itself could be easily associated with the feeling of the uncanny. This link was drawn directly by Gross who writes that:

> This link with the dead, with the real of the uncanny, the threshold realm of things unknown or repressed yet half-revealed, can be felt in the most secular of puppets, in the impression of their dead life, the sense of will and power in them despite their being objects to be manipulated by others. (2011, p. 435)

By extension, puppets could share the same space as dolls, as the repressed refugees from our childhood brains who were set loose when we realised the limit of their material representations. Simms links the puppet to this mode of thought in the statement that:

> The uncanniness stirred by a dead but seemingly alive object is that it reminds us of a primitive period in our personal and cultural development where the boundaries between the I and the world were less clearly defined. (1996, p. 673)

This notion echoes Freud's writing of the uncanny experience generated as a result of either "repressed infantile complexes [that] have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed" (1919, p. 17). Given their physical similarities, the same understanding as to how the uncanny can apply to dolls would hold some sway over an individual's experience of a puppet.

It must be noted that although their material bodies may be almost identical the context in which they are engaged is very different; whereas the doll is an unmoving figure animated by the individual's own imagination, the puppet is an entity whose very existence is occupied with movement and the generation of an

illusion of life by individuals other than the audience of the performance. Even Rilke, who wrote of the ultimate hollowness of the doll, accepts that there is a difference:

> A poet might succumb to the domination of the marionette, for the marionette has only imagination. The doll has none and is precisely so much less than a thing as the marionette is more. (1978, p. 123)

While Rilke remembers the doll and her silence, he sees the puppet as an object of unlimited imagination. Unlike the doll whose life is only ever an imagined one, the puppet lives in a world that relies on its physical adoption of animate characteristics. It is more than a stationary figure. It might resemble the doll in its physical form but it has the ability to become something more. This is because the illusion of life that consumes the puppet locates it in the ambiguous position between the living and the dead not only in its imagined life but also in its physical reality; a state that seeks to rupture the understood binaries of life and death. Because of this the puppet can be seen to reside in the powerful position of the limen, a term that identifies the unnameable state signalled by Lyotard's differend.

The term liminality was first theorised by Victor Turner in the field of anthropology and performance in his analysis of ritual practices and refers to the "in-betweenness" of an entity (as cited in Carlson, 1996, p. 16). Occurring in the negative space between two recognised states of being, liminality is a theory that aims to characterise the uncertain positionality of an entity that lies between two understood phenomena but is not quite either. Sitting outside of recognised binaries and ways of thought, the liminal is a powerful space when considering issues of the sublime and transcendence because it is closely associated with new modes of thought and shifting representation. Turner mentions that the limen causes "an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance" (1982, p. 206). A characteristic that is corroborated by Broadhurst who identifies the liminal aspects of contemporary performance as "a certain marginalised space which holds a possibility of potential forms, structures, conjectures and desires" (1999, p. 12). In attempting a tie between this theory and the performance of the puppet, one might see the liminal space offering the potential for the creation of the impossible life of the puppet as it is neither fully alive, nor fully dead.

Although many authors allude to the performance of the puppet as a liminal act, the term has been used directly in only one publication by Kominz and Levenson in a foreword to a collection of essays in which the editors describe "the charm and power of puppets is their existence in a liminal realm between reality and illusion" (1990, p. 12). No previous literature has gone to any lengths to describe just what inhabiting this position means for the puppet or how an artist might exploit it to create aesthetic effects. Blumenthal hints at the power of this position when she explains that:

> Puppetry is, inherently, the most transcendent mode of performance. After all, the transition between life and non-life—birth and death—are the most sacred moments of human experience. Puppets, inanimate objects endowed with vital force, live at that border. (1997, p. 18)

These authors see the ambiguous position between life and death as the strength of the form.

In speaking of the location of the sublime in postmodern art, Lyotard constructed the notion of the differend, which he explained was "to be found at the heart of sublime feeling: at the encounter of two "absolutes" equally "present" to thought" (1994, p. 123). In residing between life and death the puppet comes to demonstrate this concept and confronts an individual with the possibility of the breakdown in the binary between the two. For the rational adult mind this is a frightful possibility that Simms explains as "a failure to respect and understand the nature of death" (1996, p. 673). She continues on to outline the consequences of such an act as "a threat to our continuous efforts to keep death at bay through technology and medicine" (ibid.). It seems then, through reading between the lines of these statements, that the impossible performance of the puppet ultimately confronts the audience with a direct threat through its ability to undermine our preconceptions of life and death and that our souls or bodies are never perfectly our own (Gross, 2011, p. 1754). However, while this thought is linked strongly to the uncanny, Lyotard explains that the "delight, or negative pleasure…that characterises the nature of the sublime arises from the removal of the threat of pain" (1991, p. 84). For the puppet to be able to trigger the transcendental

emotion of the sublime, then, it must embrace this uncanny threat of existential annihilation in such a way that the perceived danger is removed.

The answer to this lies in the performance in which the puppet is contained, as this flexible context affords the artist the ability to construct mechanisms that allow the power of the puppet to be harnessed and channelled into the desired arena. It is possible, through carefully chosen narrative and character construction to make use of the puppet in performance in such a way that emphasises the benevolence of their supernatural existence. It is through actively controlling the double-vision of the audience to allow for an empathetic connection with the performing object that this project aims to fill a gap in knowledge. By doing so, it is expected that the puppet will evoke a state, identified by Lyotard, whereby:

> The sublime is the feeling that something will happen, despite everything, within this threatening void, that something will take "place" and will announce that everything is not over. (1991, p. 84)

In doing so, the puppet will be seen to exploit the notion of the uncanny in its liminal position, to intentionally rupture the oppositional concepts of life and death. But it will do so only so far as to create an environment in which its impossible life is no longer unpresentable and ultimately appeal to the sublime in the revelation of its supreme innocence as a material object that has managed to achieve such ends.

It is a big claim to make that puppets might be capable of such feats, but, although they do not describe this transcendence with the same terminology and theory as this project, several practitioners and observers of puppet-based performance have made note of these effects resulting from such work. Paska, for example, speaks of his figures seeming "to come alive without pretending to be alive, with an effect closer to magic than technology" (1990, p. 41). Likewise, Australian puppeteer Peter Wilson identifies the way in which puppetry "exploits an imaginative space between what is actually shown and what is "seen"…it is from this space between illusion and reality that the form takes its meaning" (2004, p. 1). Similarly in Kleist's early essay on the marionette theatre he locates the divinity of the puppet in its materiality, whereby existence is "purest simultaneously in the human body that has either none at all or else infinite

consciousness—that is, in the puppet or the god" (as cited in Paska 1990, p. 420). In performing this innocence the puppet seeks to repair the betrayal of the doll and engage the adult mind with the same canvas for imagination that was bequeathed upon these less trustworthy figures. Gross speaks of the form drawing on:

> …the intensities of imaginative love that are native to children at play, so ready to transform ordinary objects into something else, to give these objects a surprising life, to allow them to crystallise thoughts otherwise invisible. (2011, p. 2077)

The difference this time is that rather than making a pact with the silent figure of the doll alone, the individual perceives the living operator behind the puppet whose very aim is to use the object to fulfil their desires rather than leaving them facing the meaninglessness of the universe alone.

Hence through its movement, and in the way that it borrows senses, intelligence and emotion from its operator, the puppet moves beyond the doll. Gross captures this when he ponders that the puppet can be seen as "the cousin of the toy that grows beyond the child's mastery giving itself over to an inhuman life, the life of matter" (2011, p. 2207). Jentsch actually notes that it is a characteristic of the uncanny that the mind seeks to rationalise the causes of its effects and that "whether this working through is factual or not is of no great importance, as long as its final result is accepted by the individual" (1906, p. 15). In doing this, the imagination generates a series of provisional understandings about the entity, which, providing that they fit with rational thought, allow for the danger associated with the feeling to pass. Free from the silence of the doll the puppet is therefore able, with the assistance of its operator, to embody that same utterance that Lyotard identified, that *all is not over*, and present itself, an otherwise unpresentable entity, as proof that there is meaning in the universe; that material can be human just as the human can be material.

In seeking to fill the chasm of its own uncanny beginnings, the puppet provides an answer, which although less existentially threatening still bewilders the rational mind. In moving beyond simple uncanny contemplation, the experience of the sublime highlights the "latent violence inherent in the synthesis of imagination"

(Rogozinski, 1993, p. 143). Therefore while the uncanny perception is still fresh in the mind of the audience they are also able to feel an alliance with the puppet, "and its being so bluntly a small piece of the world" (Gross, 2011, p. 2186). They are able to perceive it as a being also trying to make its way in a universe of uncertainty; a position earned by the puppet's promise that even in materiality there can be life. Thus the "sublime reflection can provide…a model for a kind of *interpretive response* to the uncanny other "outside" our conceptual grasp" (Pillow, 2000, p. 2). Through the experience of the sublime and the way that it embraces indeterminate concepts of reason, the mind is eventually able to release itself of inhibitions and succumb to the emotional delight that the puppet can conjure along with the imagination.

This is key, because in the performance of the puppet we are dreaming something up, it is not the object itself that we feel ourselves align with but its "absent double" (Gross, 2011, p. 1429), the illusive puppet-soul. If we pull back from the more metaphysical standpoint that this review has taken for a moment it is possible to examine how this "soul" might actually be generated. For the sake of the child and the "doll-soul" identified by Rilke (1978), it was an act of imagination by the child that appeared to take on its own life while always residing in an individual's mind. When applying this notion of stimulus-guided projection as a means of perception to contemporary performance, we have a clear theory that outlines this effect: intermediality.

Chapple and Kattenbelt state that "intermediality operates in the spaces where strict formal boundaries become blurred" (2006, p. 23) and describe intermediality as a phenomenon whereby meaning resides not within any single entity but the perceived relationship between them. This can be seen both in the interaction between multiple theatrical forms at play on stage, and between these forms and the perception of the audience members viewing the work (Chapple and Kattenbelt, 2006). Thus in this sort of performance audience interpretation and their free-flowing imagination is used in the creation of meaning within a work. Lyotard explains that this is an important element in the evocation of the sublime experience in postmodern art as it aids in the fulfilment of a work's

gesture towards to the ultimate (1991). He states that "reflection on art should no longer bear essentially on the "sender" instance/agency of works, but on the "addressee" instance" (Lyotard, 1991, p. 97), and even goes so far as to include the artist in the same position as the audience as his work ultimately engenders "a feeling which he does not master" (ibid.).

The theory of intermediality can be applied to the performance of the puppet as by its very nature puppet-based theatre is created through the convergence of puppet object, operator, narrative and audience. It cannot exist in any of these elements alone but only in the proverbial whole that is greater than the sum of its parts as the performance of the operator is mediated by the object and in turn perceived by the audience. Wagner, who has written about puppets using this theory, explains that in puppet-based performance:

> The performers enter into the puppet bodies and humanise the animated objects—they interchange their human bodies with their object representations, until the sharp line of divisions contradicts itself. It is in the blurring of the boundary between the living and the dead, between live performance and the mediatised event that intermediality is located. (2006, p. 127)

Gross echoes a similar sentiment when he describes that there is a "kind of complicity between puppeteers, puppet, and viewer which pulls both real and hallucinatory bodies into play" (2011, p. 928). Indeed Wagner, in the statement that "the wooden skeleton [of the puppet] is a hollow structure concealing/revealing nothing" (2006, p. 135) places very little importance on the place of the object itself in this interplay, seeing it only as a canvas used to portray the performance of the operator and receive the projections of the audience. One can see then how the puppet-soul can be easily explained by understanding it as nothing more than the confluence of the imaginations of many individuals made manifest in the illusion of a living object.

Here we hit an interesting conundrum, as for the sake of academic rigor the wiser path to tread would be that of a more scientific approach whereby intermediality could allow for an understanding of the mechanics of the puppet's powerful absent double. In following that road the puppet-soul would surely be dethroned, for the words that were used to write about it would become the concrete

representation that denies it transcendence to the unspeakable ultimate. Lyotard himself warns against this, explaining that "the sublime could only be discussed in a sublime style" (1991, p. 94). For the sake of allowing the power of the form to remain apparent the project must accept the presence of the puppet-soul, apply to the practice that surrounds its occurrence academic scrutiny, but tread lightly when dealing with the manifestation itself. We must return to the material object that houses it and leave consideration of the puppet-soul to our imaginations, because it is enough to know that it lives there. The theory of intermediality, however, is useful for identifying the elements of the performance that are responsible for conjuring the double-vision that characterised the perception of the puppet object by the audience and will be returned to in the data analysis.

Indeed the irony, and the potential for the sublimity of the form comes from the fact that the puppet-soul is sprung from an object that *is* so deeply flawed in comparison to what it evokes. While Blumenthal states that puppets "harness the audience's imagination to extend through…physical barriers" (2005, p. 87), she also acknowledges that "the kick comes from finding ourselves buying into something we know is not remotely what we believe it to be" (1997, p. 17). Far from being a shortcoming of the puppet, these "gargantuan reality gaps combined with technical virtuosity can produce delight that simply explodes disbelief" (Blumenthal, 1997, p. 17). Regardless of just how vast the image of the puppet that the mind creates might be, it will ultimately be faced by the realisation that the entity it has perceived and in turn generated, cannot be made palatable for the purpose of reason. Hence the sublimity of the puppet lies in both its impossible life, and our own incredulity that we were a part of the creation of that life. Lyotard explains this as:

> Even as it deploys an unlimited field of proliferating forms before thought, the imagination remains a slave to its finitude, because each of the forms it invents and adds to the others remains limited by definition. (1994, p. 75)

At some point then, the imagination must recoil, accept its failings, and bask in the pleasure of the impossibility of what it has created.

Aside from the euphoria that it offers when compared to the doll, the puppet is ultimately flawed, just as our imaginations themselves are flawed, because we know deep down that it is not what it pretends to be. It is in this shortcoming that puppet-based theatre holds its power, as the nothingness of the puppet is able to embrace the minds of the audience and use this energy to become something much greater and demonstrate what Lyotard calls "the without limit of the object" (1994, p. 59). It is in this act, the way in which the minimalism, or negative representation, of the object opens the minds of those watching it, that the puppet is able to comment on existence and point towards the notion of the ultimate. It is not, of course, the material object itself responsible for this allusion, but rather the perception and proliferation of formless thought that the puppet evokes. Gross imagines that:

> The poetry of the puppet is a poetry of inadequacy, which feeds more fragile, vexed gestures of substitution, revision, replacement, and making good, more mysterious compensations and gifts of life, gifts of consciousness, which call out to larger worlds. (2011, p. 1438)

In this representational ability the puppet is unique. Similarly to other art forms, we have seen how embodying the differend might allow it to point towards the ultimate and thus trigger the sublime. Unlike works of visual art, the puppet also has the ability to appear animate, to respond to its surroundings, move in space, and undergo emotional transformation. Surely then it is infinitely more human, more familiar, and more powerful?

