TRANCE FORMS
A Theory of Performed States of Consciousness

Ronaldo Morelos
Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2004

School of Creative Arts
The University of Melbourne
Abstract

This study investigates forms of theatre/performance practice and training that can be seen to employ “trance” states or engage the concept of “states of consciousness” as performative practice. Trance is considered to be the result of sustained involvement with detailed information that is structurally organised, invoking imaginative and affective engagements that are maintained as interactions between the performer, other performers, the environment and audience of the performance. This thesis investigates trance performance through the conceptual lens of dramatic arts practice. In their respective cultural contexts, trance and theatre attain qualities considered as sacredness.

Trance practice and performance, across a range of cultural contexts, are analysed as social processes as elements of power relations that influence the performer, audience and environment of the performance. As performance traditions and events, this study will examine strands of praxis that can be drawn from Constantin Stanislavski to Lee Strasberg to Mike Leigh; from Antonin Artaud to Samuel Beckett and Jerzy Grotowski; from the Balinese trance performance form of Sanghyang Dedari in the 1930s to the 1990s; from the Channeling practitioners in the U.S. in the 1930s to Seth and Lazaris in the 1970s to the 1990s; and from traditions of military training, performance violence, and rhetoric associated with the attacks of the 11th of September 2001 in the U.S. and its aftermath.

The purpose of this study is to develop current understandings of “trance” as a performative mode of expression and communication, and as a set of processes by which particular states of consciousness may be embodied and enacted by performers. The study focuses on the belief systems that give rise to the sense of truth, rather than the pursuit of “truth” itself. The central hypothesis of the study is that the performer is trained in and develops a set of practices by which they are able to engage imaginative and affective triggers that allow them to embody and enact particular cultural constructs that have been determined to provide a certain type of effect upon observers and the social milieu within which the performances occur. Thus, trance is said to occur when the attribution of actions and motivations of the performer is interpreted by both performer and audience as originating from beyond the performer’s normative capacities and behavioural vocabulary.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i  the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Ph.D. except where indicated,

ii  due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed ____________________
Acknowledgements

This study is greatly indebted to Peter Eckersall and Angela O’Brien for their support and guidance. I am most grateful to David Latham, Tony Yap, and all the other interviewees who participated in this study in late 2000 for their contributions. I am also grateful for the support received from the University of Melbourne, particularly from the Faculty of Arts, the School of Graduate Studies, and the Research Office. The study benefitted from the work of the university’s library staff and the staff of the School of Creative Arts over the years. In particular, Peter Morse, Ken Wach, Dennis Claringbold, Lee Christofis, Denise Varney and Paul Monaghan have all made valuable contributions to the study at various stages. Over the course of the project, the support and advice received from Moe Meyer, Brett Hough, Thomas Reuter, Richard Sallis and Kate Donelan have also been most appreciated. I am also grateful for the thorough and generous responses of the examiners, Baz Kershaw and Peta Tait.
# Table of Contents

1. **SPIRIT MATTERS** ........................................................................................................... 2
   Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 3
   Research Procedures ........................................................................................................... 8
   Towards a Theory of Performance ...................................................................................... 12
   Towards a Theory of Inductions ......................................................................................... 15
   Structure of the Thesis ........................................................................................................ 19

2. **CULTS AND AESTHETICS OF TRANCE** ................................................................... 23
   Questions of Self .................................................................................................................. 24
   The Cult of Psychological Realism ..................................................................................... 32
   A Spirituality of Sorts .......................................................................................................... 37

3. **PERFORMED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS** ............................................................. 45
   Theatre: The Meeting Ground ............................................................................................ 47
   Cultures and Narratives ...................................................................................................... 48
   Trance and Emergent Consciousness ............................................................................... 55
   Scripts or Spirits ................................................................................................................ 69
   Inductions and States ......................................................................................................... 70
   Why Consciousness? Why Trance? .................................................................................. 71

4. **PERFORMING THE MASK** .......................................................................................... 75
   Mask Induction ................................................................................................................... 77
   Induction of Spirits ............................................................................................................ 81
   The Performer in Trance .................................................................................................... 83
   Basics and Beliefs: Constructs and Contracts .................................................................. 84
   Boundaries and Building Blocks ...................................................................................... 90
   Theatre and the Possibility of Spirituality ....................................................................... 94
   Cultural Programming and Survival Techniques ............................................................ 97
   Sustainment and Interruption of States ............................................................................ 99

5. **PSYCHOLOGICAL REALISM AS PERFORMED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS** .......... 103
   From August Strindberg to Mike Leigh ............................................................................ 107
   From Moscow to Hollywood: A Cult of the Times ............................................................ 117
   Matters of Medium: Black Box to Cinema ....................................................................... 119

6. **CULTS OF THE MYSTICAL AND THE RADICAL** ..................................................... 126
   Artaud ............................................................................................................................... 130
   Beckett ............................................................................................................................. 134
   Grotowski ......................................................................................................................... 139
   Elements of Induction ....................................................................................................... 143

7. **ANGELS OF BALI AND CHANNELS OF THE NEW AGE** .......................................... 147
   Sanghyang Dedari in Bali ............................................................................................... 150
   Trance Channels in the United States .............................................................................. 165
   Exorcism and Performance .............................................................................................. 178

8. **SOCIAL DRAMA AND THE PERFORMANCE OF ROLES IN CONFLICT** ................. 184
   War and Social Drama – the Event as Initiation and Invocation ....................................... 185
   The Ethno-Political State, the Conflictual State and the Theatrical State ......................... 190
   The Paranoid Mentality – Belief and Symbolisation ....................................................... 192
   Identity and Roles – Characterisation and Culture ......................................................... 196
   Information and Isolation – the Media Factor and Cultural Memory .............................. 197

9. **THE PERFORMANCE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD** ............................................. 202
   Conceptions of Death – the Role of Religion and Imagination ....................................... 202
   Mohammed Atta – the Ringleader .................................................................................... 206
   George W. Bush – the President ...................................................................................... 220
   The Rally Effect ............................................................................................................... 237

10. **THE ROLE OF A SOLDIER: INDUCTION AND CONFLICT** .................................... 244
    Fraternal Induction and the Marine Corps ...................................................................... 244
    Special Operations Forces – the Deployment ............................................................... 254
    Conclusions on Conflict – Fundamentalisms ............................................................... 269

11. **CONCLUSIONS: PERFORMERS AND PERFORMANCES** ...................................... 274
    The Trance Performance State ....................................................................................... 276

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................ 285

APPENDIX A ...................................................................................................................... 301
   Interview Questions for Chapter 4 .................................................................................. 301

APPENDIX B ...................................................................................................................... 302
   The Last Night ................................................................................................................ 302

APPENDIX C ...................................................................................................................... 305
   Remarks from President George W. Bush ..................................................................... 305

INDEX .................................................................................................................................. 307
List of Tables, Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1: From The Age (Melbourne) 12 September 2000, p. 12.
Figure 2: Cave art in Chauvet and Lascaux in France dating back between 15,000 and 30,000 years. Photo: Jean Clottes (Chauvet) and Douglas Mazouvoicz (Lascaux).
Figure 3: A schema model of emergent consciousness based on the work of Sperry (1969-1981), Jaynes (1976), and Edelman (1992).
Figure 4: A “closed system” state that generates an experiential field.
Figure 5: Advertisement for workshops in Melbourne, 2001.
Figure 6: Ryszard Cieslak in The Constant Prince (1965). Often considered to be the definitive performer in Grotowski’s style, Cieslak became renowned for his ability to achieve what Grotowski referred to as “translumination” in performance. Photo: Teatr-Laboratorium (Source: Towards a Poor Theatre, Grotowski 1968)
Figure 7: Sanghyang Dedari performers are traditionally two pre-adolescent girls selected and trained to perform in what is considered to be a possession-trance state induced by ritual. Photo: Tatian Greenleaf
Figure 8: Sanghyang Dedari in the 1930s (left) and the 1990s (right). (Photo: Gregory Bateson, Belo 1960 and Bali Tribune Multimedia)
Figure 9: The closed eyes of the Sanghyang Dedari performer are indicators of a “trance” state. Photo: Tatian Greenleaf and Gregory Bateson
Figure 10: The moment of “kerawuhan” of the Sanghyang Dedari performer is seen to mark the beginning of the possession-trance state. Photo: Gregory Bateson and Robert S. Petersen
Figure 11: At Sanghyang Dedari performances at Ubud in 2001, for locals and tourists, the performers walk on hot coals as part of the demonstrations of a supernatural possession-trance state. Photo: Tatian Greenleaf
Figure 12: Promotional material for marketed publications and products of channeled entities Seth and Lazaris. Sources: Seth Center and Concept Synergy
Figure 13: The appeal of Seth and Lazaris was related to a desire to believe in supernatural beings and helpers, that took hold in the North American milieu, as evident in this TIME magazine issue from November 1993. Sources: Seth Center, TIME and Concept Synergy
Figure 14: Jach Pursel channeling Lazaris. Behind him, on the right, are diagrams on a blackboard that Lazaris draws with eyes closed, seen as evidence of a supernatural process at work. Source: Concept Synergy
Figure 15: From the Herald Sun (Melbourne) 12 September 2001.
Figure 16: The cycle of the confictual trance state.
Figure 17: Pamphlets used by U.S. military in Afghanistan. Translation - FRONT: “The partnership of nations is here to help”, BACK: “The partnership of nations is here to assist the people of Afghanistan” (Source: US Department of Defense)
Figure 18: The first page of the four-page “Last Night” document found in Mohammed Atta’s suitcase and two other locations. (Source: FBI National Press Office)
Figure 19: Bush is told of the second plane crash in New York, and that “America in under attack”. (Photo - Paul J. Richards, AFP)
Figure 20: U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training exercises. Photo: Michael J. Supples (Source: American Forces Press Service)
Figure 21: U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training exercises. Photo: Michael J. Supples (Source: American Forces Press Service)
Figure 22: U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training parade. Photo: Michael J. Supples (Source: American Forces Press Service)
Figure 23: U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Afghanistan operation in 2001. (Source: Associated Press)
Figure 24: A war hero is invoked. Special Forces ODA574 Texas12 with Hamid Karzai shortly before the “blue-on-blue” smart bomb incident on December 5 (left), then on January 15 Amerine received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. (Sources: From Moore 2003 and CNN)