In puppet-based theatre the sublime bypasses representation in an object because the puppet itself is merely a pretext for a much greater exploration; "the puppet that calls up the angel" (Gross, 2011, p. 2216). If given the right performative context, the puppet-soul has the ability, in plain sight of the audience, to conjure the world of the ultimate, possible only through a material body caught in limbo between perception and reality. That is surely the most powerful object on earth; an angel nothing more than a crude figure of wood. For even once the act is over and for all of the surety of the rational mind as it reclaims its dominance, there is always a little part of us that will remember the being that our hearts told us was real. In the same way that we remember in ugly suppression the soured friendship

of our childhood dolls, we might also remember the puppet-soul who fulfilled the desires that they could never embody.

As the theoretical foundation of the project, this literature review has outlined a number of different theories that combine to provide the necessary background and terminology to allow for the discussion of the process and outcomes of the research. At its heart was the notion of double-vision, and along with it the theories of the uncanny and the sublime, two theories that describe similar and yet slightly different effects caused by an object of uncertain ontology. Building on these three terms, the review also referenced liminal theory as a useful framework for understanding the place of double-vision in Performance Studies. This was further bolstered with mention of intermediality, another term that has its origin in Performance Studies that makes allowance for the convergence of many elements in a performance work and has particular relevance to the performance of the puppet in the way that it includes the mind of the audience in the collaborative act of creation.

3.6 Current Practitioners

In order to offer an insight into how the project sought to apply these theories to the practical component of the study, the following section gives a brief outline of three artists whose work demonstrates approaches to the use of puppetry similar to my own. The three artists discussed are Peter Schumann, the artistic director of the Bread and Puppet Theatre; Julie Taymor, a freelance director and designer who works across both theatre and film; and Handspring Puppet Company, an organisation based in South Africa.

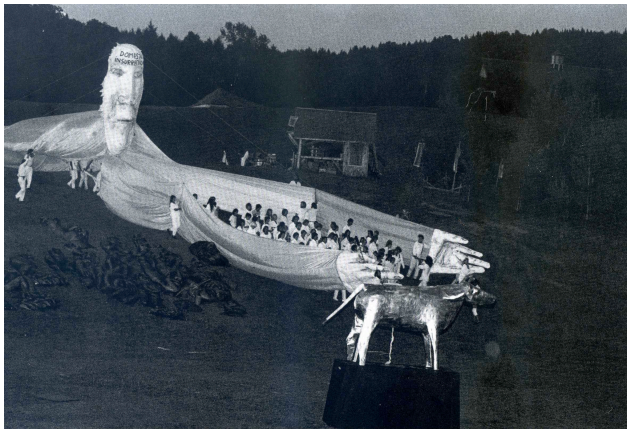


Figure Five: a landscape puppet (Simon & Estrin, 2004, p. 218)

Peter Schumann is the artist behind the internationally recognised Bread and Puppet Theatre. In his work, Schumann explicitly acknowledges the connection between the ritualised and secular importance of his own brand of large scale, festival performance. Bread and Puppet shows are consistently anarchic and politically motivated, using oftentimes crudely fashioned objects to carry potent political and metaphorical messages. In an example of the sort of puppets used by Schumann, Farber recalls the image of "a giant face twenty feet high with fabric arms that extended a hundred feet on each side moving slowly down a hillside with hundreds of white clad individuals moving in the embrace of its outstretched arms" (1993) (see figure five on the previous page). These enormous puppets are not concerned with a mimetic illusion of life, but rather with stark portrayals of various aspects of the human condition, their gargantuan size used to amplify their messages. Gross explains that:

> Schumann's creations are like arbitrary, papier-mache gods who belong to some more impersonal but still human world, their gestures slowed down, at once ritualised and clearly theatrical. Their grim faces are suffused with temporal loss and suffering, drawing our care, our moral and political sympathies, yet indifferent to us. (2011, p. 726)

The uncanny can be seen to reside in Schumann's work in his use of scale and monolithic representation that far surpass any size reachable by a human body. In addition, in Schumann's work we can see reflected gaudy images of human greed and suffering that are uncanny in their gratuitous comment on modern society much like the caricatures in newspapers.

Ultimately, Schumann's work makes use of this uncanny positioning because the sentiment buried in the message of his performances is more concerned with collective consciousness and social activism. Additionally, in Schumann's work the puppet objects do not appear to come to life, but rather stand as symbols that make comment on that life. This is a theatre of politically-charged objects where the refuse of a capitalist society is used to make comment on the machines that created it. Schumann himself recalls that:

> I have seen angels in the drafty streets of NYC who were actually tossed-away wrapping papers, but obviously joyful and superhuman

> in their ability to brighten up masses of dark stinky air between high-rises. (2001, p. 50)

Schumann's work points towards the sublime because the context of the performances that he builds frames the puppets as objects of wonder and not fear. He holds a strong belief in the power of symbolic objects and the meaning that they can bring to us in a modernised world.

The work of Julie Taymor draws similarly on the use of visual spectacle to leverage the power of puppet-based visual theatre (see figure six to the right). In addition to this, however, she makes use of her own eclectic style that blends this spectacle with carefully manipulated moments of illusion. Hence the evocation of the uncanny in her work comes not just from the size and theatricality of her performances but also from the contradiction of life in inanimate material previously discussed in this review. Indeed one of Taymor's close collaborators, her puppet maker Michael Curry, explains that there is "a wonderful contradiction created…from an inanimate object, made to be magically animate" (as cited in Lorenzen, 2002, p. 25). Taymor's work crosses many cultural boundaries as:



Figure Six: a moment of spectacle in Taymor's *The Lion King* (Blumenthal, 2007, p. 224)

> She draws on an enormous pool of forms, genres, traditions. She grasps the centre of each form, how it works in its home context and how it might resonate somewhere else … This wild cross-pollinating spans cultures. (Blumenthal, 2007, p. 7).

Through such deterritorialised practice Taymor's work is iconic of the borrowing and genre bending of contemporary puppet performance and through such commercially successful works as *The Lion King* (1997a) she is largely responsible for a resurgence of the form in popular theatre.

What is most notable about her performances, however, is the way in which she highlights the uncanny nature of the puppets and visual elements through a stripping back of the complexities of the performance to expose even the most outlandish of puppets as forms of intimately human expression (see figure seven on the right). Her work therefore becomes accessible to both adults and children alike, as it doesn't require a direct suspension of disbelief but it able to generate a unique brand of theatrical magic without concealing the source of the illusion. Woods describes this as:



Figure Seven: giraffes (Blumenthal, 2007, p. 221)

> The visible manipulation of the elements, revealing the effort needed to create the illusion of movement … She makes no effort to hide the mechanics … nor … does she utilise conventions of perceiving the puppeteer as invisible. Instead her most recent work insists on keeping the source of the magic apparent. (2004, p. 236)

By allowing an audience to see the way in which the illusion on stage is created, Taymor removes the threat of the potentially uncanny objects by exposing the pretence behind them. Rather than this choice undermining the power of her work, through cleverly constructed context and narrative the reverse is true as the audience falls for the illusion that has already been explained for them, and free from existential danger is able to indulge in the fantasy being created.



Figure Eight: Zazu puppet and operator (Taymor, 1997b, p. 186)

In her work Taymor acknowledges the performance of the operator of the puppet as integral to the generation of the illusion and makes no attempt to cloak them from the audience but rather

draws on their presence to amplify the meaning of the work. Curry explains that in this sort of performance there are "two performers: the puppet and the puppeteer" (as cited in Lampert-Greaux, 2005, p. 47) and acknowledges that the imagined character of the puppet lives somewhere between the two (as in figure eight on the previous page). Taymor explicitly attributes the intense emotional reactions that audiences have to her work to this duality. In an interview with Richard Schechner she explained that:

> Sure, I could hide those people in a costume with stilts. But then no one would feel anything. The fact that as a spectator you are very aware of the human being with the things strapped on, and you see the straps linking the actor to the stilts, that there's no attempt to mask the stilts and make them animal-like shapes—that's why people cry. (as cited in Schechner, 1999, p. 41)

By exposing the source of the theatrical magic Taymor is able to create a performative context that blends the intelligence of her audience with their desire to believe in the fiction occurring on the stage.

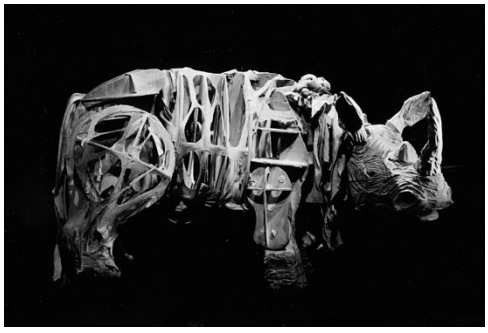


Figure Nine: the rhinoceros (Handspring Puppet Company, 2002)

Unlike the two other artists discussed, Handspring Puppet Company is less concerned with the visual spectacle of their work and places a stronger emphasis on the generation of life-like illusion within their puppets. Understandably, given what we know about the effects of the uncanny on the seemingly living puppet object, this also places them in the most interesting position regarding the imaginative experience of the audience. Similarly to the work of Taymor, the company embrace the uncanny nature of their puppets through keeping the operators visible. Interestingly, they also employ a strong visual aesthetic that avoids realistic imitation of the visual appearance of their characters.

The company make regular use of roughly carved wood, cane and gauze to create puppets that echo the physiology of the characters they are designed to portray (figure nine above). In describing the creation of the illusion around the puppet of a young horse the company explains that their work is:

> Poor theatre, which means that it's not about illusion, you don't have to believe in the illusion quite so much. You are aware of how it's made, so you are aware that they are sticks of wood, but the sticks of wood become a foal to you. (as cited in Bickerstaff and Grabsky, 2009)



Figure Ten: the horse (National Theatre, 2010, p. 34)

The work of Handspring has, in the last five years, received widespread public acclaim for their contribution to *War Horse* (2009) by the National Theatre in the United Kingdom. The central puppets in this production were life-sized horses capable of realistic movement and carrying human riders (pictured in figure ten to the left). Characteristic of the company's work these puppets were anatomically suggestive but left room for the creation of the object's life-force apart from physical appearance. Eide describes that:

> Each horse was built on a wooden framework with translucent fabric skin—clearly a puppet. But it was the way that the horses moved that astounded the audience and gave the animals life and personality. (2008, p. 15)

By avoiding direct visual mimesis in the creation of their puppets the company left room for the physical movement in the performance of the puppet to contribute to the generation of startlingly life-like characters.

Similarly to Taymor, the work of Handspring is about inviting audiences to contribute to the creation of the puppet characters in their performances. One of the lead puppeteers in the original production of *War Horse* (2009) describes this phenomenon by explaining that:

> When you come out with something that's shaped from wood, you are implying to the audience, "I'm going to play a game with you, do you want to play back?" And if they stay and watch then they say that they are playing back, they are agreeing to play this game. It's like playing with toys, and I think it invites adults to go, wow, I can be open to this, it's like I'm a child again. I think that's why they have such strong emotional reactions to the show. (as cited in Bickerstaff & Grabsky, 2009)

In the work of Handspring, the uncanny effects of the performing puppet are pushed towards the potential for sublime contemplation by drawing on the imaginative capacity of the audience in the creation of the puppet character. In allowing for this level of contribution on the part of the audience these artists are effectively masking the performance of the puppet object with the projection of the desire generated by the audience. Through the driving narrative of the work this begins as a simple process of empathy that becomes a strong connection, similar to the child and their play with the doll. This inanimate is driven with the imaginative desires of not just one individual but the collective whole of the audience, artists and performers. Hence what is created, after the moment has passed and the horse is once again wooden, might seem impossible; a state that if properly engineered could cause the rational mind to fold back on itself in search of an explanation of the impossible life that had been perceived. This is where the possibility for the sublime lies, in the emotional delight that mere wood was able to summon the ultimate.

4.0 PREPARATORY CREATIVE PRACTICE CYCLES



Figure Eleven: Old Albert rushes to the door of his shop
(Dead Puppet Society, 2011)

As a practice-led project engineered through the use of action research cycles, the study collected and analysed data from two preparatory works aimed to generate the knowledge and hone the practice needed to create the final assessable outcome. Taking place once in both the first and second year of the project, each iteration of practice served as an expression of my growing theoretical understandings and worked to steer and refine the focus of the study by repeatedly testing outcomes and assumptions in a practical creative context. In order to offer an insight into the path along which the project travelled and how the final work was prepared, this chapter offers a description of each of these preparatory creative studies as well as a summary of the data collected in order to present a series of guidelines for the evocation of the sublime in puppet-based theatre that was implemented in the creation of the final work.

4.1 *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*

As the practical component of the first action cycle, *The Timely Death of Victor Blott* served as a pilot study for the project. The work was developed by a small ensemble of performers and designers in the first few months of 2010 and had a season as a part of Metro Arts' Independents (Brisbane) in May of the same year. With this iteration of practice it was my intention to trial the research questions against a work that was built based on instinct and personal choice rather than theoretical knowledge. In this way it was intended to serve as a base-line work that was representative of my practice and could be used to gather the first round of data and spark future experimentation. At this point in time I intended to use the work to build upon a working method for puppet illusion that I had constructed the previous year as a tool for the directors of puppet theatre to ensure a high level of reality in the movement and thought processes of their puppet actors. During the creation and season of this show the little puppet boy who lent his name to the title came to ask for so much more; not a pragmatic examination of the elements of illusion, but a deep exploration of the adult imagination and just how effectively a fragile little puppet could completely

disarm rational logic. There is a full recording of the production available on Disc One in the appendices.

Synopsis:

The Timely Death of Victor Blott, was the story of a young boy, played by a half-size Bunraku style puppet, who was born without a heartbeat (pictured in figure twelve below). Sired by a poor couple living in a mythical, Victorian-esque town driven by gears and steam, at birth the boy's difference seemed sure to end his short life. Holding him close, for what ought to have been his final breaths, his bereft mother whispered into his ear that his difference made him magic and she would love him forever with a pulse or without. And so little Victor decided to live on in spite of his silent ticker. The show was set almost entirely in the Blott's underground laundry where Victor and his mother cleaned the wealthy neighbour's clothes beneath a firmament of fireflies that Victor constantly tried to catch. The narrative began when Victor was in his tenth year. Tired of a son who was nothing but a drain on his bank account, Victor's entomologist father decided to allow a local doctor, who had heard word of this strange child, to see if he could discover how the boy worked and make them both their fortunes.



Figure Twelve - Victor Blott (Dead Puppet Society, 2010)

To begin things seemed safe enough, Victor was overjoyed to have a new friend, but before long the experiments turned sour and the young boy was asphyxiated and blood-let. Fueled ever onwards by their greed, the two men planned one final

experiment: to cut the boy open and look straight at his heart. Weakened from abuse and tied to a chair, it seemed certain that Victor was about to be robbed of the miraculous life that he was gifted. Just seconds before the scalpel was to strike home the entire room began to throb and the young boy, caught between this world and the next was thrust into the air and suspended as though in water; lost in a moment of exultant joy floating with the fireflies (pictured below in figure thirteen). Victor's mother, confronted with the manifestation of her son's magic realised that there was no way that he could ever live a life of love and wonder in their cruel world. She called to him: "Victor, isn't it better to die with magic, than to live with none?" With that the young boy looked at her, his father, the slimy doctor, and after naught but a moment's pause fell to the ground. In the darkness, his magic seemingly extinguished, the boy's rattling breath could be heard growing fainter. At the moment that it stopped, with time only for the first of his mother's sobs to be heard, the room became ablaze with fireflies streaming up and out of the laundry like golden steam as though taking Victor's soul to the next life. The room was left dark, damp and barren, without any magic, or light.