Table 2: Excerpt from Miss Julie by August Strindberg (1888).
Table 3: Excerpt from The Search for the State of Shit in “To Have Done With The Judgment Of God” by Antonin Artaud (1947).
Table 4: Excerpt from “All Writing is Pigshit...” by Artaud. Translations from Helen Weaver (1976) in Antonin Artaud, Selected Writings and David Rattray (1965) in Antonin Artaud Anthology.
Table 5: Excerpt from Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (1954).
Table 6: Advertisement for Sanghyang Dedari performances aimed at the tourist market.
Table 7a: Songs used in Sanghyang Dedari inductions.
Table 7b: Songs used in Sanghyang Dedari exit process.
Table 8: An adapted transcript of an audiotape of a Lazaris performance. (Source: Concept Synergy, http://www.lazaris.com/publibrary/lazarismessage.cfm)
Table 10: Translation of Atta’s last will and testament.
Table 11: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.
Table 12: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.
Table 13: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.
Table 14: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.
Table 15: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.
Table 16: Excerpts from “The Last Night” document.
Table 17: Excerpt from “The Last Night” document.
Table 18: Excerpt from “Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 12 September 2001”
Table 19: Excerpt from “Address to the Nation, 7 October 2001”.
Table 20: U.S. Special Forces recruits memorise and repeat this creed in training.
Table 21: Key principles of the U.S. Special Forces.
PART ONE

Trance
I. Spirit Matters

This study is an investigation of the phenomenon of “trance”, particularly in the way that it relates to the performing arts. The study analyses models and structures which describe the experience of being “in a trance” – feelings of dissociation, possession, hypnotic states and “altered” states of consciousness. The focus of the thesis is the state of consciousness entered into by the performer in order to embody various forms of trance states. This thesis analyses the nature of the trance state, the various forms of trance practice which include channeling, shamanism, acting, spirit possession, military training and other practices. The thesis also analyses the techniques of trance performance, particularly the elements of inductions and exits of trance states.

The central proposal of this study is that “trance” can be used as a framework by which to develop the understanding of performativity and agency, through illustrating the processes by which a particular form of individual embodiment and enactment can result from culturally (group) specified parameters. The thesis is therefore concerned with the belief systems that are necessary in order to experience the various and particular states of consciousness required in the performance of trance. Out of this investigation, the ultimate aim of this thesis the development of a theory on the practice of trance in the context of the performing arts. This thesis is a study of trance as an experience and a practice.

The study frames trance as an aesthetic process, and investigates the phenomenon of trance as it relates to the practice of the performing arts by looking at the craft of the performer. By regarding the phenomenon of trance from the discipline of Performance Theory, questions of how the phenomenon functions are addressed from the point of view of the practitioner. The central hypothesis of this study is that all modes of performance – in the broadest sense – require distinct and particular states of consciousness to be salient in order to be effectively embodied and enacted, and that particular embodiments and enactments – performances – themselves generate and develop distinct states of consciousness. The central problem concerning this study is the question: how does this work? The study tests the hypotheses that there are basic processes and practices that induce and constitute the trance state; that trance practice can be regarded as a technical and aesthetic experience; that
consciousness in its many forms is comprised of symbols – beliefs and values – and when trance states access these symbols it is the beliefs and values of the consciousness that is communicated and manifested. Thus through the conceptual lens of practice, the study investigates the experience and practice of performing trance as a state of consciousness.

**Introduction**

Apart from being a study of the performed state of consciousness, this thesis is particularly concerned with a range of performance practices which employ various forms of trance states. The topic explores the concept of trance as a performative practice, while it also looks generally at the concept of states of consciousness in performance. From shamanic imagery to psychological realism, the fundamental impulse to regard human experience and potential – with the quality of self-awareness – has led us to construct ‘inner worlds’ according to our cultural, social, and psychological environments. These inner worlds emerge as self-reflections from the biological human brain, embodiment and experience – the human “organism”. These self-reflections can represent the ‘spiritual’ urge of the organism. Spirits are seen as transgressive powers and drives within a particular ‘consciousness set’, serving both to reinforce normativity as well as to release “other-ness” or transformativity – the transformative potential of the organism. The embodiment of spirit itself expresses the transformative potential of human consciousness. In trance, embodiment is a way in which the organism in turn is able to apprehend and appropriate the “other”. Central to the processes of comprehension and appropriation is the identification of the “self” and the “other”. The act of identification is an act of definition. One is identified as, with, or be identified by, in an act of definition. Identification is a process, identity is the product. This study is primarily concerned with the process. The performative act of identification is both a capacity and a susceptibility. The strength of an act of identification and the degree of involvement generated are evaluated along a continuum between “pretending” and “being” – indicating the apparent levels of commitment to performance imperatives. The act of identification is both learnt and activated. This is the sense in which the term “spirit” is employed in this study – the

“animating or vital principle” and “that which gives life to the physical organism in contrast to its purely material elements”.

The thesis examines belief systems. A “belief” is considered to be the “conviction of the truth of some statement or the reality of some being or phenomenon especially when based on examination of evidence” or “a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing”. “Beliefs” are the basic and implicit assumptions – statements that are internalised – which encapsulate an understanding of the self, its environment and its existence. Through our beliefs, we define our environment, our existence, and our identity. ‘Belief systems’ are the clusters of assumptions through which we regard and develop our sense of our selves and of our world; clusters which are comprised of both individualised and socialised elements. Some of these assumptions are shared with others, while some are unique or uncommon. Belief systems are of particular importance to this thesis, in that the performing arts necessitate the manipulation of beliefs through the heightening of particular ones and the reduction of certain others for the duration of a performance. The ‘suspension of disbelief’ required of audiences and performers is the convention by which the world of the performance is entered. Constantin Stanislavski considered “truth” to be inseparable from belief particularly in relation to dramatic performance. It is possible to substitute the word “truth” with the word “reality” in this assertion in order to align with post-modern sensibilities.

To clarify what is generally believed by the key terms of the title, it is useful to look at the Oxford English Dictionary definitions of these terms. “Trance” is seen as “a state ...(a) prolonged suspension of consciousness ...(a) cataleptic or hypnotic condition ...(a) state between sleeping and waking ...(a) stunned or dazed state ...(a) state of mental abstraction from external things ...(a) absorption, exaltation, rapture, ecstasy”. The term “conscious” is viewed as a quality of “having the witness of one’s own judgement or feelings ...inwardly sensible or aware ...having internal perception of a fact, of one’s sensations, feelings, thoughts, of external objects ...having one’s mental faculties actually in an active and waking state ...aware of what one is doing or intending to do ...having a purpose and intention in one’s actions ...aware of itself, aware of its own existence”. “Consciousness” is considered to be “the state or fact of being mentally

---

3 From the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition) entry on “spirit”.
4 From the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (10th edition) entry on “belief”.
conscious or aware of anything ...regarded as the normal condition of healthy waking life ...as a condition and concomitant of all thought, feeling, and volition”. “Consciousness” can also refer to the “totality of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings, which make up a person’s conscious being ...a collective faculty to an aggregate of (individuals) ...so far as they think or feel in common”.6

The idea of “consciousness” is also understood to have both individual and social dimensions. These dimensions are made possible and apprehensible through forms of language, as the element that “weaves together the fabric of our society”.7 The phenomenon of trance has also been described as “a temporary state of consciousness” that is experienced as a “transcendence” of the sense of the “normal self” through an “intensification” of “mental or physical” processes.8 This transcendence of normativity can also be seen to be constructed and experienced through linguistic systems.