Figure Thirteen: Victor prepares to die (Dead Puppet Society, 2010)

At the production's core, *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*, was conceived to try and explain away as many of the alienating aspects of the puppet as possible through

the story and design. In effect, it tried to highlight the uncanny life of the puppet in such a way that invited the audience to enjoy the illusion they were experiencing. The result was that it became a work with a dual meaning; both the story of an impossible, magic boy without a heartbeat, and that of a puppet brought magically to life. Placed in a position where the puppet was neither a threat nor a nuisance, it was not shunned by the audience as sub-human, but embraced, just like the little boy in the show, as an uncertain object of incredible potential. I had aimed to achieve this through using the dramatic context to explain why Victor needed to be played by a puppet; he had no heartbeat, he needed to fly, he needed to suffocate and to bleed, and ultimately, he needed to actually die. In performing these actions the puppet did not seem grotesque but initially very much human, and ultimately a lot more than that. Using a puppet to play the human central character of the work whose existence was so puppet-like placed the audience into an intensely ambiguous position as to how to read the character.

Rather than alienating the audience, the piece embraced the uncanny effects of the puppet by placing it in a deeply gothic world where such a strange occurrence might seem less out of place. Furthermore, by comparison to outlandish shadow play and the monstrous caricatures of the doctor and his father, Victor seemed the most balanced, the most human, and the easiest to identify with. One audience member explained that "Victor captures the audience with his looks, his movements, his joy. He feels so alive" (Audience Survey 1, 2010). Another spoke of the effects of accepting the puppet resulting in "an intense feeling of weightedness, at the same time as being completely free to experience the surreal world that he was travelling in" (ibid.). By setting the show in a gothic world the effects of the uncanny were given context and the audience members were able to focus on their empathy with the character, and then later in the experience, the impossibility of their connection with him.

As with the work of Taymor and Handspring, the work made no effort to conceal the stage trickery that was being used to bring Victor to life. One audience member commented on this and remarked that "it was on the whole full of life. Interestingly enough the fact that it is quite clearly inanimate helps with this"

(Audience Survey 1, 2010). Whether they were conscious of it or not this individual's comment signals the way that the transparency of the illusion allowed it to bypass the rational thought processes that would otherwise interrogate it. Or in other words because the illusion was constructed in full view of the audience they found no reason to distrust the puppet object and were able to indulge in the character that it was evoking.

Actively keeping the operators visible, one of the pragmatic elements that was necessary to achieve this transparency, had an unexpected effect that strengthened the metaphysical thematic of the work. Not content to simply understand the functional roles of the puppeteers, the imaginations of the audience registered any number of deeply personal readings as to what the three women might represent for Victor. One recorded that "they added to the part as Victor had a magical quality to him. They felt like spirits or guardian angels" (Audience Survey 1, 2010). This sentiment was echoed repeatedly with statements like "I was aware of them as like a spirit surrounding Victor. Like guardians" (ibid.), and "they were a combination of Victor's spirit and the narrator's presence" (ibid.). Another respondent commented that "they became Victor's animas, [his] life force" (ibid.). At the end of the work, in order to signal the death of the character the three puppeteers, who had had constant contact with the puppet over the course of the show, withdrew their hands with a sharp intake of breath and slowly left the space. One audience member observed that "it seemed as though they were one with each other, and one with the puppet. Even as they exited it felt as though Victor's spirit were leaving the stage" (ibid.).

These wonderfully perceptive responses from the audience that came about as a result of the purely pragmatic choice to keep the operators visible was to become one of the major turning points in the first year of the project as it offered insight into just how much work the audience's imaginations were doing in their reception of the performance of the puppet. Although this was most obvious in the perceptions of the operators, who, while given a distinct choreography and heightened performance style were attributed with metaphysical meaning by the audience, there was also a noticeable contribution on the part of the audience to

the puppet character itself. One noted of Victor that "in moments of rest he looked the way that I feel" (Audience Survey 1, 2010), displaying a developed empathy with the imagined thought process of the puppet. Further to this, another stated that "he represented the pure innocence and trust of all children – particularly for me – my own" (ibid.). These statements suggest that audience members engaging with the puppet were doing so through adding to the physical illusion being presented to them with their own thoughts and desires, in effect contributing to the puppet character through their own projections.

The ability of the puppet to receive the projections of the audience was noted by one of the puppeteers, when she explained that Victor "just seems like a vessel for potentiality, like there's no life or death in there. He's just kind of like a font for energy to pass through" (Personal Interview A, 2010). One of the audience members noted a similar phenomenon in mentioning "the emotion channeled around him" (Audience Survey 1, 2010). Another particularly perceptive audience member even made mention of the fact that the audience were coaxed into contributing to the puppet character explaining that "with the puppet you accept that it will be flawed and so allow your imagination to explore the realistic possibilities" (ibid.). The performance of the puppet and the collaboration of the audience in the creation of character was evidence of a significant imaginative effort on their part, a state of perception that one of the actors explained with "we do not really trust that the imagination is still there and that adults can reconnect with…and I think this show did this for people" (Personal Interview B, 2010). It was through this imaginative engagement and the way that the minds of the audience were able to subconsciously contribute to the illusion that the reality of the puppet seemed to exceed its bounds; a state that seemed to allow the space for the evocation of the sublime in the uncanny life of the puppet.

This work placed the audience into a unique position as the context of the performance allowed them to empathise with the puppet character and through this empathy the illusion of the puppet's life was strengthened. This set up a positive feedback loop whereby each new moment increased empathy with the puppet that lead to further emotional projection that increased empathy and so

on. This allowed for the puppet to seemingly take on a life of its own, as though the child playing with her doll suddenly realised the object actually was moving of its own volition and all of her desires had been made manifest. In this way, the longer the audience engaged with the performance of the puppet, the more that the character they were building became a part of them. There were several comments from both the audience and within the creative team that identified the effects of this feedback loop, some of which begin to display characteristics of sublime experience.

One of the ways that this experience was demonstrated was through comments recorded by the audience that mentioned a clear contradiction in their perception of the puppet, particularly in hindsight once the show was over and they began to rationalise what they saw. One recalled feeling "distressed and confused by my desire to intervene in the piece to protect something that was not real" (Audience Survey 1, 2010), a comment that suggested they were unaware of how much effort their own imagination was expending in the creation of the illusion. Another remarked that "I had to keep reminding myself that Victor was a puppet" (ibid.), suggesting that they were trying to keep their imagination in check. Even one of the operators of the puppet recalled a similar experience explaining that during the show she would repeatedly tell herself ""it is just a puppet, it is just a puppet" because I was so scared to get involved with it, to start crying or anything" (Personal Interview C, 2010). These responses demonstrate that throughout the performance the puppet object became a site of significant conflict between perception and reality. The audience members knew what they were feeling, that they had just had an encounter with a magic child, but they also knew that this child was nothing more than a wooden puppet. This placed them in a position of clear cognitive contradiction and presented them with a dilemma, to believe the truth of the object, the child that they had perceived, or the feelings that they'd experienced; or maybe all three truths?

Presented in this way the puppet became a liminal object, not quite dead, not quite living. Sitting between these two binaries it became a site of metaphysical confusion and therefore one of potentiality; a material shell that came to house the

elusive puppet-soul. Thus, through its motions, the building of an illusion and the belief building of the audience, it was able to steer itself towards the ultimate. One audience member eloquently expressed that "Victor was a little boy – but more like the notion of a boy, more all encompassing and therefore powerful" (Audience Survey 1, 2010). The puppet is not a boy. It is representative of a boy, a fragment of the totality of a boy, a vessel that could house an infinite number of possibilities as to what that concept might mean. The character was not then limited to the object but conjured through it. In this position, even once rationalised and understood, the puppet object was not able to present itself as a concept in any way equal to the totality of the puppet-soul that had been created through the collaboration of all elements of the performance. This was a clear indeterminate concept of reason as the imagination failed in its efforts to explain what it knew to be true in any fashion that seemed logical or acceptable to the adult mind.

If an audience member had come this far, invested in the puppet and contributed to their unique version of its soul, it would then have become possible when faced with the sheer impossibility of their experience, to accept the rational failings of their mind in regards to the event and indulge in the power of that feeling; to embrace the sublime. An online blog about the performance captured this state when it proclaimed that the show was:

> A story that takes you on a journey from bewilderment to shattering realisation, technically sound and impressive lighting, audio and visual effects, depths of emotion and something special that draws you out above your own imagination. That something special is the puppetry. I have never left the theatre in awe of how emotionally invested I could be in the life and experiences of the main character in a play only to realise that very character was not played by an actor nor even a human being but an inanimate puppet. (Gilmore, 2010)

This blogger's experience of being drawn *out above her own imagination*, surely speaks of an encounter with something more than the physical reality of the puppet, and gestures, just as the object did in the performance, to the fragile other that was conjured.

As the pilot study for the project, *The Timely Death of Victor Blott* offered a wealth of data suggestive of the sublime experience evoked through the uncanny puppet,

but more importantly, offered several focus points to be tested in the next iteration of the study as to how this experience might be amplified. Specifically, these areas of future enquiry fell around the use of a fantastical setting and the thematic justification for the use of the puppet to enhance the effects of the uncanny; to break through the assumptions of the audience's minds by ensuring visibility of the mechanics of the puppet and the operators' relationship with it; to endeavor to build an aspect of meta-theatrical retrospect into the performance event to allow consideration of the reality of the object within the performance itself; to carefully choose the key thematics of the work to engage the imaginations of the audience; and finally, to construct the performance in a manner that both allowed and encouraged the collaboration of the audience in the creation of the puppet character, and therefore, puppet-soul. The individual importance of these elements was to be tested in the next action research cycle and the creation of the second performance work, *The Harbinger*.

4.2 *The Harbinger*

Building on the beginning understandings of the first cycle of creative development, *The Harbinger* (2011) was created in the second year of the project as the focus of the second major action research cycle and was performed as a part of La Boite Theatre Company's Indie program. In order to provide a counterpoint for the insights generated during the first cycle, *The Harbinger* was created using a very different artistic process that made alternative creative choices regarding the positioning and context of the puppet. This second work set out to remove or alter these elements so that the effects on the uncanny nature of the puppet and potential sublime experience could be examined. In particular, the work was made so as to preserve the fantastical setting but not justify why the puppet was being used as a performer. It was to maintain the same level of transparency in the visible operation of the puppet but not draw attention at any point to the inanimacy of the object or offer a chance for retrospect within the performance context. Most importantly, however, in reaction to the level of imaginative engagement observed in the first cycle, it was intended to remain largely open in

terms of meaning through the use of primarily visual forms of storytelling to see whether this would increase the level of audience projection or damage the level of investment in the puppet.

Synopsis:



Figure Fourteen: the old man (Dead Puppet Society, 2011)

The Harbinger followed the story of an elderly old man who lived alone in his bookshop in the aftermath of a civil war that destroyed his city (pictured in figure fourteen to the right). The old man seemed content to live out his final days locked safely away with enough tins of dog food to eat, until early in the story a little orphan girl broke into his bookshop, scared of the violence outside in the streets, and refused to leave. Initially the old man met her with distrust but quickly the pair formed a strong partnership; he provided her with warmth and shelter while she was able to bring the old man nicer food like bread and apples. Before long the old man began to tell her stories of his past, of his beloved wife who died in childbirth and who left him with visions of a savior who she promised would come and deliver the city from its turmoil. The little girl became deeply involved in the old man's prophecy, reading from a large ledger about the rise of a great captain seeking to bring the world back to peace. She found the hope so addictive that she decided to nail the pages from the book to lampposts throughout the city so that all might read. As she had expected, the citizens also found hope in the story and the mood in the streets changed.

Everything seemed sure to mend until the old man read the girl one final chapter and she recognised the legendary captain from the story as the same man who killed her parents, the leader of the rebel army who had started the civil war in the first place. Disgusted at her misplaced faith the little girl pleaded with the old man and told him what she knew to be true but he would not hear any word against those of his wife that promised a savior and banished the little girl from the house. Alone once more in the streets the little girl began to destroy the pages from the book, but citizens who had fallen for the allure of the story would not stand to see it defamed and she was hung by her neck from a lamppost for her blasphemy. Alone once more, the old man wanted to apologise to the girl and went outside to find her. Confronted by her limp body hanging before a blood red sunset and recognising the moment from his wife's story, he realised that he had let his true savior, in the form of his young friend who had brought joy back into his life, pass him by. In the final moments of the piece the set began to fall apart to represent the undoing of the old man's world leaving the audience in darkness.

Rather than using explicit personal narrative and dialogue like *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*, *The Harbinger* was a silent play in which no character spoke leaving the reading of the work to the audience and their understanding of the characters' body language and the projection that was used to fill in necessary backstory. In addition the thematics of the show moved from the private and personal struggles found in *The Timely Death of Victor Blott* and were focused more on the political. As a result of these things, coupled with the sheer size of the puppet, *The Harbinger* presented audiences with a work that was much harder to access and that didn't offer as much of a chance to emotionally engage with the puppets. Interviews with members of the audience identified the way in which this different positioning of the puppet character initially resulted in feelings of disgust and fear. One explained that "it scared me. There is just something about puppets that freaks me out" (Personal Interview D, 2011) a sentiment that was not expressed once in relation to the comparably gently character of Victor. This same respondent spoke about her perception of the puppet in such a way that echoes

the uncanny recalling that "it was quite real and scary that it was not actually real. That was the scary part" (ibid.). She even went so far as to identify that she saw this response as a hangover "from when I was younger" (ibid.). The uncanny can therefore be seen to function clearly in the performance of this puppet in the fear associated with the seemingly animate life of the material object, and a link with this emotion and more developmental stages of thought.

Responses across the board suggested that through this uncanny reading of the puppet, even in a place of loose context and positioned as a less likeable character, they were still able to build belief. One explained that "maybe at the start I could have questioned the fact that he was so big and obviously not a real person but I think that was totally lost throughout as you saw his emotions" (Personal Interview D, 2011), displaying a certain ability to use the uncanny nature of the puppet in the development of empathy for the character that the object housed. Audience members engaged via survey expressed a very similar process with responses such as "I was a bit wary when I first found out [that the character was a puppet] but I enjoyed it" (Audience Survey 2, 2011), "at the start I was skeptical but it grew on me" (ibid.), and "after the initial shock of it being a puppet he became real to me" (ibid.). For some this process was much quicker, as one recalled "from the moment I walked in and saw him breathing it started my belief of his life, as the performance went on it just grew" (ibid.). Some even made no mention of having difficulty engaging with the object recording that "I really believed that it was not a puppet but a person" (ibid.), and "I didn't see it as a puppet" (ibid.). Regardless of the length of the process undertaken by the audience to move past the physical contradiction of the puppet and into belief in the character, it is important that even in narrative circumstances that undermined their ability to empathise this transition still took place.

As with the work of Taymor and Handspring, the old man puppet was operated by three puppeteers in full view of the audience allowing the performances of these operators to affect the way that the audience viewed the object. It seems that through an innate trust of this visible human presence, members of the audience could be coaxed into belief in the puppet as an expression of the movements of the

human performers, a position that allowed their imaginations to begin making something more of the puppet character and building on the uncanny duality of the object. One of the interviewees recalled that "for the first little bit I was watching how they did it…and then…there was something more interesting about watching this puppet move" (Personal Interview D, 2011). Through this process she was able to make peace with the illusion and explained that she "just liked seeing this totally huge thing being alive" (ibid.). Through its manipulation by a visible human presence the giant puppet underwent a development that made it seem less threatening. An almost identical response from a second interviewee charted the same process in the description that:

> When I was watching in the beginning I was like, ok, I can see how he works and going oh they are nice little tricks, and then all of a sudden when the girl came in that's when it started, when he started reacting. That's when I stopped looking for the tricks and just started believing in them. (Personal Interview E, 2011)

Although it was given very little aid by the narrative and stripped of the expressive means of speech, the uncanny contradiction of the puppet was still generated through the visibility of its operators, a state in which "it seemed so real but pretend at the same time" (Audience Survey 2, 2011).

The puppet may have been a confusing contradiction in itself due to its size and appearance but through the work of the puppeteers the audience found a means to empathise with this uncanny old man. Further to this, even without being given any specific role in the drama, members of the audience began to distance the puppeteers from the old man and saw them each as different entities. One of the interviewees recalled being aware that "they were aiding him but they were not him" (Personal Interview D, 2011) demonstrating the way in which her imagination was able to build on the illusion of the puppet to a point where he appeared to move under his own volition. She explained this in more detail remembering that:

> You can't get away from the fact that they were there but after a while I stopped seeing them as the people who were making him come alive and started seeing them as just the people helping him to be. (ibid.)

Even in the context of a work that didn't seek to actively create an emotionally realistic representation of the character this individual was able to contribute to the illusion and create the appearance of the autonomy of the puppet object.

Indeed throughout the creation of this performance I had aimed to identify this contribution on the part of the audience and the way that their imaginations, either subconsciously or otherwise, were responsible for creating a large part of the illusion for themselves. Further, through the media I chose to tell the story, and the removal of all spoken text, I sought to test how far this openness could be stretched before the gaps in the work became too large for the audience to fill and their perception of the puppet was damaged. Primarily, this was done through the fragmentation of the storytelling and by confronting the audience with not just the dramatic moment before them, but a series of parallel realities created using projection and miniature puppetry behind a scrim cloth. What became apparent was that although they were still able to empathise with and build upon the puppet character, the disruption of events and removal of more personalised forms of communication meant that the audience was asked to do too much work and their engagement ultimately faltered. The same interviewee who had demonstrated such devotion to the illusion of the puppet also reported that "when I watched some of the AV … that took me out of the magic of the world a bit. It took me out. And I think when that happened, I thought, oh, ok, so he mustn't be real either" (Personal Interview D, 2011). Another interviewee gave an insight into the effects of this openness recalling that:

> The fact that the puppet didn't talk, there was no dialogue, there was only music, it was immediately fragmented with projection and other types of delivery [that] made it a very overwhelming cognitive experience. The simultaneity made it very difficult to process everything and to be able to get into that story and empathise with those characters. (Personal Interview F, 2011).

While the audiences were able to build upon the openness of the puppet object itself in order to create their own version of the illusion and resulting character, the same could not be said for the narrative and delivery of the work. The degree of investment in the character was therefore not increased by its positioning in an open narrative but rather somewhat undermined by the lack of constraint and

targeted empathy that a more traditional structure would have offered to the object.

Given the cognitive turmoil in which the piece placed the audience in their understanding of the story, the construction of the illusion of the puppet character must have been reliant on something other than the context and narrative of the work that was found to have been somewhat lacking. Similarly to *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*, several audience responses attributed the personification of the puppet object to similarities that the individual audience members had experienced in the real world aside from the theatrical context that the puppet performed within. There were several mentions of the old man reminding interviewees of grandparents (Personal Interview E, 2011; Personal Interview F, 2011) but one in particular explained that "I work in a nursing home and it reminded me of some of the old people at the nursing home just because he was old and he seemed cranky and hurt" (Personal Interview D, 2011). Another was less specific but made note that "there was definitely something subconscious going on" in the construction of the puppet character (Personal Interview E, 2011). In a similar vein, the final interviewee gave a near word-perfect description of how he felt he perceived the illusion giving the opinion that:

> I think the reason that we as an audience were able to construct that as an old man was because we, within those physical movements, were able to transplant our own experiences and our own connections within the real world onto that puppet. So by transposing those kinds of intertextual elements we kind of create and putting them onto the puppet it kind of imbues them with life I suppose. (Personal Interview F, 2011)

Regardless then of the shortcomings of the piece, the audience was able to construct their own belief in the puppet character based on personal experience. A process that comes about because "you do not want to see it as a wooden thing, you want it to be a character" (ibid.) which means that the puppet character is "different in everybody's heads" (Personal Interview E, 2011).

Even in the face of an ambiguous narrative and a physically confronting puppet object, through its movement alone the audience was able to invest in the puppet character through the visible puppeteers and their own experiences to create a

version of a puppet-soul. While this addresses the way in which the work drew on the uncanny effects of the puppet it leaves the question of the presence of the sublime relatively unanswered. However, as with the puppet character in *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*, several responses from the interviewees identified a degree of further cognitive dissonance, particularly in their perception of the puppet character that could suggest the presence of the sublime. This was reflected in responses such as "you get so enwrapped in this old man, and you feel for him and then the next second, you are like wait a second, he's not even a real thing, why am I…?" (Personal Interview D, 2011); and "it is really hard to explain, just, knowing that he's not real but at the same time he feels so real" (Personal Interview E, 2011). Another audience member explained in an interview that you "realise that he's not actually real but still feel so sad for him because this happened to him … and it obviously hadn't happened to him, but I was still feeling it!" (Personal Interview D, 2011). It is clear that the audience members struggled with these concurrent and yet contradictory thoughts and that there was confusion over the empathy that they felt for the object, a state that holds the potential to lead to the all consuming cognitive failings of the sublime.

Further to this, two of the audience members interviewed also spoke of this conflict of imagination and reason leading to overwhelming emotional experiences. The first explained that "I think I might have had moments of being overwhelmed because I knew that it was not real but [was wondering] why was I feeling so connected to this thing?" (Personal Interview D, 2011), and the second recalled feeling "a lot of tension in my emotions…like I wanted to go and lie down in the corner and cry for a bit" (Personal Interview E, 2011). It can be seen then that there was a degree of sublimity in the performance of the puppet itself in the way that it caused an intense contradiction between its rational reality and imaginative possibilities, but the same could be said of any performing puppet. A more telling analysis of the way that the sublime functioned in the work lies in trying to identify the ultimate notion that the puppet character pointed towards and the way that it might have functioned as a transcendental element in an otherwise human event.

Of all of the data collected, only one of the interviewees made any comment that in any way suggested the universality of the puppet and how it evoked something larger. She spoke of the puppet and the vague perfection to be found in the unrepeatable recalling that:

> He's not real and that kind of makes it perfect. That perfect moment where you know you can't ever repeat anything again. It is like he would be just perfect as he is. (Personal Interview E, 2011)

The same individual also made comment that every time she thought of the puppet she thought "there's no way this thing is wood and rubber, there's got to be something more there" (ibid.). While these comments illustrate some degree of transcendence on the part of the object, it seems as though the overall performance event fell a long way short of the seemingly all-consuming cathartic reaction caused by the easily relatable character of Victor. Even with the thematics of life, death, age and the ultimate power of passing time, it doesn't seem that audiences were able to embrace this puppet as a vessel that could become a plastic symbol for these infinite concepts and hence the overall dramatic power of the puppet and the piece as a whole could never move beyond uncanny contemplation.

Given that the data collected from this iteration suggested that the puppet character, even given his extraordinary size, could still be related to and serve as a canvas for imaginative projections, the reason for this shortcoming and the limited potential for the sublime transcendence of the object must have related to the ambiguous context and narrative of the work. Because of the fragmented delivery of the work the audience were not put into a position where they could lose their puppet-soul in the metaphysical thematics of the work ultimately meaning that there could be no moment of narrative catharsis that would serve as a catalyst for their cognitive rupture. Therefore even though the puppet could be initially perceived similarly to that from the first research cycle, there was no clear union between the apparent magic of the puppet and the magic of the story that could have allowed the imaginations of the audience to run away from them.

The data suggested that this may have been the case because the work never let the audience relax, which robbed their imaginations of the opportunity to

subconsciously create a personal version of the character and then feel the emotional pull of their empathy as the character was pushed to and fro in the narrative before them. Without this congruence between the form and the content the experience was less roller-coaster and more traffic jam as audiences desperately tried to work out what was happening to the character that they felt they owned. The lack of a clear storyline and the inability of the work to coax empathy from the audience hamstrung the emotional feedback loop in which the rational reality and imaginative perception of the puppet character can amplify each other to a point of emotional catharsis where the act reveals the impossibility of itself. It is in this moment of emotional release caused by the narrative that investment in the illusion can be at its highest point and simultaneously undermined. Residing in a place of heightened emotion as a seemingly living contradiction the object can evoke the ultimate that literally tears our understanding to shreds as the puppet-soul explodes from the inanimate figure that can no longer contain it and we are left flawed by a product of the imagination that is not deductible by reason. Falling short of this ultimate goal of the project, *The Harbinger*, served as a vital experiment into the effect of ambiguity in the manipulation of the audience's imagination through narrative.

4.3 Findings arising from creative practice cycles one and two

By using these two creative practice cycles as testing grounds for the practical components of the project it was possible to distill a series of eight key elements that could be implemented in the creation of the final work to test their efficacy as guidelines for the evocation of the sublime in puppet-based performance. Reflecting the process undertaken by the audience, these eight elements, which formed a summary of the insights gained through the first two practice cycles, were broken into two groups of four, each of which was designed to take the audience to a deeper level of engagement. The first of these sets was geared at the generation of a holistic illusion of life and character in the puppet object that would generate an uncanny reading. In order to achieve this it was seen as necessary to:

1. *Allow for the world of the show to be one of magic and fantasy*
2. *Ensure there is quick and clear reasoning for the use of the puppet embedded in the narrative and context*
3. *Keep the source of the illusion clear and give no cause for distrust*
4. *Enrol the puppeteers in the world to distance them from the puppet*

If each of these steps were successfully implemented then it was hypothesised that the puppet object should move beyond its simple inanimate state and become, in the eyes of the audience, an independent entity moving and thinking by its own free will.

In order to take this apparently live object to a state where it offered the potential to generate a sublime experience there were four more elements that were seen as necessary. In order to evoke the sublime through the puppet, it was suggested that the work:

1. *Engage the imaginative co-operation of the audience through a clear narrative so that they begin to self perpetuate the illusion/character*
2. *Embrace the fiction surrounding the puppet object and stretch the empathy of the audience*
3. *Actively steer the narrative towards the metaphysical and gesture to the ultimate notion that the character represents*

4. *Trigger a catharsis in the narrative that will force the puppet-soul to flee the material puppet and allow for retrospect*

While the puppet object itself and the movement given to it can be responsible for generating the uncanny, it was predicted that the potential for the sublime experience that it held could not be accessed without a narrative structure that met these four requirements. If these steps were used to support and extend the audience's uncanny perception of the puppet object and their creation of the puppet-soul it was thought that they would create the necessary cognitive tension to allow any possible rupture in the illusion to cause an emotional fallout that would herald the sublime. Together, these eight concepts formed the working model that was used to engineer the final creative work and stood as the initial expression of the knowledge generated through the project.

5.0 FINAL CREATIVE PRACTICE CYCLE - *THE HARBINGER*



Figure Fifteen: Young Albert and Adelaide dream of a trip on a magic carpet (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

Taking the eight guidelines that had been consolidated during the first two practice cycles, the final piece of creative practice was a redeveloped version of *The Harbinger*. This section outlines the form that this redevelopment took and the changes that were made to the original production to satisfy the provisional needs of the guidelines and create an avenue to test their viability and validity.

In this redevelopment, the creative process was structured differently to allow for a more tightly controlled creation of the work. This change was also implemented because the project was significantly larger than the productions in cycles one and two. The primary differences that this shift involved was the creation of a full script before any other elements of production began, a clearer division of creative roles, and a more streamlined rehearsal period where the work was staged with the performers rather than devised with them. Although it had the same name as the creative component of the second action research cycle, this final work was very different, both in terms of story and the conventions of the puppet forms used. These changes were made in reaction to the data collected from the first two practice cycles, working towards taking the successful elements from each and combining them into the final work.

The move from the first two development cycles into this final round of practice was also accompanied with a significant rise in the professional stakes of the showing. Whereas the first two works had been presented in independent programs geared towards the showing of works by emerging artists, the final development was presented as a part of La Boite's public mainstage season, a full-blooded industry context where it was subject to professional levels of criticism. This was far cry from the speculative context and incubated setting of the university, marked a move away from the comparatively supportive environment that surrounds independent works, and tested the project in a commercial setting. Although it was an incredible leap of faith as it involved the trialing of unproven concepts and modes of practice in a very public arena, presentation in this context was ideal for the project as it allowed for an examination of my work in a real-world setting, with a general public audience, and ultimately bridged it from a tentative, emerging practice into a professional setting with commercial outcomes.

This new version of the work saw the return of the giant Old Man puppet as the central character, although in appealing to the mainstream audience, this time he was given a name: Old Albert.

Synopsis for the redeveloped work:

Old Albert lived in a rundown old bookshop. During his younger days the bookshop had been his pride and joy, and he had lived there happily with his wife. In the present day, reduced to a gnarled old man bound to a ramshackle wheelchair, Old Albert's life was a far cry from what it had been. Until one day a homeless orphan girl broke into his shop, refused to leave and became the catalyst for change in Old Albert's life.

Burdened with the mysterious task of creating ten thousand small mechanical insects that took flight at the sound of a simple tune, Albert saw the little girl as an unwelcome distraction. At first she questioned him about his work, and wondered if she had stumbled across some evil plan to destroy the city, but desperately searching for an adult who might somehow come to replace her lost, nameless parents, the little girl soon decided to help Old Albert with his labour. As time passed the pair grew used to each other; the little girl became more and more bold in her demands for affection, and Albert gave her just enough attention to keep her on her task.