Trance, as a performative practice, accesses an aspect of the “fabric” of language that is revealed to its audience, as highly symbolic and significant. Such aspects resonate profoundly through the sense of being – resonating meaning by activating abstractions and conceptualisations that make up the wellspring of the total individual experiential memory of the organism. In order for trance to resonate meaning, it must be culturally accessible. The power that it invokes is contained in its symbolic value. This thesis concerns itself with the “acted trance” as it does with the “dissociated trance”. It is not the concern of this thesis to attempt to definitively distinguish between the “acted” and “dissociated”, as it is my belief that these qualities belong in a spectrum of practice that has been constructed as “trance”.

Consciousness is effectively generated by such factors as language, behaviour, drives, as well as memory in the form of recollections and reflections, beliefs and emotions. Our ‘inner worlds’ – our worlds of constructs – are built upon these elements. These elements comprise our field of types and templates. Our conceptualisations and our abstractions determine the quality of our perceptions and experiences. Thus the organism generates a field of consciousness – an attuned awareness that is aware of its own self and of others.

6 From the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition) entries on “trance”, “conscious” and “consciousness”.
Central to the problem of consciousness is the notion of identity – who or what is aware. Identity can serve as a designation of a particular consciousness set. It is possible to talk about consciousness sets that are designated along regional and/or linguistic terms, such as an Australian consciousness, or a European consciousness. Indeed, the languages (verbal et al) that we communicate with, as well as the settings and styles in which we live, greatly influence the consciousness that we develop. To talk about a Chinese consciousness, for example, is to focus upon a particular field of values, linguistic behaviours, cultural memory, as ‘filters’ of perception and experience. Within these fields of memory there are the subsets and mutations. Furthermore, subcultures often emerge as a response to a dominant cultural paradigm. On the level of individuals, there are also differentiations. On the social level, drives which serve as normative pressures and subversive influences are observable.

A basic element of the filters of perception and experience is found in the selection and association of memories which occur in the process of ‘narratisation’ – the formulation and recollection of ongoing stories which become the ways by which we make sense of our individual and collective experiences.\(^9\) Narratisation of experience allows us the ability to organise memory in ways that are consistent with our particular internalised belief systems. Narratisation can also describe the process by which we formulate and reinforce our belief systems. This narratisation – and its subsequent patterning in the process of ‘historicisation’ – is further organised on a social level by dominant cultural fields and by dominant consciousness sets.

The experiences that are defined as the “self” and as the “normal” or “everyday” aspects of existence represent the sense of normativity that serves as the functional bedrock of meaning-making processes engaged in on individual and group levels. The experience defined as “real” represents measures of authenticity and authority by which individual and group values are determined and defined, and by which imaginative and affective experiences are apprehended and categorised.

In this study, trance is considered to be the result of sustained involvement with detailed information that is structurally organised, invoking imaginative and affective engagements that are maintained as interactions between the performer, other

---

performers, the environment and audience of the performance. Trance states are maintained and heightened by degrees of belief emerging from acts of identification engaged in by performers and audiences. Therefore, the notion of trance is used as a way of conceptualising and understanding the departures from normativity – the transgressions and transcendence of ordinary “everyday” experience – that are engaged in by the performer and to a certain extent by the audience of the performance. Trance is seen as a mechanism by which to grasp the dynamics of dissociative phenomena. Trance is also is regarded as a way of understanding the motivation of actors in performance.

Therefore, the term “state of consciousness” describes a quality of awareness. In trance, this quality is often identified as a similar quality to that which is found in the hypnotic state. This thesis looks at this quality of awareness as one that is based on beliefs. The belief systems of the organism, to a large degree, determine the quality of experience of that being. Beliefs are the filters through which we see our reality. Phenomena such as trance represent shifts and alterations in the “normal” filters that we ordinarily or routinely use to perceive and interpret our experiences. Gilbert Rouget described “trance” as “a transcendence of one’s normal self, as a liberation resulting from the intensification of a mental or physical disposition, ...as an exaltation ...of the self”.\(^{10}\) However, the problems and limitations inherent in the notion of a “normal” self cannot be allowed to detract from the central investigation. In studies of hypnosis, trance has been described as a “result of ideas, associations, mental processes and understandings” that are induced by “the communication of ideas and the eliciting of trains of thought and associations”\(^{11}\) – a view that highlights the notion that “trance” states result from interactions with others and the environment, through which imaginative and affective involvement is achieved. Trance is viewed as a state of consciousness, as well as a social-psychological process and a mode of embodiment. Therefore, this study also considers the notion of a trance of “normativity” – wherein the trains of thought and associations, that determine the qualities embodied and enacted, are based upon group-defined expectations of “normal” experiences and functions. These perspectives reveal the various aspects of trance.

---

\(^{10}\) Rouget: p. 14

Research Procedures

This study employs case study analyses, participant observations, practitioner interviews, performance accounts and reports as data which are processed along a grounded theory model. Through interviews with and accounts of performers and practitioners in various performing arts, trance practice, social drama and cultural traditions, the study investigates various aspects of trance states with regard to a broad range of performance practices. For one section of the study, subjects were asked in interviews to respond to a number of questions on the subjects of trance, consciousness and performance. Subjects were asked to discuss any experiences they might have had that may be considered to be trance states, particularly those experiences that were related to the performing arts. Some subjects were interviewed more than once in order to follow up lines of inquiry. Performers and practitioners were also observed (at times documented on video) in performances, in rehearsals and in workshops. In other sections of the study, literature on and accounts of performative practices from a range of social and cultural traditions are utilised to develop an understanding of “trance” that focuses on the beliefs and processes by which particular states of consciousness are embodied and enacted.

The investigator in this study comes from a background of dramatic arts training, teaching and professional practice in addition to a grounding in the academic discipline of Theatre and Performance Studies. Therefore the study has focused quite extensively on the experience and process of performance and training. This focus was reflected in the application of the research methodology.

This study begins with a review of literature related to the subject and the problems implied. The literature reviewed has been drawn from the field of Psychology in relation to the question of consciousness particularly with regard to “altered” states as well as the practice and theory of hypnosis; from the field of Anthropology in relation to the inter-cultural study of trance practice and related phenomena; and from the field of Performance Theory in relation to the craft of the performer and states of consciousness that are implicated. The review of literature pointed to the importance of belief systems as they related to the practice and the perception of trance states. The literature also indicated the presence of a set of commonalities in the various practices which employ trance states. These commonalities, together with due consideration of the differences suggested, offer a basis for a theory of performed states of
consciousness. Another focus of the study has been on an initial batch of interviews of practitioners in the fields of dance and drama. As preliminary fieldwork, the interviews had been essential in testing the lines of questioning to be employed, as well as some of the key concepts that have been suggested by the literature and that were dealt with in the study. The interviews had also been most useful in identifying practitioners and lines of inquiry that were later investigated as in-depth case studies of practice.

This study necessarily owes its development to Anthropology, Sociology, Neurology, Psychology, Philosophy and Aesthetics. However, this thesis is constructed within the discipline of Performance Theory. The theoretical approach of the thesis is necessarily located both in actor training discourses and in reception theory. Trance performance cannot occur without an audience, and a performance cannot be perceived as trance unless it is framed and prepared as such - it is an interaction, a conversation, between the craft of the performer and the performance context of its audience. Given the porous nature of Performance Theory, the relationship between actor training discourse and reception theory requires elaboration in the development of the understanding of trance as performative practice. The purpose of this study is to identify processes of embodiment that occur in theatrical and social spaces, and to investigate the meaning-making processes that occur in such spaces. As such, it faces the challenge of negotiating a vocabulary that acknowledges the legacy of all these traditions, whilst maintaining a level of validity that is both acceptable to these traditions of knowledge and may contribute to the development of these traditions, as well as to the discipline of Theatre and Performance Studies, that is its own grounding.

In terms of performance traditions, this study examines strands of praxis that are drawn from Constantin Stanislavski to Lee Strasberg; from Antonin Artaud to Samuel Beckett and Jerzy Grotowski; from the Balinese trance performance form of Sanghyang Dedari in the 1930s to the 1990s; from the Channeling practitioners in the U.S. in the 1930s to Seth and Lazaris in the 1970s to the 1990s; and from traditions of military training, performance violence, and rhetoric associated with the attacks of the 11th of September 2001 in the U.S. and its aftermath. The various practices investigated are considered to be primarily symbolic and aesthetic phenomena emerging from the embodiments and enactments of performers; the primary focus of the thesis shall be the experience of such phenomena from the perspectives of the practitioners of trance performance. By analysing these performance traditions as case
studies, this thesis investigates the processes by which beliefs shape performances of both normativity and the transgressions of that sense of the “normal” or “everyday” situation and identity. By examining these traditions historically, adaptations and progressions that indicate evolving practices and traditions are discernible. Accounts of performers, observers, and various analyses are useful in revealing the elements of practice and training that facilitate the invocation of the necessary states of performance. The theory of performance developed in this study draws upon contemporary theories of consciousness, hypnosis, communication, culture, social and political organisation.

To perform is to act. The performance paradox first problematised by Denis Diderot in the 18th century\(^\text{12}\) – the tensions between the performance and experience of emotion or action – is important to this study. The considerations, initiated by Diderot and then further considered by other theorists like William Archer in the 19th century,\(^\text{13}\) constitute some of the foundations of this study. But before becoming fully involved in reconsidering the “psychology of acting” it is important to acknowledge some of the central elements in contemporary understandings of the notion of theatrical performance. We perform acts every moment of our lives; our acts sustain our existence and are evidence of life. Therefore, what differentiates ‘performed’ action from ‘ordinary’ action? The term ‘performance’ is usefully defined by Eric Bentley and Peter Brook in their respective definitions of ‘theatre’. Both described theatre as a phenomenon comprising of three essential elements. Bentley believed that in the theatrical situation, “the distinction between art and life” can be reduced to a minimum wherein “A impersonates B while C looks on”.\(^\text{14}\) Brook refers to an empty space that is taken as the bare stage upon which someone walks across whilst someone else is watching, and considered this to be “all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged”.\(^\text{15}\) In these descriptions, 1) a player 2) performs a function 3) to an observer.

However, in the context of this study the notion of ‘performance’ is considered to include the execution of any action or expression that involves some prior preparation and the regard of an individual or collective organism other than the performer. In this sense it is important to consider the definition of ritual and performance, that Richard


Schechner offers, as “restored behavior” – behavior that is repeated and rehearsed. The processes investigated in this study are employed to varying degrees in conventionally recognised trance performance, in theatre and drama practices, and in social and cultural practices. This study investigates the experience of the performer in these dynamics, and the elements that are required for effective performance. In particular, this study investigates the qualities of consciousness that are conducive to the invocation of the transformative potential of the performance event. Actors can perform in various parahypnotic states wherein events ‘really happen’. The level of belief that the actor manages to generate internally can impact upon the ‘believability’ of the performance and the level of ‘suspension of disbelief’ that is effected in its audience.

This study is also concerned with the performance of states of consciousness in the broad social and cultural setting. Jon McKenzie provides a conceptual framework by which to investigate performativity in the context of “actuality” or in “real world” events. McKenzie discusses three areas of study that converge upon the notions of “performance” and “performativity” – Performance Studies focusing on “cultural” performances, Performance Management focusing on “organisational” performances, and Techno-Performance focusing on “technological” performances. McKenzie argues that as these modes of performance come to be seen as “embedded in one another”, the understanding of performance as “a mode of power” becomes more possible. Thus, performance is seen as “the stratum of power/knowledge” in order to regard “discursive performatives” and “embodied performances” in their normative and transformative “potentialities”. Using these frameworks, it becomes possible to investigate the phenomenon of trance in performance in the context of the social drama in which it is embedded.

The uses of single and double quotation marks throughout this study, where they do not indicate direct quotes, represent appeals to the critical faculty of the reader when such terms are encountered. As an investigation of meaning and beliefs, it is important to approach some terms and phrases with a degree of reservation in order to regard the ways in which ideas become embodied and enacted knowledge. By doing so, this study strives to analyse the performativity of the language of knowledge.

---

Towards a Theory of Performance

This study is concerned with the application of the conceptual framework of “trance” as performed states of consciousness to develop a broad theory of performance. The trance state is considered to be a form of concentration – of intensified and focused attention. However, to say that trance is simply strong mental focus would be incomplete; it requires affective, imaginative and active involvement. Trance requires more than just mental effort, Jerzy Grotowski talks about the “total act”,18 this study is concerned with the embodiment and enactment of belief (imagination). As case studies in the coming chapters will demonstrate, the elaboration of trance as a conceptual framework illuminates the processes by which agency and responsibility are both attributed and experienced. The performances of trance states are investigated to develop the understanding of the types of processes and concepts that are deemed necessary for a successful or effective performance. The trance practitioner is a performer in the sense that they use their own self as the instrument of a “framed” expression – an experience held and staged as an event imbued with conventions and significances, i.e. culturally loaded.

This study is centrally concerned with the beliefs that frame and facilitate performances of particular states of consciousness. The engagement of such beliefs require the performer to become sufficiently prepared to embody and enact the essential elements of the social and cultural expectations encapsulated by those beliefs. Both Stanislavski and Strasberg, for instance, repeatedly emphasise the notion that the actor requires the faculty of susceptibility, “the wakening of belief in the actor”.19 This study assumes that the performed trance and the hypnotic trance are closely related. It is not so much a framing of performed trance as hypnosis, rather it is an investigation of related phenomena and what that relationship reveals about the dynamics of such performative states. Hypnotisability can be related to the ability and propensity to “suspend disbelief”, suggesting that a performer’s ability to engage in and sustain characterisation is related to the measures of hypnotisability; further suggesting that features of personality and identity systems observed in hypnotisability measures are related to the process of characterisation.20
The ideas of Denis Diderot, in the essay *The Paradox of the Actor* (1830), triggered the early debates on whether an actor should or should not feel the emotions they portray on stage. Diderot himself never published this essay, it had a limited audience by 1774 and it was found and posthumously published.21 Diderot argued that an actor cannot be truly involved in the emotions and passions of their characters, or they would “lose” themselves in those emotions and passions – they become dissociated. What he was fundamentally arguing for was an emphasis on technicality as a “method of creativity”. Many have since countered Diderot’s arguments and a split has been recorded in the dramatic arts between schools of “external” and “experienced” acting. However, Diderot seemed to be touching upon the need for an “executive faculty” or a “hidden observer” state of consciousness – arguably a necessity for any effective performer since the “invention” of drama itself. Unfortunately for Diderot, the assumption he made was that emotions and passions in themselves were the causes of dissociation, rather than perhaps the levels of self-centred absorption in such affective states.22

The problem of performers “losing” themselves in the performance is certainly central to developing an understanding of the trance performance state. It is important to consider the notions that make up the idea of “self” for the performers and their audiences, and how the boundaries between “self” and “not-self” have been defined. These problems are concerned with the nature and understanding of the concept of “identity”. This study considers the framework of identity to be dynamic and malleable, as well as socially and culturally defined. To attempt to arrive at a notion of identity that can claim to apply across differing social and cultural contexts would be highly presumptive. Instead this study considers the acts of identification that individuals and groups engage in within their respective contexts. The “normal self” is invoked as a problematic concept in this study, and one which serves as a reference point that is invariably cited in defining the “trance” experience. Furthermore, this study is centrally concerned with the types of interactions that individuals and groups engage in with others and their environment, as performative and communicative acts that further elaborate upon the “self” definitions applied.

In these considerations, this study draws upon and develops some key propositions that can be traced back to the “symbolic interactionism” advanced by Charles Cooley in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) and George Herbert Mead in *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), and taken up by Frank Tannenbaum in *Crime and the Community* (1938), Edwin Lemert in *Social Pathology* (1951), Howard Becker in *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963), and Thomas Scheff in *Labeling Madness* (1975). The “labeling theory” that has resulted is useful because its premise is that meaning and the image of the self is produced through interactions with others. The definition of a situation and the perception of self adopted impacts upon an individual’s position within a group. However, whereas labeling theory focuses on the dynamics of behavioural “deviance” or “deficit” – criminality, abnormality, or disability – this study undertakes the development of an understanding of the processes by which transformative and normative modes of performativity are intentionally embodied and enacted. Therefore, the acts of identification involved in a performance event require a thorough analysis of the context and content of the embodiment and enactment.

For example, this study considers two types of trance states in channeling traditions – the improvised consultations and the set pieces addressing a larger audience. Improvised pieces are dialogical and highly interactive, they engage the audience and its concerns, responses to which are derived from the particular cultural memory or field of interaction represented by the channeled entity. In contrast, set pieces are demonstrative and illustrative, they reveal some of the “extra-ordinary” or “supernatural” qualities of the trance state personality or entity. This thesis concerns itself with the subjective experiences of these variances. The differences in these trance states reveal some important qualities of the performative and communicative acts that comprise these states. The improvised consultations are highly reliant upon the practitioner’s capacities for empathy and abilities to discern non-verbal signals, whilst being informed by the character complex and objectives of the channeled entity. The set pieces require the practitioner to be more reliant upon the communicative intent and content of the channeled entity’s performances as demonstrations of authority.

---

One report of a channeling workshop describes a facilitator – as a channeled entity – advising participants on the necessity “to trust the feelings... impressions” that “came to them when they opened up to channeling”. In doing so, the facilitator describes a similar process to working with “impulse” particularly in the context of improvisation in performance. Impulses, feelings, or impressions activate the instrument, the body of the performer. The parallel concerns of “creativity and insight” sought in channeling practice and the “creative state” proposed by Stanislavski point to the states of consciousness by which the imaginative faculty of the performer is developed and employed in performance.