Figure Sixteen: Young Albert and Adelaide read a letter (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

As they worked together and the weeks turned to months, the books and chests that littered the room began to open and give rise to memories from Albert's younger

days, played out with smaller puppets (pictured in figure sixteen on the previous page). In these apparitions, a younger Albert met the love of his life, an apple farmer's daughter named Adelaide; they fell in love and moved to the city where they struggled to find a shared future; and ultimately after planting a forbidden tree in the floorboards, Adelaide died from a pregnancy that she had never wanted, leaving Albert alone.

Unaware of any of this, the little girl decided that she had had enough, and that without explanation of the reason for their labour she would do no more work. Her strike fired a heated argument between the pair; Albert told her that she meant nothing to him and was just a pair of nimble hands capable of work, and she told the old man how bitter she thought he was, how incapable of love. After their attacks came to an end, Albert, worked up and having difficulty breathing, suffered a massive stroke and collapsed to the floor. When he woke, he was on the floor, leaning against the enormous tree growing at the back of the bookshop; the same tree that his young wife had planted the day that she died. Seeing that he was awake, the girl went to him, sat beside his enormous body, and told him that she had finished his task, and that the insects were complete. After telling her quietly about his long lost love, Albert told the girl to collect a small music box that lay on the mantel, and once she had left his side, slipped quietly into death.

With no idea what else to do, the little girl opened the music box and saw scrawled beneath the lid the very words that she had waited for so long to hear: "I love you". With the gentle chiming of the music box, the wings of the insects started to buzz. The little girl watched as they swooped out over the town and showered the dirty buildings with thousands of apple seeds, growing a beautiful city of trees; Albert's final gift to his wife.

5.1 Re-versioning *The Harbinger*

In moving into this final version of the work, the guidelines that were generated through the first two research cycles were purposely activated in order to test their relevance and efficacy. In addition to this, some of the changes were also provoked by the creative needs of La Boite Theatre Company as the presenters of the work. Although this meant I lost sole control over some creative decisions, those that were implemented by the company served to bring the work in line with the requirements of a mainstage, commercial production and came to focus and reshape the working principles that I had developed over the course of the project to fit within this setting. The major request from the company was that the work focus on foregrounding the puppetry, and unlike the first version of the show, incorporate whatever was necessary to make the audience's connection with these little performers as easy as possible. The main objectives of La Boite were closely aligned with my own hopes for the project, and as such the relationship served to support the development of the work and shape it for the professional, commercial context. The following sections outline the way in which the work aimed to incorporate the guidelines viewed through the lenses of the two key theoretical platforms, the uncanny and the sublime.

5.2 Nurturing the uncanny life

Guideline 1. Allow for the world of the show to be one of magic and fantasy

In creating the fictional context that was to house the performance of the puppet, the work aimed to generate a post-apocalyptic, somewhat gothic setting through the elements incorporated into the set and technical design. Primarily, this was conveyed through the purposeful gloom and darkness of the stage space, but was also present in the abnormal proportions of the room, and the inclusion of overtly fantastical objects such as the tree growing indoors, and the overly large bookcases. Additionally, the first moments of action were intended to set the world apart from our own through the use of the storybook-esque voiceover and

inclusion of strange elements such as the ghostly hand, the battered state of the young girl, and her confusion as to what a tree was.

Guideline 2. Ensure there is quick and clear reasoning for the use of the puppet embedded in the narrative and context

The primary rationale for the use of the puppet lay in the enormous bulk of the old man and the connections that his oversized body had with the strangeness of the fictional world. The use of this object also drew thematic connections with the fragility of the character and his tentative hold on life, and as the piece came to a close, his puppet-ness also facilitated his death. The smaller puppets were used in order to conjure a sense of wonder and transience in fitting with their apparition as Old Albert's memories and the fleeting nature of such thoughts. In a pragmatic sense, they were used to allow for the creation of overtly magical scenographic changes in representing the beauty and whimsy of the young couple.

Guideline 3. Keep the source of the illusion clear and give no cause for distrust

In order to make sure that the audience had an appropriate time to come to terms with the size of the old man and his representation as a puppet, he was made visible from the beginning and during preshow to allow for an acclimatisation to the form and representation of the character to take place. Additionally, in the first few minutes of the performance, a moment was made of the puppeteers taking their places to operate the character to make clear to the audience that no attempt was being made to mask these performers as the source of the illusion but rather ask the viewers to engage with the humanity of the act.

Guideline 4. Enrol the puppeteers in the world to distance them from the puppet

Beyond their initial connection with the old man, the puppeteers were enrolled in the world through engaging them in non-puppeting tasks and the creation of the world and story as well as the operation of the character. This came into play as they moved away from the old man to set up moments for the smaller characters and also in their operation of other puppets. Additionally, through allowing them to have an outside awareness of the puppet character in looking to him for cues and remaining active when he was asleep the work attempted to imbue the puppet character with the feelings that the operators had towards him in an effort to both distance them from the character and humanise the puppet.

Given that most of the performers in the work had not worked with puppets before, the rehearsal process was largely concerned with trying to achieve a balance between spending time on blocking and staging, and the training required to allow them to bring the puppets to life. In most cases this was achieved through focussing on the physical performance styles that the performers were comfortable with and creating a shared choreographic language that could be used to easily build a sense of ensemble and dehumanize the individuals. There was a tension throughout the rehearsal process and the financial and time based restraints that governed it that meant that this choreography and movement was limited at times and could have been further developed if resources had allowed.

5.3 Evoking the sublime

> *Guideline 1. Engage the imaginative co-operation of the audience through a clear narrative so that they begin to self perpetuate the illusion/character*

Beyond the initial setup of Old Albert and the girl and their task in building the insects, the work aimed to engage the imaginative cooperation of the audience through the use of the remembered love story played out with the smaller puppets. Through embracing the clear emotions associated with the young couple meeting and growing their love through numerous trials this secondary narrative was used to established points of connection between the story and the lives and

loves of the individual audience members in an attempt to create characters that could be related to easily and reflect this imaginative engagement back on the old man.

Guideline 2. Embrace the fiction surrounding the puppet object and stretch the empathy of the audience

Following the beginnings of the imaginative engagement of the audience with the puppets, the work aimed to stretch their empathy towards the characters through straining the relationship between the younger puppets and turning the earlier positive emotions associated with these memory scenes towards darker content and potential sympathy from the audience. Additionally, this was reflected in the main narrative as the young girl became increasingly invested in the old man. The eventual conflict and rupture in their relationship that occurred in the fight between the two brought the thematic of love and companionship to the fore and sought to draw empathy from the audience witnessing their emotional pain.

Guideline 3. Actively steer the narrative towards the metaphysical and gesture to the ultimate notion that the character represents

Initially, the script included several scenes that embraced the fantasy of the work and took the characters through various hallucinations and dreams in an attempt to incorporate the metaphysical aspects called for by the guidelines. However, late in the rehearsal process I felt as though these scenes were having the opposite effect, and that explicitly embodying these states was actually undermining their power and so most were removed. Due to differences in opinion with my co-writer a compromise was struck and remnants of these moments remained which I felt was ultimately detrimental to the dramaturgy of the piece. The changes that were made, however, sought to foreground the metaphysicality latent in the death of Adelaide and the growing fragility of the old man as he neared his own end, rather than the alienating and ambiguous Mr. Somebody character that was originally

intended to embody these aspects of the work. Given another development of the work I would seek to remove reference to this character altogether and further clarify the narrative.

Guideline 4. Trigger a catharsis in the narrative that will force the puppet-soul to flee the material puppet and allow for retrospect

Similarly to the issues faced with the work embracing the metaphysical aspects of the puppet, the catharsis engineered into the narrative was clouded by dramaturgical uncertainty and unnecessary detail. These shortcomings aside, the work still made bold attempts at provoking this catharsis in the death of the old man and in the final fruition of his task with the flight of the insects and growth of the city of trees as penitence to his wife. Even in the face of the narrative confusions at play in these moments, the catharsis still appeared to generate considerable emotion as it fulfilled its central role of reminding the audience, lost in the emotion of the story, that they had invested in a puppet. An assessment of this, and the efficacy of each of the eight guidelines will be presented in the next chapter.

6.0 THE PRACTICE AND THEORY NEXUS – KEY INSIGHTS ARISING FROM THE STUDY



Figure Seventeen: Old Albert teaches the little girl how to build a mechanical insect (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

The first two cycles of creative practice generated a series of guidelines that were aimed towards the generation of a sublime experience in puppet-based performance. In analysing the data that was collected from the final creative work, *The Harbinger*, this section presents the eight key guidelines that arose from the first two practice cycles and makes use of audience data and the theoretical understandings outlined in the literature and contextual review to make comment on the effects of their implementation and move towards the final findings of the project. For this last research cycle, the data was collected from the audience in two different ways. The first of these took the form of a short answer survey that was distributed to the audience immediately post-show, and took the form of a series of general questions about the show to allow for a broad range of relatively unfocussed data that could be coded later (copies of these surveys are available in the appendices). The second was a series of semi-structured interviews that were conducted with three individuals taken from the general public audience in the weeks following their viewing of the performance. Also, where relevant, comments published in reviews have also been used to provide further evidence.

6.1 Nurturing the uncanny life

The first set of these guidelines that resulted from the initial practice cycles were concerned with the conditions that were necessary in order for an adult audience to be able to move beyond their preconceptions of puppet-based performance and partake in the uncanny readings and "lack of orientation" (Jentsch, 1906, p. 2) that the puppets could potentially cause. This was important as the performance of the puppet seeks to embrace surmounted thought processes that are regularly shunned by adults because we "are not always capable of exorcising the spirits which [are] created out of [our] own head[s]" (ibid., p. 13) and thus can view engagement with the performing puppet as an undesirable practice. The deep imagination required of an adult engaging with a performing puppet is akin to that of a child at play with the doll and "reminds us of a primitive period in our personal and cultural development where the boundaries between the I and the world were less clearly defined" (Simms, 1996, p. 673). Because the adult mind

has surmounted these ways of thought it must be coaxed into investing a similar level of trust in the puppet object as in normal interactions such "a failure to respect and understand the nature of death" would be shunned (ibid.). Analysing this first set of data poses somewhat of an obstacle as there was no mention in the data gathered through surveys or interviews of an uncanny experience so the analysis of this data relies on responses that signal the thought process, and infers how the work generated these interpretations of the puppet. The following sections make use of the four guidelines concerned with nurturing the uncanny life of the puppet as a frame for the analysis of the data collected.

6.1.1 Allow for the world of the show to be one of magic and fantasy

The attempt to create a tangible world of heightened thematic potential to assist in the audience reception of the performance seems to have been successful as the data demonstrates evidence in regard to the design and context of the performance allowing for imaginative experiences that could incubate uncanny thought. One survey recalled simply that "I was transported to the world of imagination" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). Additionally, all three interviewees made explicit mention of the ways in which the world of the play came to influence their experience of the work. The first explained that "*The Harbinger* was sort of a fiction, an apocalyptic world where all the poetry and the beauty from the story came from the setting" (Personal Interview G, 2012) expressing a degree of beauty that he was able to find in the destruction and cruelty of the world. The second interviewee made a similar comment that:

> It was really eerie. It was quite scary. But also magical. It really felt like you could kind of get lost away in the play, in the darkness of it. But the magic comes back. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

This reading was similar to that of the final interviewee who saw the work "bordering on fantasy because of the magical elements" (Personal Interview I, 2012) but constructed a more rational explanation that "it seemed some sort of microcosm of what society had become in the future" (ibid.). Similar sentiment was expressed in several published reviews that applauded the design and technical elements and used language such as 'darkly enchanting and enthralling'

when describing the production (Rogers, 2012). These responses all echo the statement made by Gross that the form of puppetry draws upon the "intensities of imaginative love that are native to children at play, so ready to transform ordinary objects into something else" (2011, p. 2078), and suggest that the work created an environment where this kind of youthful investment was possible.

6.1.2 Ensure there is quick and clear reasoning for the use of the puppet embedded in the narrative and context

Taking this discussion further, the audience responses also suggested that the context and narrative gave clear justification for the use of the puppet character as called for by the second guideline, particularly concerning the reason for his unique physicality. One stated that they thought, "it seemed that the giant was made huge with his life experience" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), a notion that was reiterated in one of the interviews with the explanation that:

> The huge size of him was his huge ego. But then he's run down and his hands do not work and his clothes are all draped off his body. That showed how emotionally scarred and damaged he was as a person. I think all of that helped the audience understand him. Whereas if you'd just had a regular sized puppet like all of the other ones, or even just a normal person it wouldn't have been so easy to understand that concept. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

It is interesting to note that when viewing the puppet and the justification that the work offered for his physical presence, this interviewee praises the scale of the object as being responsible for the poetry of the character even though his size emerged as a weakness when it came to belief in the illusion of the character as is discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to this data demonstrating a poetic viewing of the puppet object within the narrative and context whereby his size came to stand for the life that he'd lived, there were two responses that showed evidence of a much more logical thought process behind the individuals' reasoning for the character to be played by a puppet. One interviewee explained that "because the actor was an adult playing a child the size difference [between the performer and the puppet] was

kind of relative" (Personal Interview I, 2012), a statement that was echoed in one of the surveys with mention that "I felt the giant man made the world seem like it would to a kid" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). These responses both offer insight into the way in which the design of the world offered the audience reasons for the use of the puppet. Through this clarity of thought the act of the puppet and its revival of "repressed infantile thought…[and] primitive beliefs" (Freud, 1919, p. 17) is made less dangerous and more inviting as the puppet is firmly housed and justified within the context of the theatrical event allowing for the potential of deeply imaginative play.

Indeed one interviewee offered a direct link back to the uncanny doll describing that the work "takes you back to your childhood in a sense, but through adult language and not treating you like a child" (Personal Interview H, 2012). However this individual explained that the puppet had strengths over the doll. Where Rilke identified the moment in the life of the doll where "the imagination ceases to perpetuate itself, when boredom sets in, the world that we had taken for granted suddenly takes on dark and unfamiliar hues…[and] we sense a threatening emptiness" (as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 672), this interviewee explained that with the puppet:

> This one's personality is ready made, this one's character is ready made, how it moves and walks and talks and all these things, they've already been made for you, so you just take on all the information that you can and that's what builds the memories. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

It is evident in this response that although this individual was able to see the similarity between the material bodies of the puppet and the doll, the creation of the character became more of a shared experience as the theatrical world and the performance of the puppeteers entered into collaboration with her imagined version of the character. Thus the puppet didn't succumb to the same limitations as the doll as it was being dreamt to life by more that one mind in a collaborative, intermedial act. The audience weren't responsible for the impulse to bring life to the object, but were rather offered an imaginative concept already in its early stages that they could take and build upon for themselves. This has clear links to Rilke's statement that the doll is "precisely so much less a thing as the marionette

[puppet] is more" (1978, p. 123). Whereas an unmoving doll might summon the "threatening emptiness" (Rilke as cited in Simms, 1996, p. 672) that it engenders, with the performance of the puppet the audience aren't responsible for the initial inception of the character and so rational thought processes and an unwillingness to engage in childish belief building are bypassed. This is significant in the emotional investment of adults in the puppet performance as it doesn't rely on them to make the first steps of belief by themselves but rather offers them a concept already in motion that they are more likely to accept.