Trance states and performances are loaded with themes that are historic, mythic, futuristic, or realistic – depending upon the cultural values and needs of its audiences and practitioners. Therefore the trance performance necessarily communicates symbolic and aesthetic qualities that suggest an “other” world. Such symbolic and aesthetic qualities are integral to the induction procedures of trance performances, and to the dramatic characterisations of a wide range of performance traditions.

**Towards a Theory of Inductions**

Words uttered, events experienced, written and recorded artefacts constitute the consciousness and, then, the drive and memory of the organism. The ability of the organism to make sense of its existence and experience greatly influences that particular organism's actions and expressions. Central to this study is the consideration of a theory of inductions by which the experiential and perceptual filter of the performer is invoked and disrupted.

Inductions are “internalisations” of particular values and beliefs by which the actions or expressions of the organism are governed and compelled. The process of “internalisation” is a process of memorisation and uncritical acceptance of information, the attribution of definitions – meanings – as justification and valuation of action or choice. Habituation is also a process of internalisation. Motivation is the internalised belief system which most readily or directly influences decisions and actions. Such processes are elaborated upon in psychological studies concerned with the ways in

The internalisation is effected through processes that are described as hypnotic; and the body of the practitioner performs accordingly.

Hypnosis is a cooperative interaction. The hypnotic contract requires that the client or audience suspension of disbelief or engage in particular conventions, and to partake in specific belief systems. Hypnosis is necessarily a collaborative process – a practice by which compliance is elicited. Hypnosis occurs as a part of routine or ordinary existence and experience, in daily social interactions and roles. In performing arts practice, the process by which a performer ‘makes an offer’ to fellow performers serves as an initiating step in such an interaction – the offer can only be as compelling as it is hypnotic.

This study argues that trance is a conventional process, reliant upon group conventions and expectations. Each state of consciousness is governed by sets of implicit or explicit conventions and expectations within which an individual performs a character, role or function. Bodily functions and sexual acts can be described as trance states, as different states of presence. But who is present? The self is, in effect, constantly reconstructed within models of existence. The ways of organising experiences are to do with the narratives that are created around, and identified with, such experiences. These are the memory sets that we use to make sense of existence. These are the different memory sets that we enact and embody, that we activate, in performance states.

What follows is a preliminary consideration of the process of induction, its intentions and its perceptions or measures of efficacy. Further reflections on the techniques employed in induction, which are interpreted as social, physical and psychological processes, are developed later in the study. These reflections are presented as speculations on the factors that contribute to successful induction, and the qualities or the context of the states of consciousness that are achieved.

There can be said to be seven basic elements in the process of induction. These elements do not necessarily function in the same sequential order with each particularity, nor would they always occur as distinct stages. They involve processes and sensations. They can be seen as developing strands of experience. The induction
process begins with the individual. The individual experiences an identification process, an intensified involvement, a sense of isolation from the “normal” environment, a certain amount of instruction, a sense of initiation, an invocation process, and the imagination of the individual must be activated and engaged. The induction procedure resolves into a process of interaction with the environment. These are basic elements of the induction process.

**Identification**

A primary objective of an induction process is the reframing of an individual’s sense of self – their identity. If the individual is to adopt and internalise a particular cluster of values, that cluster is effectively encapsulated by a consciousness set with an identity structure. The identity structure is of an individual or a group nature, as such it represents a particular set of characteristics and values that is both internalised and invoked by the individual. Such identity structures are seen to emerge from acts of identification engaged in by the performers.

**Involvement**

The process of induction requires the intensified involvement of the individual in order to take effect. This intensification of involvement can take the form of an act of concentration – as in the focusing of attention upon an object – or an act of limitation – as in the confining of attention to particular objects. Intensified involvement is an essential preparation for the sense of “heightening” of subjective experience, as well as for the generating of states of receptivity to relevant stimuli in the individual.

**Isolation**

The individual must be isolated from their “normal” environment for the duration of an induction process. The duration of the isolation greatly varies depending upon the particular induction process, it may be a matter of minutes or a matter of weeks. The isolation does not necessarily entail the physical separation of the individual from their “normal” environment. The isolation is achieved through mental and psychological processes. Extended induction procedures generally require a physical form of isolation; whereas inductions utilised in an established practice generally invoke a sense of isolation through mental techniques which employ intensified involvement.
Instruction

The individual may learn a certain amount of information and technique in the induction process. The individual may be guided along a particular direction of development. The individual may undergo an indoctrination process during the induction procedure. Instructions are necessary as signposts in the experience of induction particularly when the individual is put into states of receptivity or passivity. The instruction prepares the individual intellectually and affectively for the performance. The instruction drives the induction process by focusing the individual’s attention upon the preparations for performance.

Initiation

The induction process gives the individual a sense of initiation into a cult – a “closed system” of beliefs and values – or a social entity. The initiation itself might be in the form of a ceremony or a rite. The individual may experience the initiation as an invoked sense of belonging to a particular entity, especially in an induction procedure that is used as part of an established practice. What is essential in the experience is the sense of having been initiated – the sense that one is entitled and equipped to engage in a particular practice.

Invocation

The individual must learn or utilise an invocation process in the course of an induction procedure. The invocation is the act of bringing about the state or the process that is required. The invocation is a mental preparation and a trigger for the trance practice state – the individual achieves this by involving the imagination in the process of initiating particular psychological and physical processes through the use of “inner world” actions. The invocation process produces the necessary suspension of the “normal” sense of self, in order to be replaced by the state of consciousness that was learnt or discovered in the course of induction.

Imagination

The imagination of the individual must be engaged and activated by the induction procedure. The imagination represents the ability of the individual to focus on a sense or an image which brings about the appropriate state of consciousness and the social-psychological process that is required. The individual might imagine a predetermined set of internal actions – as in the case of an induction procedure in an established
practice – or an undetermined flow of internal actions and images – as in the case of performances that utilise improvised interactions.

**The Closed System**

These elements function within a system of processes that can attain a condition of being “closed” as a cycle. In attaining such a “closed” state, a dynamic is generated by which a field of experience comes into existence. Whilst the cycle is maintained, the sense of the “reality” of the experience continues, at different times becoming heightened or diminished according to the “intensity” or momentum within the closed system. Such a system is activated by training, preparation, interaction, as well as by events or conventions.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The first part of the study considers the different types of trance states, as well as the current understanding of the nature of trance states. In the first three chapters, the study necessarily deals with the notion of consciousness and the notion of states. Central to this is the body of work that comes from research into the practice of hypnosis. It has been considered that the nature and techniques of hypnosis practice parallel many of the processes and understandings employed in performing arts practice and training. This study is concerned with these commonalities in so far as it reveals something about the influence which belief systems have upon the experience and perception of performance forms. Also central to these considerations is the constructed senses of identity, the notion of ‘roles’ – as social expectations – and the nature of memory. This section of the study considers the factors which influence human action and communication to the extent in which they relate to the performing arts. In chapter four, the study investigates the techniques that are employed by practitioners of trance performance, towards the consideration of the various essential elements of the contemporary practice of Mask performance and training, as well as contemporary practices that employ the notion of trance as performance. In particular, this study considers the key elements in the induction and in the exit of trance states. Inductions are the processes by which trance states are brought about or entered into. Inductions can also be seen to mark, in a ritualised form, the beginning of a trance performance. Therefore the induction serves as both a triggering mechanism and a training for the trance state. Similarly, the exit procedures are the processes by which
the trance state is terminated and by which the return to the ‘normal’ environment of the practitioner is initiated. The exit procedure can also be said to mark the ending of a trance performance state. Although the impacts of these processes are likely to be felt by both the practitioner and the observer, this study is primarily concerned with the experience of the performer of the trance state rather than the experience of the audience of the trance performance.

The second part of the study investigates the notion of ‘trance’ as it relates specifically to performing arts practice. A range of performance styles from different cultural contexts are looked at from the perspective of a theory of performed states of consciousness. In chapter five, the performance style proposed by August Strindberg, and the practice and theory developed by Constantin Stanislavski then later by Lee Strasberg are examined. As parts of a continually evolving belief system with clear practical performance applications, they have, arguably, had a profound influence upon the globalised culture of the 20th century – as the ‘cult of Psychological Realism’. Other performance styles to be considered include the style developed and utilised by British film-maker Mike Leigh. In chapter six, the study investigates the performative modes proposed by key practitioners of the Avant Garde performance tradition of the first half of the 20th century – Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, and Jerzy Grotowski. The work of these practitioners are considered in the context of the discursive streams they represent and in contrast to the traditions of Realism to which they were responding. In chapter seven, as a further contrast, a performative mode which is conventionally recognised as a trance performance practice is investigated, in the example of the Balinese trance form Sanghyang Dedari. This particular performance style is regarded in the fullness of its practice, from recruitment to training to induction, from performance to exit. Finally, the practice and cultural phenomenon of ‘channeling’ is analysed, particularly from the point of view of the question of the source of communications and material produced in trance performance. The practice of channeling is a major influence in the broader cultural phenomenon of the ‘Human Potential’ movement; as such, it is an ideal case study of a developing belief system fostered by and leading to developments within a particular cultural field. Further, the textual basis and nature of the practice of channeling provide an example of the roles of language and symbolism in the process of trance performance.
The third part of the study analyses the idea of ‘trance’ in broad terms of human endeavour, to consider further the notion of ‘roles’ and ‘culture’ as they relate to human action in the ‘real’ world. A key aspect of this consideration is the idea that trance states apply to a wider range of human processes than is generally accepted. In chapters eight and nine, the study looks at the trance state that is induced by powerfully charged instances of social drama and conflict such as the events of the 11th of September 2001 in the United States, through the performances of key players in this drama – Mohammed Atta and George W. Bush – and through the impacts that these events had on their primary audience groups. In chapter ten, the study considers the type of trance state that can be said to be enculturated and induced in fraternal military cults such as the United States Marine Corps and Army Special Forces, where the performance of required actions can at times take on life-and-death proportions. In this sense, the trance state in its essential form is considered to be the utilisation of intense absorption and concentration, which serves to alter the subject’s sense of identity and values, in order to facilitate the performance of particular actions and behaviours as motivated by particular ways of perceiving and experiencing existence. The states of consciousness which give rise to various and particular forms of action or behaviour will be shown to be induced through various techniques and environments. This part of the study considers a range of different types of trance states, and the belief systems which are essential in the production of such states.