6.1.3 Keep the source of the illusion clear and give no cause for distrust

In a similar vein, the third guideline geared towards embracing the uncanny effects of the performing puppet suggested the importance of keeping the source of the illusion clear. This was in order to give no cause for distrust and reduce the potential for rejection of the character due to a preoccupation with understanding the puppet's mechanisms. The primary means through which this was achieved was through the fully visible operators and the use of no cloaking techniques in the manipulation of the puppets allowing the act to play out in full sight of the audience. While the narrative embraced the puppets as living entities, the actual presentation of the figures was a clearly human act. As a result, the work aimed to evoke the uncanny effects resulting from the "uncertainty as to whether an object is alive or not" (Freud, 1919, pp. 8-9) through balancing the illusion with the constant revelation that it was being generated by visible performers (as pictured in figure eighteen above). The outcome of this was expressed simply in one survey with the response that "I liked that they weren't hidden" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). The majority of respondents mentioned being



Figure Eighteen: the operators stand with Old Albert (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

aware of the operators as responsible for the creation of the characters at least in part.

Numerous respondents went beyond this and expressed that the visibility of the operators actually added to the experience of the performance, outlining additional positive effects of not attempting to hide the source of the illusion. This was suggested in statements that revealed how the puppeteers came to give "a great amount of humanisation to the puppets, through their movement and facial expressions" (Audience Survey 3, 2012) and focussed on the almost symbiotic nature of the puppeteer-puppet relationship. A similar understanding of the operators was explained in one of the interviews when the individual related how:

> You could feel that he [the puppet] was real. You could feel that nature within him; his energy was really very personable so you could really attach to that. I think that came through a lot because you could see the person operating the puppet and you could see the energy transfer into the puppet from that person. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

These statements hint at the beginnings of the double-vision used by members of the audience in their reading of the puppet characters, not simply in the sense of the duality of the puppet's ontology as a living, dead object, but also in the location of the character somewhere within the puppet/operator binary. One interviewee recalled enjoyment at the fact that "the feat of [watching them] making him live is what's so engaging" (Personal Interview G, 2012), drawing focus to the imaginative delight that was gained from being privy to the construction of the illusion. The data suggested that through the transparency of the act, the audience were able to engage with the uncanny performance of the puppet through the clear human source of its "bodily or mental functions" (Jentsch, 1906, p. 10), which stands as evidence of the intermedial construction of the illusion.

Through keeping the puppeteers visible, and the use of bold stage makeup and dark coloured clothing, the work aimed at estranging them from the action and in many ways came to embody the notion of Brecht's 'verfremdungseffekt'. Although my rationale for making use of this estrangement served a very different agenda than Brecht there were similarities in the way in which the work aimed to make

the audience alert to the circumstances that allowed for the creation of the onstage illusion rather than taking the situation for granted. Brecht stated that:

> The artist's object is to appear strange and even surprising to the audience. He achieves this by looking strangely at himself and his work. As a result, everything put forward by him has a touch of the amazing. Everyday things are thereby raised above the level of the obvious and automatic. (Brecht, 1964, p.92)

Through heightening the performances of the operators, their makeup, and their stylised movemements, the work demonstrated a level of estrangement whereby the audience were made aware of the construction of the illusion. By making no attempt to conceal this part of the act the double-vision required by the audience was heightened as the disparity between their two perceptions of the puppet character widened. In working to establish this duality, it seems that the verfremdungseffekt was integral in maintaining the material reality of the puppet that was responsible for throwing the perceived illusion into such contrast as the audience dreamt their own versions of the character to life.

6.1.4 Enrol the puppeteers in the world to distance them from the puppet

It was evident, then, that through the visibility of the operators and their clear connection to the puppets, the audience were able to trust more deeply in the performance of the puppets and came to invest them with a degree of humanity. This stood at odds with the final guideline arrived upon in the first two development cycles, which explained that the puppeteers should be enrolled in the world in order to *distance* them from the puppet. On examining the data to see how this distancing could possibly fit given of the overt connection that seemed to have built between the puppets and their visible operators there were four distinct ways in which the audience came to read the place of the puppeteers. The most straightforward of these modes of perception involved the audience drawing on their previous understandings of the notion of a puppeteer and allowing for a distance to develop based on the pragmatic necessity of the living performers' presence for the apparent life of the puppet characters. This was captured in statements such as "I understood them as puppeteers" (Personal Interview G,

2012) and resulted in responses that saw them as "characters in themselves" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), "they seemed like minions" (ibid.), and "they had their own choreography" (ibid.) all of which focused on the bodies of the performers as separate entities to those of the puppets even in light of the strong link between the two.

The second view of the puppeteers saw them emotionally linked to the lives of the characters that they portrayed but in an almost omnipresent fashion, as though they were fulfilling the function of storytellers. This was demonstrated in a response from one interviewee who explained that:

> They weren't characters, they were sort of just storytellers. Like I didn't see them in the same way as I saw the little girl because they weren't part of the story, they were there to tell it to you. Which I think was good because when they picked up any other puppet that they wanted to you didn't see them as a particular person using a particular puppet you just saw it as a puppet now able to move around. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

Similarly, another interviewee understood it that the puppeteers "know the story so well and they were giving you emotional cues with their body language" (Personal Interview I, 2012) and in this way were able to impart the experience of the work. Although these comments echo a similar sentiment in the sense that they are aware of the distancing of the puppeteers from the puppet characters, they make allowance for the connection between the two in a pragmatic sense, and still regard the human performers as the source of the illusion.

The third view of the puppeteers was more abstract and metaphysical and was demonstrated by an audience member who saw the puppeteers as "the physicalisation of the puppet-souls" (Audience Survey 3, 2012) and expounded in greater detail by one of the interviewees who perceived that:

> Barb [who controlled the head of the giant puppet] was the energy of the old man, of the puppet, she was in a sense like his soul, she was that part of him. They extended off her and became his dreams and operated all of the other little puppets. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

This mode of viewing the puppeteers fits closely with the way in which some audience members perceived the flow of energy from the operator to the object

but makes use of the word soul to serve as figurative label for the operator who is the source of that energy. These responses stand as poetic descriptions of the audience's awareness of the intermedial nature of the puppet and demonstrate the "blurring of the boundary between the living and the dead" (Wagner, 2006, p. 127), willingly engaged with in the safety of the theatrical context.

Far from being a fixed state, the data supported the notion that an individual's reading of the puppeteers could change throughout the performance. This final notable form of perception, akin to Jurkowski's notion of transitional awareness (1998), saw audience members make use of the visible puppeteers to gain entry to the work but then fall into the world of the puppets and leave the living performers in the background. One individual explained the process she had felt herself move through as she recalled that:

> It took me a while not to notice the operators of the puppet. I liked being able to see them though because I could transfer the emotions from her face, a real person's emotions, and could see them through the puppet and see how she was manoeuvring his head and mouth and everything to respond to what she was doing. You just started to get lost in it after a while because you do not really register that those people are there anymore. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

When questioned as to why she felt this way the same respondent explained that "you just drift onto the puppet because that starts being the real person, that starts being what the performer *is*" (ibid.). The data reveals, for this audience member at least, that through the progression of the work and the individual becoming comfortable with the modes of expression used by the puppet, the performers became increasingly less important in the audience's reading of the puppet characters. This was also mentioned in one of the reviews that although the puppeteers "are in plain view of the audience … their dedication and skill makes them invisible, so the giant puppet seems … to lumber around the stage completely unaided' (McGuire, 2012). It appears that while the clear relationship between the performer and the puppet body served to disarm preconceptions as to the danger of surmounted thought surrounding investment in inanimate objects, once this way of thinking was re-remembered and found benign the medium of the performer was no longer necessary.

Although they were concerned with differing levels of imaginative perception, all of these modes of viewing the puppeteers: as pragmatic, as storytellers, as metaphysical entities, or shifting in and out of awareness, were similar in the way that they made allowance for a degree of connection *and* a degree of separation in the relationship between the puppet and its operator and foregrounded the intermediality of the performance. One of the reviews spoke of the puppeteers occupying "a strange, shifting netherworld, in which they are both anonymous animators and direct participants" (Harper, 2012). Ultimately, while the puppet's apparent life came from a human source, its character was most closely associated with the object itself, locking the two entities into a performative relationship where one could not function without the other. This notion was supported by one of the survey respondents who remarked that she "liked how the physical connection literally "gave life" – it imbued this lovely symbolism of the literal role of a puppeteer" (Audience Survey 3, 2012).

Overall, even though it revealed an unexpectedly strong link between the puppet characters and the performers, the data indicated that the uncanny effects of the puppet still allow the audience to engage with the puppet characters. On this ability to overcome the negative, alienating effects of the uncanny, Jentsch explained that whether the working through "is factual or not is of no great importance, as long as its final result is accepted by the individual" (1906, p. 15). Through the visibility of the illusion and the acceptance of the intermedial nature of the performance the data suggests that the audience were able to reach this point of understanding that the uncanny life of the puppet was actually something that contributed to the effect of the overall work and was to be marvelled at. Ultimately, it paved the way for the imaginative investment and surrender to the potential experience that the duality of the performance, both real and imagined, had to offer.

6.2 Evoking the sublime

Lyotard states that the "delight, or negative pleasure … that characterises the nature of the sublime arises from the removal of the threat of pain" (1991, p. 84). Further to this, Pillow explains that "sublime reflection can provide … a model for a kind of interpretive response to the uncanny other "outside" our conceptual grasp" (2000, p. 2) explicitly illustrating the potential for the movement of an individual from an uncanny understanding to a sublime experience. As it was applied to this study, the sublime was concerned with the ways in which the puppet object could be used in the creation of an imagined version of itself that could surpass the material restrictions of the physical entity and come to embody the phenomenon that this unique perceptual experience cannot exist within an object, but rather in the mind of the individual beholding the object (Kant, 2008a). In order to achieve this, the first two development cycles gave rise to a series of suggestions as to what might allow this imaginative projection to be coaxed out of the audience and then manipulated by the performance to give rise to a sublime experience. The following sections make use of these guidelines in the analysis of the data.

6.2.1 Engage the imaginative co-operation of the audience through a clear narrative so that they begin to self perpetuate the illusion/character

The first of these guidelines stressed the importance of engaging the imaginative co-operation of the audience through the narrative so that they would begin to self perpetuate the illusion and character by projecting their own readings of the character onto the puppet's physical body. There were several instances in the data where audience members made mention of their building belief in the character and an awareness that this was a process that they were actively involved in. One response explained that "from about halfway the characters seemed more than just wood, maybe I was getting caught in the story" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), suggesting the significance of the narrative in the creation of this imagined character. Similarly, one of the interviewees recalled that "how he [the

old man puppet] looked on stage was his character and not his physical body" (Personal Interview G, 2012) and attributed this to that fact that "with a puppet the character lives inside your mind whereas with the actor you see them alive on stage" (ibid.). This statement aligned the physical body of the puppet with Lyotard's "negative representation" (1991, p. 85) in the way in which it is able to suggest at being without actually being and call up something larger than itself.

Additionally, several audience members explained that the physical shortcomings of the puppet object, "a hollow structure concealing/revealing nothing" (Wagner, 2006, p. 135), were actually responsible for their investment in the character; a far cry from Reason's assertation that "adults may well respect the skills constructing the illusion but will always compare the puppet to the human actor and see its representational limitations" (2008, p. 343). Rather, what Reason saw as limitations were identified as strengths with suggestions that "because you do not get facial expressions … the viewer can participate in the meaning-making process more. It is more open to interpretation" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), and "[I could relate to the puppets more] because I could project my own emotional experiences instead of relying on [an] actor's facial expressions and body language" (ibid.). This intermedial engagement was explained further in one of the interviews as being:

> Equal part audience and puppeteer. Because without me watching them and building something from them they wouldn't be characters, they would just be bits of wood being moved by people. It takes the connection, for me anyway, from the audience to understand what's being presented and to make that alive for myself. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

The data revealed that the show effectively captured the imaginative co-operation of the audience and that they were actively involved in the creation of the puppet character through their perception of the performing puppet object. This was important because establishing this level of investment was the first step in triggering an emotional feedback loop where the narrative stretches the empathy that the audience feel for the character allowing it to multiply exponentially.

6.2.2 Embrace the fiction surrounding the puppet object and stretch the empathy of the audience

The second guideline called for the work to embrace the fiction surrounding the puppet and stretch the empathy of the audience in order to "harness the audience's imagination to extend through … physical barriers" (Blumenthal, 2005, p. 87), particularly the materiality of the puppet. There were several elements within the work that were identified within the data as contributing to this deepening of the emotional connection that had been built with the puppet character. The first series of these responses captured the general emotional state that audience member's felt turned them towards this empathy recalling that "the moments of heartache [had me] empathising with the puppet's experience" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), and "you feel for the characters, you just want things to work out for them" (ibid.). This was explained by one of the interviewees as occurring because:

> The experiences that happen in the play you could relate to your own life, to your own feelings, or to other narratives or stories that you'd seen that were real to us as adults, to us as people. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

In the creation of the work the inclusion of the flashbacks told with the smaller puppets were intended to do just this, to give the audience an ability to see a second side of the old man's character and to understand where he had come from. One of the reviews noted the added emotion added by these scenes explaining that "the flashbacks create, at first, a light and humorous contrast to the more sinister mood of the current timeline, but they grown steadily more dread-filled as the two timelines catch up to each other" (McGuire, 2012).

The effect that these smaller characters had on the perception of the old man was explained in some detail in the data collected. Common responses about the placement of the smaller puppets included statements that "I felt the smaller characters lent their life and feeling to the old man" (Audience Survey 3, 2012), "they were telling me the story of his life [and] it helped me to understand how he had gotten to where he was" (ibid.), and "those little stories really made him more

likeable and made you invest in his character" (Personal Interview H, 2012). Indeed the data revealed that even though the illusion generated around the old man was not as strong as that of the smaller puppets, the relationship between the two lent the emotional power of the young characters to the giant puppet. One of the interviewees explained this as:

> You could really see how he had become so jaded and how he was so emotionally closed off. Especially because you have thoughts when the girl discovers the bloody clothes and the trunk that he might be a more sinister, more evil character but then that is all explained in the smaller puppets that he's in fact never gotten over the loss of his wife. I also think that it shows how vulnerable he was and that he couldn't allow himself to become emotionally connected with the little girl because he has the fear of loss. That goes with humanising the character as well because it is so in-depth, they are such in-depth human emotions. (Personal Interview I, 2012)

Similarly, the conceptual relationship between the old man and his smaller counterparts "gave a contrast between a life when he was happy to the life he was living now. As the story developed my emotional connection grew stronger" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). It is evident that the audience were able to read into the connectedness of the different puppets and allow the narrative that they were portraying to build on their empathetic experiences of the work.



Figure Nineteen: the girl holds her face in Old Albert's hand (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

In addition to the importance of this back-story, the other element that was mentioned as increasing the audience's empathetic involvement with the characters was the performance of the little girl, the only character played by a human actor (pictured in figure nineteen above). One of the interviewees recalled of her performance that:

> It gave you something more normal, something that you were more accustomed to, just to get you into the world. But it was just to get us into it. Once you were in there you were fine, you didn't really need her. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

It seemed that through having this genuine human presence at play within the work, the performer playing the little girl was able to signal emotional cues for the audience, almost teaching them how they could engage with old man puppet by following her lead. The same interviewee reiterated this in explaining that she:

> Was a really easy way to follow a human relationship or a human connection with something that's not human. Just out of habit or training, in my mind I was able to know that she was feeling this way towards this character. I didn't see her falling in love with a puppet, she was falling in love with this grand idea of a father figure. The human emotion and relationships that were manipulated on stage helped to support the characters that were represented by the puppets as real characters. (ibid.)

This data showed that through the emotional investment and projection of the live performer, the audience's empathetic involvement was strengthened.

6.2.3 Actively steer the narrative towards the metaphysical and gesture to the ultimate notion that the character represents

Indeed, the "grand idea of a father" that the little girl desperately wanted the old man to embody served as evidence of the mobilisation of the next guideline relating to the sublime evocation of the puppet in steering the narrative towards the metaphysical and gesturing to the ultimate notion that the character represented. Employed in the way that it is used in sublime theory, the ultimate identifies an entity that is beyond reason and exists outside of the borders of human logic, something that can be felt but not understood nor quantified. This aligns closely with the nature of the puppet itself as an object that becomes the vessel for a character that exists as a concept with no distinct form and remaining ever illusive, as stance that Gross attributes to the "poetry of inadequacy [of the puppet]…which calls out to larger worlds" (2011, p. 1438). Unlike the first practice cycles, none of the data collected made overt suggestions as to the ultimate qualities that the puppet characters came to represent for the audience. The

closest mention that was made explained that "I didn't always see him as a character, I saw him more as a concept. Like I knew he represented this, and I'm going to follow him through this object" (Personal Interview G, 2012). The same interviewee continued on to explain that:

> He represented, he epitomised, everything that had gone wrong with this world that they are in. He was affected by loss and guilt and all that sort of stuff. I think he represented what the little girl would eventually turn into if she didn't find her nice little place. I think he showed the consequences of that world. He was the world himself, more than one specific character. (ibid.)

Even though this individual did not attempt to specifically name the ultimate entity that he perceived that the puppet came to represent, the response shows that he was aware that his understanding of the puppet came to encapsulate more than just the inanimate puppet itself and signalled the "without limit of the object" (Lyotard, 1994, p. 59) in the imaginative power associated with having no fixed material form.

6.2.4 Trigger a catharsis in the narrative that will force the puppet-soul to flee the material body and allow for retrospect

The artistic motivations at the heart of the production were aimed at encouraging the audience to build an authentic connection with the object that would allow it to transcend its inanimate nature. The final guideline that was generated through the first two practice cycles, and that which was expected to trigger the sublime experience involved engineering a catharsis in the narrative that would allow for retrospect as to the impossibility of the illusion and effectively force the puppet-soul to flee the material object. The thinking behind this lay in confronting the audience with the ontological truth of the inanimate object in which they had invested in an attempt to spark cognitive dissonance between its perceived and actual reality. In the creative work, this final moment took the form of the death of the old man, allowing the puppet to return to its inanimate state before the audience at the same point as reaching an emotional climax in the narrative. In doing this, the work embraced Blumenthal's notion that "the transition between life and non-life – birth and death – are the most sacred moments of human

experience" (1997, p. 18) and took advantage of the fact that "puppets, inanimate objects endowed with vital force, live at that border" (ibid.).

Several pieces of data identified the emotional strength of this moment, both in the shattering of the illusion, but also in reinforcing the character that had been dreamt to life. Ironically, one survey recalled that the puppets actually felt the most alive as they died as it gave a sense "of their mortality" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). Another response echoed a similar sentiment explaining that the puppets were most believable "as they die … it was almost a contradiction … [and] raises all sort of questions about how we see *ordinary interaction* and what brings any relationship alive/to life" (ibid.). Through the puppet exploiting its unique ontology as being neither living nor dead, it was able to bring these uniquely human themes into high relief and in doing so bolster the illusion of its own apparent life.

Indeed it seems that the purely imaginative nature of this character meant that the death was in fact more impactful because there was a degree of symbolic reality to the return of the puppet to stillness that mirrored what happens to a human body when the spark of life leaves us in death. This was captured by one of the reviewers who explained that "his great carcass just lies there, now nothing more than an assemblage of wood and cloth. It's as stark a depiction of the absence of life as you're likely to see on a stage" (Harper, 2012). Similarly one of the interviewees spoke of the poetics of the puppet's passing allowing for an emulation of the emotions of a real death remembering that:

> Watching the representation of this person die, the person died with it. Because that's the only connection that you have to that character. So when the puppet dies you've got no way to connect to them anymore, you can't talk to them from the audience. You are not with him anymore, so to you they are dead. Someone might as well have died on stage. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

He continued on to explain that "with someone dying in your mind you still have that sense of loss and everything that something's just been taken away from you. It doesn't have to exist in the real world for that loss to be effective" (ibid.). This was captured in another of the interviews with the response that:

> I thought in a sense though like it was a more real death because the energy does leave the puppet. It doesn't really turn into just a prop onstage, for me it didn't, but there's no energy left in it. Whereas an actor on stage, if they die, they are still pretending to not have any energy, so it is a bit different. It was really sad. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

It was evident that the audience came to see the transfer of the energy away from the physical puppet leaving them with just a memory of the character to hold onto; a transition that was described poetically in the final interview as though:

> It was all representative of a spirit leaving the body and I think that because the puppeteers were creating his emotion, his movement and that kind of thing it was not so much of a physical ability leaving, but more that the puppeteers came to represent his soul, almost. Just to see them scatter away and leave him. It was a very poignant moment. (Personal Interview I, 2012)

With this act of apparent death, the negative representation of the puppet ended and it no longer maintained the connection with the imaginative character that had been built around it. In putting the audience in this position, it encouraged a degree of retrospect as they were placed in an ambiguous position where they were required to reconcile the inanimate object with what they had dreamt it to be. In this way the puppet embodied Kant's "indeterminate concept of reason" (2008b, p. 47).

At the end of the performance when audiences came to view the work with a certain degree of retrospect, the acknowledgement that they had viewed the puppet with a level of duality appears to have added to the wonder that was experienced demonstrating the "gargantuan reality gaps combined with technical virtuosity [that] can produce delight that simply explodes disbelief" outlined by Blumenthal (1997, p. 17). This was demonstrated in the response that:

> From outside the play you saw it as a puppet, just as itself, and that made you think *I've just gone through this whole process of believing and liking and grieving for something that didn't exist. It only existed in my mind. This character was only in my mind*. (Personal Interview G, 2012)

Specifically, this same audience member made clear mention of being aware of, and enjoying the conflicting readings of the puppet in the response that:

> I feel like the show really embraced the idea of dissonance in that you know the puppets aren't real and yet they are real in your

> mind. I think that's what I was feeling at the end when I walked out, it was that joy of knowing that my mind shouldn't have been able to do that, to tell me the two things at one time, and I liked that. (ibid.)

This individual made clear mention of the way that his mind was juggling the disparate concepts of puppet and character and that for him it resulted in a strange cognitive sensation and explained that "I think that's what sort of glued me into it … they were both at once" (ibid.). For this to have happened, the imagined puppet character that his imagination had built, must have grown to a point that it was able to begin to challenge the notion of the puppet as an inanimate object that rational logic and preconceptions would have favoured.

Further, the dataset contained many recollections of individuals becoming aware of this thought process, and the primary location of the puppet character as an imaginative entity that belonged almost exclusively within their own thinking. One of the interviewees recalled that:

> I felt like the character was just left behind in memories. It felt to me as though he fell back into my memories, back into what I'd seen on stage and I knew that he had been. Because you see the body there and you go *oh yes, he's dead, there's no energy there, there's nothing left*. So you start thinking about what they were like when there was energy. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

Similarly, another gave a more pragmatic explanation that "after big old Albert died I still understood that the character was alive in my imagination and was supported by this puppet" (Personal Interview G, 2012). Still another gave the poetic response that "they lived on stage and in my heart" (Audience Survey 3, 2012). These responses all uncover elements of double-vision in these individuals' perceptions of the puppet character and offer insight into the emotional traction that this gained within their imaginations.

6.3 The location of the sublime

Within the data collected there were several mentions made of feelings that could be associated with a sublime experience generated through various thought processes and different aspects of the work. Each of these mentions however, was

concerned, even if only by allusion, with the mobilisation of double-vision arising from intermedial perception and became particularly pointed at moments in which the two perceptions of the puppet slipped in their balance of power and caused a cognitive turmoil. The most general of these sublime notions came in the form of the puppet-soul as the imagined character that was birthed in the minds of the audience through the negative representation of the imperfect puppet object. In a way, this ephemeral entity came to acknowledge the ultimate entity to which the puppet object pointed allowing for the character to grow far beyond the constraints of the material object. This was captured in the recollection that:

> The emotions that the puppet conjures within you make you able to picture that puppet as a real person and when they do pass, when the puppet passes, you hold onto those memories, you can't just get rid of those memories. So they are still there and still alive and it is [the puppet's] more than just pieces of wood. Those memories mean more and you hold onto those, instead of the puppet itself. (Personal Interview H, 2012)

The way in which this imagined concept of the puppet was able to gain such weight in the imaginations of the audience stood as evidence of the power of the object in the erosion of rational thought and the ability that it has in allowing the imagination to perpetuate itself and ultimately present a notion that cannot be reconciled with the simplicity of the material object.

Further than this, the data suggested that there was more to be found than just wonder at what the mind could create under these circumstances but also an emotional enjoyment in the cognitive dissonance of the illusion itself that gave rise to sublime thought. One of the interviewees explained that "there's a joy in being able to live in a make believe world, and to know that it is make believe, but to still love it anyway" (Personal Interview G, 2012). Later in the interview he also mentioned that:

> I definitely gave into it. I acknowledged both but didn't care. I enjoyed the fact that I could experience them at the same time. That's what I was trying to say about when I came out afterwards. About being given the experience. Not tricks. But given the experience of the illusion. (ibid.)

The responses of this individual gestured towards a sublime joy to be felt in the tension of the irreconcilable nature of the two entities that make up the puppet

but being willing to surrender to their impossible union and take emotional enjoyment from the experience of succumbing to the shortcomings of his imagination. Additionally, this audience member made particular mention, using quite violent language, of the feeling of emotional rupture at the conclusion of the performance when the physical and imaginative manifestations of the puppet could no longer remain together and the puppet object no longer stood as a justification for the emotions being experienced. He explained that at this point:

> You feel that meta-form of the both [puppet object and puppet-soul] breaking, shattering, because you do not have the other half to take form anymore, you've only got the character that you've built for yourself. So you feel independent because now you are not being fed this experience anymore. You are on your own. You are just lost in it. So when you are just left with the character that you've built it is that shocking, jarring out of that experience. Then you are just left with the character. (ibid.)

The comments of this interviewee suggested that he was experiencing the "tension between joy and sorrow: the delight of having a feeling of totality inseparable from the pain of not being able to present an object equal to this idea of totality" outlined by Broadhurst (1999, p. 30) in the way in which his imagined versions of the puppet characters sat at such odds with what the rational mind knew to have happened as it regained control at the end of the performance. In knowingly engaging with the visible illusion of the puppet and yet still being moved by the resulting character, this individual appears to have found a sublime experience in surrendering to the apparent impossibility of the act.

As a result of this rupture, the creation of the puppet-soul and its eventual departure from the physical body of the puppet which was no longer able to contain it, the illusion itself comes to point towards a second ultimate notion when considering the impossibility of what the dead object has achieved; a gesture to the notion of humanity itself and the endlessness of our imaginative capabilities. This was poetically described by the final interviewee as:

> It made me feel more human. Because I realised what a strong emotional investment I could make in something that was not. It made me realise a little more how my emotions worked. It didn't make me feel cheated at all. I thought it was beautiful. To be able to have that emotional investment to something that isn't real, it kind of reflects a mirror to the emotional investments that you have in

> your life. It holds a mirror up to your reality and that's why I felt so human. (Personal Interview I, 2012)

In this act, the imagination is not able to fully comprehend what has just occurred and "recoils upon itself, but in doing so succumbs to an emotional delight" (Kant, 2008a, para. 21). The sublime experience that is generated through the performance of a puppet, although brought into higher contrast at points, lies in the rational impossibility of the character that the imagination is able to generate and the realisation that one has been able to engage in such a feat. The performance of the puppet object appears to trigger a manifestation of Lyotard's explanation that "even as it deploys an unlimited field of proliferating forms before thought, the imagination remains a slave to its finitude" (1994, p. 75).

6.4 Conclusion

Through the collection and analysis of this data, the preliminary findings that arose from the first two development cycles were tested in a practical context, and the success of their implementation was tested. In the majority of cases, the data that was collected supported the preliminary findings and saw these performative elements as being adequately incorporated into the final creative work. On the other hand, this analysis also found some of the proposed guidelines to be unnecessary in embracing the uncanny and triggering the sublime. A summarised outline of these outcomes is presented in the following chapter.

7.0 FINDINGS



Figure Twenty: Old Albert demands the return of a tool (Dead Puppet Society, 2012)

When setting out to undertake this research project three years ago, I had wanted to arm myself with a conceptual framework that I could use to understand the reasons for intense emotional reactions that the puppets in my creative works were eliciting for adult audiences. I was guided by the following research questions:

How can the uncanny readings of a puppet be embraced to allow an adult to engage in the construction of the illusion?

What are the key elements that can be built into a puppet-based work to allow for the evocation of a sublime feeling?

In working towards answering these key questions, the data that was gathered from the first two rounds of creative practice was analysed in order to provide a set of structured guidelines aimed at generating the uncanny life and triggering the sublime experience of the puppet. At the stage of compiling the preliminary findings I called these suggestions for modes of practice guidelines, but after the final round of development and data analysis, I revised these into a smaller set labelled contributing factors, two associated with embracing the uncanny, and two the evocation of the sublime. This was to acknowledge that there was no one perfect process that sparked the imaginative feedback loop and summoned the puppet-soul and sublime thought, but rather a series of core elements based in practice that could be woven in innumerable ways in the pursuit of the transcendental power of the form.

7.1 Embracing the uncanny

In order to embrace the uncanny experience arising from engagement with the puppet it was found that a puppet-based performance should endeavour to give no cause for distrust by keeping the source of the illusion visible and offering a clear reason for the use of the puppet built into the world and the character that the object represents. With this transparency the audience was more likely to engage in the performance of the puppet with imaginative play. By creating the illusion with this degree of honesty, and not making any attempt to hide the puppeteers or the mechanisms bringing the puppets to life there was less chance

that the object would be overly rationalised and the illusion of life rejected. It was found that within this illusion, a balance needed to be found between the transparency that allowed for the uncanny to arise and the reality that was required for the building of belief in the illusion, and that it actually took relatively little, within the theatrical context, to charm an adult audience into engaging with the puppet character. Along these lines, it was discovered that distancing the operator from the puppet object was not necessary for the creation of the illusion, nor summoning the uncanny, but could be provoked if required through multiplying the number of operators on any one puppet object.