The final part of the study considers the implications of the research findings in relation to the field of Performance Theory. In chapter eleven, the notion of performed states of consciousness is regarded in its potential to make sense of the broad range of related phenomena such as multiple personalities, the notion of roles, possession, dissociation, and cultural normativity. Although the conclusions of the study are grounded in the discipline of Performance Theory, the scope offered includes the various ways in which the embodied presence is manifested and interpreted, whether it be seen as demonic or therapeutic or artistic. In a fundamental sense, this study is concerned with the way in which the human organism interacts with and is influenced by others and the environment – the way in which the state of consciousness of the organism determines the actions that it performs.

The purpose of this study is to develop current understandings of “trance” as a performative mode of expression and communication, and as a set of processes by
which particular states of consciousness may be embodied and enacted by performers. Initially this study investigates performance practices that are conventionally regarded as performing arts. The analysis broadens to encompass performance traditions found within social and cultural contexts that regard and accommodate notions of trance as a performative component of a belief system. Finally, the study broadens once more to encompass performative processes that are played out in the context of social drama – in what is thought of as the arena of actuality. Through these investigations, this study will apply and develop the conceptual framework of “states of consciousness” as a basis for understanding the processes by which qualitatively distinct performances – as the embodiment and enactment of particular discursive streams – are induced in respective performers. This study undertakes the development of a theory of inductions and performance to account for the processes by which the performer is trained and enculturated in various traditions and modes of performance, and the aesthetic processes by which such performances generate particular beliefs and states in both the performer and the audience of the performance. The following two chapters investigate, more closely, historical notions of “trance” and “consciousness” to begin to unravel the mysteries that surround such notions. The frameworks within which belief systems coalesce as significant influential factors for individuals and groups are regarded through the notion of “cults” in order to understand the processes by which adequate levels of commitment and conviction to particular definitions of “reality” are evoked and developed in the performer and their audience, and by which particular performances can influence and shape both the immediate and the broader social and cultural milieu. As examples, the study briefly considers the conceptual frameworks of “psychological realism” and “spirits” in order to develop an understanding of the discursive streams that have determined the more widely-held views of the notions of “trance” and “consciousness”, as well as to develop an understanding of the influence of such conceptual frameworks upon the embodiment and enactment of normative and transformative ideals.
2. Cults and Aesthetics of Trance

Quests and Spirituality

This study is primarily concerned with beliefs and techniques. However it is also concerned with what drives those beliefs and techniques. This thesis argues that trance performance represents a field of practice, which includes theatre practice, that accesses and forms collective cultural memory. Because of its liminal resonance, trance is a window into reflective thought or inspired intuition. While trance taps into the field of ideals and transcendence, it must maintain a link with the actuality of daily concerns and the dialogues of trance performances with its audiences must concern themselves as such.

Trance practice thrives on the belief of transcendence of the material realm, into the realms of concepts and ideas, the realms of intelligence and intuition – realms that are commonly described and conceptualised as “spiritual”. This thesis views spirituality as a phenomenon emergent of these realms of concepts and ideas, of intelligence and intuition. By doing so it attempts to bridge the mystical and scientific through such spans as theories of “emergent interactionist” consciousness, the notion of “narratisation”, hypnosis research, communications theory, and many others.

Trance states are often invoked as facilitative agents of healing practices. This potential to heal serves as a benefit derivable from many trance practices, and thus a rationale for such practices. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to test these claims to efficacy, this study is concerned with the manner in which those claims are made and supported. Where possible, this study, examines the measurable responses of the audiences of the performance, but is not centrally concerned with such responses, as core evidence.

Historical Views

Trance as performance is often seen from the context of ritual activity. It can also viewed from the perspective of theatre, as it contains the essential elements of
theatrical activity, i.e. performer, performance and observer. The practice of trance performance must be viewed in the context of its historical documentation – particularly those produced before the 1950s. Many of these early records, with their underlying held assumptions, tended to frame experiences of trance performance as either symptoms of primitive/pagan tendencies or pathological tendencies harnessed for the benefit of a cultural practice. Belief systems were viewed inevitably in comparison to a Western-based scientific paradigm which asserts and assumes superiority over that which it observes and contemplates. This study is an investigation of the cultural context that spawns trance practice, but more specifically it is a study of the practice itself, of which performance is but one aspect.

This study begins by analysing the ways in which the phenomenon of trance performance has been accounted for and explained in studies in the past. The following table (See Table 1) considers various models of analyses that have been applied in the study of “spirit possession”. Though distinctions can and have been drawn between the practices of trance and spirit possession, this study considers the relationship between these practices to be defined by the employment of belief systems that enable the performance of states of consciousness which are transgressive of the “normal” or “natural” identity structures by which the performers are otherwise known in the service of a definable social and cultural complexes that are embodied or enacted by such performers.

**Questions of Self**

The issue of dissociation has been central to the question of trance. Multiple personalities and dissociative tendencies have long fascinated psychologists, psychiatrists and neurologists. At the core of this fascination is the problem of “self”. The issue pertains to the sense of communal or personal identity; it also pertains to the attribution of responsibility. Is Hamlet responsible for an injury ‘he’ might cause at a performance, or is it the actor playing Hamlet, or is it the theatre company that stages the production?

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Functionalist models  | * spirit possession as a datum that putatively reveals underlying frictions in social structure  
|                       | * spirit mediums as an afflicted group who participate in spirit possession ceremonies to vent their frustrations in order to enjoy fleeting moments of social prestige  
|                       | * invariably comparative analyses considering relations of mediumship, gender and social structure in a variety of societies  
|                       | * highlights spirit possession as a social process with social consequences  | * focuses entirely upon mediumship  
|                       |  | * fails to consider the social perspective of women's experience  
|                       |  | * overlooks the cultural and bodily dimensions of spirit possession  |
| Psychoanalytic models | * focus attention on spirit mediums  
|                       | * consider the psychodynamics of mediums  
|                       | * consider pre-possession malady tantamount to a psychotic episode that society "treats" through initiation into the spirit possession cult; the initiation is cathartic; mediums perform useful social functions  
|                       | * provides useful historical information about the psychodynamic development of spirit mediums  | * fails to address the social, cultural symbolic, or historical dimensions of spirit possession  
|                       |  | * considers a complex local phenomenon in terms of Western categories  
|                       |  | * results in studies that fail to address the importance of social meaning  |
| Biological explanations | * consider the physiology of the trance state; suggest that possession states alter brain waves, e.g. spirit possession is the biological result of food prohibitions, or from calcium deficiencies  
|                         | * the relation of music to the onset of trance, e.g. the onset of trance through disturbances of the inner ear brought on by rhythmic swaying  | * neglects the sociology and symbolism of spirit possession  
|                         |  | * reduces the body to its physio-chemical essentials  |
| Symbolic approach     | * starts from the premise that possession is a form of intellectual communication; probes its cultural content; possession as a text that represents cultural knowledge, a text that transmits information about themes of cultural significance; analyzes what the spirits say to their various audiences  
|                         | * explores the complexities of local expression and local ideas  | * in considering the cultural content, analysts sometimes neglect the social and the psychological aspects  
|                         |  | * places too much emphasis on possession's textuality, relying too much upon the assumption that images and other sensations sound, smell, taste are "texts"; generally, not even the best studies, which combine the symbolic, psychological and/or social aspects of the phenomenon, present holistic accounts of spirit possession  
|                         |  | * bypasses the notion of spirit possession as an embodied cultural practice  |
| Theatrical / performance approach | * suggests that possession is a form of cultural theater; priests become impresarios; mediums are actors; musicians form orchestras; spirit recitations become scripts that are central to the drama of the expression of culturally specific existential themes  | * an underlying assumption is that the effectiveness of spirit possession is embedded in its performance  
|                         |  | * ignores the social and psychological dimensions of mediumship  
|                         |  | * inscribes Western categories metaphors of performance onto non-Western cultural forms  
|                         |  | * the metaphor of theater could take us only so far, for it provides merely a stage for the apprehension of spirit possession  |

Table 1: Various approaches to the study and explanation of spirit possession.  
Possession, by spirit or by role, serves a distancing function that lifts the performer, performance and observer into the realm of the aesthetic and the abstract – the wellspring of human knowledge and experience – that functions as a field of collective cultural memory.

The practice of trance performance is fully reliant upon a particular vocabulary and framing structure that are grounded in specific social and cultural traditions and contexts. This is the symbolic language of trance practice and the artistic framing of the trance performance. The narratives and mythologies accessed by such practices are also grounded in particular social and cultural traditions.

Figure 1: From The Age (Melbourne) 12 September 2000, p.12.

The premise of this study is that it is beneficial to the development of a theory of performed states of consciousness to view trance as entertainment, and entertainment as trance. This study considers “trance” to be a form of “absorption” into particular belief systems. Following Erving Goffman’s ideas on the “self-as-character”, the notion of a trance of “normativity” that is based on beliefs engendered by consensually derived definitions of reality shared by particular communities or groups becomes a consideration. Furthermore, the notion of trance states defined by roles, social expectations or acts of identification become a point of discussion as performance.

The modern study of trance can be traced back to conceptualisations developed from the practices and theories of Mesmerism in the 18th century, a tradition that led to the popularisation of Stage Hypnosis in the 19th century. These ideas were developed in studies of Spirit Possession, and the early conceptualisations of modern Psychology and Psychiatry in the late 19th century. In the early part of the 20th century, the studies and practices of Spirit Mediums became the basis of many of the notions that allowed the development of the practice of Channeling; whilst in the theatrical and dramatic arts, the ideas of Stanislavski and Artaud in relation the actor’s practice of Characterisation were largely influenced by these currents of thought that became the basis of the most popular performance traditions of the late 20th century.

The dominance of a notion of consciousness articulated by William James (1890) and developed by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, among others, has resulted in a reliance upon such notions as “unconscious”, “subconscious”, “dissociation”, “archetypes”, “repression” and numerous other signifiers for a somewhat fractured experience of the “self” and the “world”. Though such concepts have enormous value as systems by which to conceptualise the complexity of human experience, they have often been resorted to as the only feasible handle upon an “ineffable” phenomenon. This barrier of ineffability has not been entirely helpful in developing an understanding of the experience of consciousness, particularly when certain phenomena pose strong challenges to limits of knowledge set by psychology in its various forms – from structuralist to behaviourist and psychoanalytical, to humanist and cognitive – as the principal discipline by which “consciousness” is scientifically apprehended. Therefore, if consciousness was not denied existence outright it would often be separated into “levels” when the limits of acceptable knowledge are violated. The phenomenon of “trance” has at various times been relegated to the basket of “possession” or “dissociation” seemingly on the basis of a perceived threshold of ineffability – the unexplainable was considered to belong to the “depths” of consciousness that were beyond understanding. Such notions of ineffability are no more useful to a developed understanding of the experience of consciousness than the Cartesian “ghost in the machine” or various forms of mysticism.

---


In the analysis of practice, the key issues that must be considered are related to the structures and expectations that are inherent to the performance states involved. For example, it is important to consider the explicit and implicit contracts entered into by performers and their audiences – the “demand characteristics” – in the performance event and its reception. The problem of demand characteristics has long been considered in the fields of psychology, psychological experimentation, and hypnosis research – the notion was first considered by psychologist Martin Orne in 1961 and has since become an important problem in psychological research involving human subjects. This notion takes into account the processes by which experimental subjects actively cooperate with experimenters by favourably responding to the “cues which convey an experimental hypothesis”, thus taking on the role of the “good subject” on the basis of an “identification with the goals of science in general and the success of the experiment in particular”. Therefore, subjects in the “experimental setting” can become “concerned about their performance in terms of reinforcing their self-image” and “even more concerned with the utility of their performances”.

In the performing arts, the ideas behind the notion of “suspension of disbelief” and the theatrical conventions often taken for granted as part of the performance event – such as the “fourth wall” and the “role” of the audience – employ the same principles of conventionalised behaviour within particular contexts as demonstrated by the notion of “demand characteristics”. Thus it would also be necessary to consider the importance of “ritual protocol” in induction processes, both in the actual induction phase and in the maintenance of trance states and conditions – for example, studies have found that occurrences of “posthypnotic amnesia” in subjects are totally reliant upon instructions from the hypnotist to either “forget” or “remember” aspects of experience during hypnosis.

This study will analyse the effects of “narratisation” – as a social and cultural process, and its relation to cultural memory – upon the activated expectations of both performers and their audiences in the context of the performance event. Narratives are invoked both in and out of the performance “world” that is presented, the event can be simultaneously a “play” and a “good night out”. In considering the performed state of

---

6 Orne.
8 Ibid.: p. 34.
consciousness, it is therefore necessary to analyse the narratives that are involved. In order to do this, it will be highly beneficial to move well beyond notions of consciousness that are trapped in the “ghost in the machine” or suppressed as “subconscious” or “unconscious” material in both the Freudian and Jungian senses. Instead, this study frames the notion of consciousness as both a process and a product of the organism involved in meaning-making as a whole entity in relation to its environment – an “emergent interactionist” model\(^9\) that is complimented by a “multiple drafts” model\(^10\) of consciousness.

**Shamanism in Practice**

It is important to consider the social functions and applications of the practice of shamanism; both as traditions performed by practitioners grounded in non-modernist cultures that were initially documented by early 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century anthropologists – from Claude Levi-Strauss onwards – and as the appropriated and reconstructed practices performed by post-modernist neo-pagan adherents inspired by the New Age or Human Potentials movement of the late 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century.\(^11\) To varying degrees, in both instances the trance narratives invoked strive to confront the fears of the individuals of a culture or sub-culture, and to negotiate an amicable agreement between the “spirit” world (the “dreamtime” complex) and the physical “living” world. These practices strive to invoke their respective forms of a “terrifying beauty” that functions as the basis of a trance aesthetic.

As performers, such practitioners of shamanist traditions engage in their respective forms of training and performance practice or protocols which are intended to develop the aesthetic elements of the performance state involved. Such performers can be compared with others engaged in a multitude of forms. Just as the trance performer might see themselves as a medium of “archetypal” or “spiritual” forces, so the “conventional” performing artist can see their own body as a medium of their art and aesthetic. All these performers can only exist within their respective contexts – their own particular set of beliefs, traditions and audiences.

Later, this study investigates the traditions of Balinese trance performance and the practice of channeling in the New Age and Human Potentials movement. In studying these practices as traditions, received understandings of them can be charted from the fields of Anthropology to Performance Theory. It is possible to consider the performance of trance as being very closely related to the performance of the conventional character in the dramatic arts - all the dramatists cited in this study have considered that connection. But this comparison is not altogether complete, because the conventional character can often be perceived with tensions that arise from a conflicting belief or tradition – such as one based upon a cult of “personality” or “the star” complex. A character can possess an actor. However, an actor can possess character but cannot be easily said to possess a symbolic character because it is simply symbolic. So when an actor does possess a character within a constructed reality or narrative, it does so at the expense of that reality, as it promotes a disbelief or critical ability in the receptor. Disbelief is weighted down rather than totally suspended. The presences of these aesthetic tensions are themselves most revealing of the cultural narratives at play, particularly in relation to held notions of agency.

This study also considers the relationship between trance performance and the practice of Stanislavski’s System, particularly in the notions of the “inner life” or “inner vision” of the performer.12 These notions can relate strongly to the notion of the “hidden observer” proposed by psychologist Ernest Hilgard to account for different “kinds of information processing” that appear to occur in “hypnotic consciousness” within individuals. Hilgard developed the metaphor of the “hidden observer” as “a convenient label for the information source tapped” within a theory of dissociation or “divided consciousness”.13 By tracing the development of drama performance theory through Artaud and onto Strasberg’s Method, it is possible to analyse the processes by which the “inner vision” are considered to be effected and to engross the performer in the character – particularly in the performance and experience of action and emotion, as well as in the fundamental conceptions of the “self”. In this development, the gap between Stanislavski and Strasberg reflects the gap between the two “schools” of trance that advocate amnesic and non-amnesic practices – in beliefs regarding the presence or absence of the “hidden observer”. Arguably, Strasberg as a North American interpreter of Stanislavski, brought about a mystification of the practice – in the insistence upon an individuated and neuroticised self, consistent with the capitalist

and bourgeois environment that spawned it\textsuperscript{14} – as opposed to the “industrial” work approach of Stanislavski, as a technique that serves to reproduce, as opposed to generate, unique processes that are highly individuated. Strasberg strove for an “authenticity” in characterisation, in much the same way as modern readers of trance practice can become concerned with notions of “true” or “genuine” trance as opposed to the “fake” or “acted” trance.