7.2 Evoking the sublime

The sublime experience was found to be located in the ontological duality of the puppet, and the way that it requires the double-vision of the audience in its perception. Double-vision was therefore found to be synonymous with the cognitive dissonance and ambiguity that were known to give rise to sublime thought. While the preliminary findings offered four distinct steps aimed towards positioning the puppet in this way, the results of the final data analysis grouped around two major movements that were responsible for gearing the performance of the puppet towards a sublime experience. The first of these was concerned with embracing the imaginative collaboration of the audience in the building of the puppet character and stretching their empathy to solidify their emotional engagement through an intermedial exchange between puppet, operator and audience. Through inviting this investment a work is able to give rise to the imagined puppet-soul within the minds of the audience as they substitute the limits of the material object with the without limit of their imaginative projections. This process of investment was revealed to draw on the double-vision of the audience, and actively seeks to present the imagined version of the puppet character as equally valid to the material reality of the puppet. With this level of dissonance at play, the true sublimity of the puppet object could then be unleashed through incorporating a moment of rupture within the work that would confront the audience with the materiality of the puppet object and, leaving them with their

imagined version of the character, foreground the rational impossibility of the act that they have witnessed and felt.

7.3 Poetics of the sublime thought

From the data collected and analysed in all three developments of the project, two key modes of sublime perception arose, each of which was concerned with a different cognitive contradiction that had been laid bare by the performance of the puppet. The first of these triggers for sublime experience identified the audience developing an awareness of the puppet object as a negative representation and the infinite nature of the imagined puppet-soul. This manifested in an emotional delight found in engaging in childlike imaginative play while rationally knowing that their projections were impossible and irrational. In this case, the sublime experience arose in marvelling at the imagination revealing itself, and what it was capable of achieving. The second thought process that seemed to regularly give rise to sublime experience was found in the rupture at the conclusion of a performance when the puppet object ceased to stand as a physical container for the character and the puppet-soul was left with the audience, highlighting the materiality of the object that had given rise to such an apparition. In this case, the sublime experience lay in the apparent impossibility that the imperfect puppet object could come to embody the ultimate notion of life and conscious thought. In all cases, the power of the physical puppet came from it being a negative representation capable of drawing on the imaginative perception of the audience to far outgrow its reality as a material object. Where the doll might come to herald "the possible absence of transcendence" (Rilke as cited in Simms, 1996, 673), the puppet did exactly the opposite, and opened the adult imagination to prove that transcendence is possible.

8.0 CONCLUSION



Figure Twenty-One: Victor breaks free of gravity and catches a firefly (Dead Puppet Society, 2010)

Three years ago, this project began as an exploration into the uses of the puppet as an object that could be manipulated in performance with the potential for generating deeply imaginative experiences. Concerned with creating a framework for practice and a language that could be used to describe that practice, I have walked with the puppets, and innumerable other artists, through numerous creative processes constantly working to conjure the flicker of life in our inanimate companions and find ways to document and discuss what we saw. In the beginning, the research drew on a gut feeling that the duality of the puppet, and the double-vision that it required of the audience, held the potential for the evocation of extraordinary perceptual experiences; an impulse that has now been validated.

Within the chaos of an emerging arts career, the project was structured using three creative practice cycles that made connections with works that I was developing outside of the university context. As such, the project as a whole stood as an extended exercise in praxis; aligning my artistic practice with a rigorous academic discipline that offered a framework through which to critically analyse my own work, and therefore steer the development of my practice with the insights that were generated. The major outcomes of the project were the three creative works that were created during the three years of investigation and this document, intended to accompany the development of this practice and offer insight into the decisions made and the process for creation. Further, the practical application of this knowledge has already been felt in the local theatre industry through the widespread critical acclaim that the presentation of each work has attracted and the establishment of the Dead Puppet Society as an Australian theatre company creating puppet works for adults and providing access to training and workshops. Although it developed alongside all three works, the scale of this following, and the artistic application of the new knowledge generated, was felt to an incredible degree during the presentation of the final work that was a tremendous commercial success, enjoying a completely sold out season and overwhelmingly positive reviews. While this was heartening for me as an artist, I believe that it also stood as the ultimate test for the project and proved an ongoing demand for this form of performance.

In an academic sense, the project has filled a gap in knowledge as to the application of the uncanny and the sublime to the puppet and discussed the potential that they offer for the transcendence of the object. Additionally, through a comparison with the figure of the doll, the research has proposed suggestions as to why the adult mind is able to engage in the illusion generated within puppet-based performance, making reference to our supressed infantile imaginations and identifying the strength of the theatrical context in reawakening these modes of perception. Further, it has labelled the puppet object as an example of Lyotard's negative representation and attributed the transcendental power of the form to this well documented phenomenon in contemporary artistic practices. Finally, in an attempt to present practical knowledge that is transferable into the creative practices of others, the project has given rise to a series of contributing factors that can be drawn upon in the creation of puppet-based work to allow an artist to actively steer the process of investment, dissonance and rupture that ultimately enable the puppet to herald the ultimate and evoke the sublime.

The power of the puppet and its ability to transcend far beyond the constraints of its material body lies in just how deeply flawed the poor things are, and the unspoiled apparitions that their imperfect bodies can draw from out imaginations. What we love is not the puppet itself, but the soul that we dream to life for it. Coming full circle, and seeing an old statement with new eyes, I see the wisdom in Kleist's (1810) whimsy that after all this, the ultimate notion of:

> *…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.*

9.0 APPENDICES

DISC ONE: Creative Cycle One – *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*, 2010

1. Script
2. Production Recording
3. Audience Survey Data (Audience Survey 1, 2010)
4. Interview Transcripts (Personal Interviews A, B & C, 2010)
5. Media and Reviews
6. Production Stills
7. Ethics Forms

DISC TWO: Creative Cycle Two – *The Harbinger*, 2011

1. Script Outline
2. Production Recording
3. Audience Survey Data (Audience Survey 2, 2011)
4. Interview Transcripts (Personal Interviews D, E & F, 2011)
5. Media and Reviews
6.Production Stills
7. Season Program

DISC THREE: Creative Cycle Three – *The Harbinger*, 2012

1. Script
2. Production Recording
3. Audience Survey Data (Audience Survey 3, 2012)
4. Interview Transcripts (Personal Interviews G, H & I, 2012)
5. Media and Reviews
6. Production Stills
7. Season Program

10.0 REFERENCE LIST

Battersby, C. (2007). *The sublime, terror and human difference*. London: Routledge.

Beeman, W.O. (1993). The anthropology of theatre and spectacle. *Annual review of anthropology, 22*, 369-393.

Bell, J. (2001). *Puppets, masks, and performing objects*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Bickerstaff, D., & Grabsky, P. (2009). *Making War Horse* [DVD]. Brighton: Seventh Art Productions.

Blumenthal, E. (1997). The life and death of puppets. *American Theatre, 14*(1), 16-19.

Blumenthal, E. (2005). *Puppetry: A world history*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Blumenthal, E. (2007). *Julie Taymor – playing with fire*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Brecht, B. (1964). *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*. In J. Willet (Trans. & Ed.). New York: Hill and Wang.

Broadhurst, S. (1999). *Liminal acts: a critical overview of contemporary performance and theory*. London: Cassell.

Carlson, M. (1996). *Performance: a critical introduction*. London: Routledge.

Chappel, F., & Kattenbelt, C. (2006). *Intermediality in theatre and performance*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Dead Puppet Society. (2010). Projects: *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*. Retrieved August 16, 2010, from http://www.deadpuppetsociety.com.au/projects/the-timely-death-of-victor-blott/

Dead Puppet Society, (2011). Projects: *The Harbinger.* Retrieved October 17, 2011, from http://www.deadpuppetsociety.com.au/projects/the-harbinger/

Dead Puppet Society. (2012). Projects: *The Harbinger*. Retrieved September 14, 2012, from http://www.deadpuppetsociety.com.au/projects/the-harbinger/

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Eide, P. (2008). At large. *Puppetry Journal, 59*(3), 12-16.

Ely, M. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: circles within circles*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Farber, J. (1993). *Brother bread, sister puppet*. Vermont: Cheap Cinematography.

Freud, S. (1919). *The uncanny.* Oxfordshire: Imago.

Gilmore, Y. (2010). *The Timely Death of Victor Blott*. Retrieved May 30, 2010, from www.australianstage.com.au/reviews

Gray, C. (1996). *No Guru, No Method?* Helsinki: UIAH.

Gray, C., & Malins, J. (2004). *Visualizing research: a guide to the research process in art and design*. Burlington: Ashgate.

Gross, K. (2011). *Puppet: An essay on uncanny life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Handspring Puppet Company. (2009). Performed London, New London Theatre. Performance: Theatre.

Handspring Puppet Company. (2002). About Us. Retrieved August 12, 2010, from http://www.handspringpuppet.co.za/html/frameind.html

Harper, J. (2012). *Part fairytale, part fable, meet The Harbinger*. Retrieved August 22, 2012, from http://www.couriermail.com.au/lifestyle/review-party-fairytale-part-fable-meet-the-harbinger/story-fn8zv21o-1226454839846

Haseman, B. (2006). A manifesto for performative research. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy, 118*, 98-106.

Haseman, B. (2007). Rupture and recognition: identifying the performative research paradigm. In E. Barrett and B. Bolt (Eds.), *Practice as research: approaches to creative arts enquiry* (pp. 147-157). London: I.B. Tauris.

Jentsch, E. (1906). *On the psychology of the uncanny*.

Jurkowski, H. (1998). *The human among things and objects*. London: BrUnima.

Kant, I. (2003). *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime* (J.T. Goldthwait, Trans.). California: University of California Press.

Kant, I. (2008a). *The critique of judgement* (J.C. Meredith, Trans.). Adelaide: eBook@Adelaide.

Kant, I. (2008b). *The critique of pure reason* (J. Meiklejohn, Trans.). MobileReference.

Kaplin, S. (1999). A puppet tree: A model for the field of puppet theatre. *The Drama Review, 43*(3), 28-35.

Kominz, L., & Levenson, M. (1990). *The language of the puppet*. Vancouver: Pacific Puppetry Centre Press.

Lampert-Gréaux, E. (2005). Curry's creatures. *Entertainment design – the art and technology of show business, 39*(4), 6-7.

Lorenzen, B. (2002). With Michael Curry in the studio. *The Puppetry Journal, 53*(3), 24-26.

Lyotard, J.F. (1991). *The inhuman: Reflections on time*. California: Stanford University Press.

Lyotard, J.F. (1994). *Lessons on the analytic of the sublime*. California: Stanford University Press.

Makyut, P., & Morehouse, R. (2004). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophical and practical guide*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Malpas, S. (2002). Sublime ascesis: Lyotard, art and the event. *Angelaki, 7*(1), 199-212.

McGuire, T. (2012). *The Harbinger (La Boite)*. Retrieved August 24, 2012, from http://www.stagemilk.com/the-harbinger-la-boite/

McNiff, K., & Whitehead, J. (2006). *All you need to know about action research*. London: Sage Publications.

Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. California: Sage Publications.

Nancy, J. (1993). The sublime offering. In J. Librett (Trans.), *Of the sublime: Presence in question* (pp. 25.54) New York: State University of New York Press.

National Theatre. (2009). *War Horse Program*. London: Dewynters.

Paska, R. (1990). Notes on puppet primitives and the future of an illusion. In L. R. Kominz and M. Levenson (Eds.), *The language of the puppet* (pp. 37-42). Vancouver: Pacific Puppetry Centre Press.

Pillow, K. (2000). *Sublime understanding: Aesthetic reflection in Kant and Hegel*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Reason, M. (2008). 'Did you watch the man or did you watch the goose?' Children's responses to puppets in live theatre. *New Theatre Quarterly, 24*(4), 337-354.

Rilke, R.M. (1978). *Some reflections on dolls*. Connecticut: New Directions.

Rogers, K. (2012). *The Harbinger: Dead Puppet Society*. Retrieved August 19, 2012, from http://www.australianstage.com.au/201208185705/reviews/brisbane/the-harbinger-%7C-dead-puppet-society.html

Rogozinski, J. (1993). The gift of the world. In J. Librett (Trans.), *Of the sublime: Presence in question* (pp. 133-156). New York: State University of New York Press.

Sauter, W. (2000). *The theatrical event: Dynamics of performance and perception*. University of Iowa Press: Iowa City.

Schechner, R. (1999). Julie Taymor: From Jaques Lecoq to *The Lion King*. *The Drama Review, 43*(3), 36-55.

Schensul, S., Schensul, J., & LeCompt, M. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, and questionnaires*. California: AltaMira Press.

Schön, D. (2006). *The reflective practitioner*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Schumann, P. (2001). What, at the end of this century, is the situation of puppets and performing objects? In J. Bell (Ed.), *Puppets, Masks and Performing Objects* (pp. 46-51). Cambridge: MIT Press.

Shershow, S.C. (1995). *Puppets and "popular" culture*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Simms, E. (1996). Uncanny Dolls: Images of Death in Rilke and Freud. *Literary History, 27*(4), 663-677.

Simon, R., & Estrin, M. (2004). *Rehearsing with Gods: Photographs and essays on the Bread and Puppet Theatre*. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.

Stringer, E. (2007). *Action research*. London: Sage Publications.

Taymor, J. (1997a). *The Lion King*. Performed New York City, Minskoff Theatre. Performance: Theatre.

Taymor, J. (1997b). *The Lion King: Pride Rock on Broadway*. New York: Hyperion.

Tillis, S. (1992). *Toward an aesthetics of the puppet: puppetry as a theatrical art*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Tillis, S. (1996). The actor occluded: puppet theatre and acting theory. *Theatre Topics, 6*(2), 109-120.

Turner, V. (1982). Liminal and liminoid in play, flow and ritual: an essay in comparative symbology. In C. Counsell & L. Wolf (Eds.), *Performance analysis: An introductory coursebook* (pp. 202-209). London: Routledge.

Van Winckel, N. (2005). The Godchild and the doll. T*he Massachusetts Review, 46*(4), 611-616.

Wagner, M. (2006). Of other bodies: The intermedial gaze in theatre. In F. Chappel & C. Kattenbelt (Eds.), *Intermediality in theatre and performance* (pp. 125-136). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Wengraf, T. (2004). *Qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage Publications.

Williams, M. (2007). Including the audience: the idea of 'the puppet' and the real spectator. *Australasian Drama Studies*, *51*, 119-134.

Wilson, P., & Milne, G. (2004). *The space between: the art of puppetry and visual theatre in Australia*. Sydney: Currency Press.

Woods, A. (2004). Puppetry in action: “Bringing together man and nature”: The theatre of Julie Taymor. *Performing Arts Resources, 23*, 225-238.