After Strasberg, the development of a new “radicalised” or “mysticised” Avant Garde is evident, as seen in the work of Schechner and others of that generation. This movement in turn, influenced theatre movements around the world that embraced its ideals as manifestations of a “counter-culture” ethos that attained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Stanislavski can perhaps also be said to have been influenced by Marxist and Freudian perspectives, whereas the Strasberg techniques as well as the radical or mystical Avant Garde are perhaps more influenced by Jungian ideas – particularly in their reliance upon notions of “archetypes” and “subconscious” material. Much of the work of the mystical Avant Garde, particularly from Artaud to Grotowski, are worth noting in their endeavour for an “altered state” type of performance, later taken on in such rehearsal processes as the “dropping in” text exercises\textsuperscript{15} and the practice of exclusion of scripts from actors in the early stages of rehearsals – the “workshop” ethos. As a later discussion of drama practitioner David Latham’s “journey” and “mask” techniques illustrate, many of these notions have become central to Western actor-training practices in the late 20th century.

The “black box” can also serve as a sensory-deprivation mechanism, that isolates the action and the viewer’s experience from the “outside” or “natural” world for the duration of the performance.\textsuperscript{16} Such mechanisms as this became central to the conventionalisation of “fourth wall” practices that demanded increased passivity from audiences in order to heighten the sense of a “realistic” world on stage – thus audiences can embody the role of the “hidden observer” in such performances. With the rise of Rationalism in the 19th century and with the “industrialisation” of theatre, particularly from Stanislavski onwards, came an acceleration of a process of demystification – the demise of the “magical abstract” at the age of modernism.

\textsuperscript{15} For example – Ulen, Amy (1998). \textit{Connecting the Mind and Body to Educate the Whole Person}, Surfing with the Bard. 2003.
However, this process would provoke a resurgence of dualism in the early 20th century, with the advent of such movements as Spiritism and then the mystical Avant Garde. Both Naturalism and Realism appear to hold oppositional aesthetic and paradigmatic stances to non-naturalistic and metaphysical forms of perception and representation.

Trance represents one of the few remaining bastions of the mystical, in its claims of a dualistic nature, and of the magical in the modern. This may be inevitable until materialist paradigms can come to accommodate notions of non-material living forms and intelligences. Similarly, the modern stage and the cinematic film has become the medium through which it becomes possible to access worlds other than the “real” and “present” experience – the worlds designated in modernism as “fiction”. Thus the actor of modern film and stage can be an “industrialised” channel or medium.17

**The Cult of Psychological Realism**

This study considers the idea that Psychological Realism, as a style of representation and performance, illustrates and embodies a particular way of perceiving an individual’s relationship and experience of others and the environment – that is, a particular way of being which serves as a filter of experience and expression. This filter of ‘reality’ is characterised as both naturalistic and realistic, with an underlyingly scientific and materialistic view of human existence.18 This filter, this way of being, is embodied in and animated by the characters of Naturalism and Realism through interactions with other characters and the environments in which they live.

This study analyses the nature of characterisation and performance as a cultural practice; by looking at Psychological Realism as a cultural practice, the elements of the performance practice that determine the performer’s state of consciousness – not the actual subjective experience of the performer as such, but the filters of experience, the objective tools, that the actor employs are analysed. In this sense, the term ‘state of consciousness’ refers to the qualities of awareness and being, which in turn determine the quality of experience and expression of the performer. This study analyses the elements of the practice from the perspective of induction processes that are utilised to arrive at a ‘truth’ in the enactment and embodiment of the scripts of Psychological Realism.

---

17 Ibid.: p. 172.
This study investigates the beliefs that make the enactment and embodiment of Psychological Realism possible – in the techniques of Stanislavski, Strasberg and others – to analyse the ways in which various states of consciousness are accessed and utilised as artistic practice. Analysis reveals the constituent elements of the states of consciousness, the belief systems that come into play when characterisation brings the actor to the point of enactment and embodiment of the scripts and spirits of Psychological Realism. Analysis of the process of characterisation, the notions of possession and character, allows the conceptualisation of the states of consciousness necessitated by the process of characterisation. Analysis of a range of actor training and performance techniques illustrate this in the repertoire of Psychological Realism.

This study applies the conceptual frame of ‘cult’ to investigate the qualities of Psychological Realism as a cult, and at times a powerful dominating cult. To analyse the cult as another filter of experience and expression for individual and social organisms – a state of consciousness that imagines and defines situations in a particular way – this study looks at the processes that brought about the dominance it achieved, as an agent of both transformativity and normativity.

In analysing the term ‘cult’ a problem is encountered, and requires a similar treatment to difficulties presented in the term ‘realism’. The problem lies in the privileges granted to these terms. The word ‘cult’ has come to be associated with the idea of being a peripheral phenomenon, as in a movement or group that is distinguishable from ‘legitimate’ or dominant forms of religions or ideas. The Vatican, through the Society of St. Paul, readily acknowledges this central problem of ‘value judgement’. In a booklet entitled *Vatican Report on Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements* (1988), cults are seen as reactions to “various needs, aspirations and questions... expressions of the human search for wholeness and harmony, participation and realisation on all the levels of human existence and experience... attempts to meet the human quest for truth and meaning, for those constitutive values which at certain times in collective as well as individual history seem to be hidden, broken or lost... which in turn call for psychological and spiritual responses”.19

---


If the value judgement that is often associated with the term is suspended, it is apparent that the word ‘cult’ can and often refers to any exclusive expression of devotion, worship or ritual – as implied in its Latin root *cultus* which denotes habitation, civilization, refinement, education, style, or order. In *The Cult Experience*, Andrew Pavlos finds that a cult can characterise a “definition of reality... way of perceiving the world... norms and standards... to judge what is construed as physical and social reality.” Therefore the cult encapsulates an “ultimate system of values” held by a group of individuals. In this way, cults facilitate behaviour modification and control by providing a uniformity of beliefs and a reference group for individual adherents, so that the cult doctrines take “precedence over other forms of reality... the values of the individual, compared to values of the cult group, are diminished”. This function can apply, as I.M. Lewis finds, to both “peripheral cults” and “the main moral code of the societies in which they occur”. For this study, the same process of ‘de-privileging’ needs to be applied to the term ‘realism’.

**Issues of Control – The Artist in Trance**

In considering the performance states invoked in a range of traditions, it becomes necessary to view the practice of trance induction as primarily a process of context-creation by which the actions of the performer are framed. For example in comparing the training and performance of the mystic trance practitioner with the hypnosis subject and the Method actor, it is impossible to avoid the complex set of conventions and cultural resources that must be employed in order for the performance to achieve its desired effects. Comparative investigations of such practices reveal that there are clear parallels between the problem of the “acting paradox” described by Diderot with regard to characterisation – does the actor “truly” feel what the character feels? – and the trance or conscious channeling question. Thus it becomes evident that trance performance is a practice grounded in rhetoric – performative and communicative acts that necessarily resonate as “true” or that are categorised as “transgressive” of norms. Thus, channeling strives for a state of consciousness that is considered to awaken “creativity and insight” and create an “opening to another reality”, in much the same way that Stanislavski talks about the attainment by relaxation and concentration of the

---

23 Pavlos: pp. 9-10, 63-64, 74.
actor’s awareness and attention of the “creative state” from which the actor’s imagination can derive material in order to create the reality of the dramatic performance.

Similarly, the different ways in which an actor can embody and enact a character – as represented by Strasberg’s “psychological” Method and by Stanislavski’s later developments of a “method of physical action” – are also apparent in traditions of trance performance. It will be shown that there are elements of both “external” and “internal” schools of performance in trance practices. Both internal imagery and external physicalisation seem to be invoked as starting points for trance states. Presumably, individual preferences and requirements of form can determine the technical approach taken by the practitioner.

In the process of creating the “physical incarnation of a role”,25 the actor allows the character the fullness of a life of its own. Trance states require nothing short of this also. The creative life of a trance “entity” must be allowed full expression, demanding total believability from the performer. At times the totality of this believability necessitates or leads to a dissociation of the “normal” personality. Although this may be interpreted or experienced by a performer or observer as a “loss” of physical or mental control - the feeling of control - such “loss” of control is contained within a frame of behaviour. As Stanislavski stressed the importance of “objectives” and verbs in endowing a character with action, so it must be considered in the functionality of “invocations” of all sorts as calls to action. Performers must find for themselves the cues that allow them to effect the necessary transformations or the transportation to “creative states” of theatre and trance performance.

The question of “control” or “agency” must be considered in relation to the experience of the performer. Stanislavski’s System grew out of a concern for “restraint” of the actor’s own salient concerns and tendencies, as well as a desire to control or facilitate a creative process. Trance practice also necessitates a restraint and a control – that of the “normal self” which must be stood aside by conscious process and will, so that a trance entity or character may inhabit the body of the performer for the duration of the performance. The “normal” self in trance performance may be dissociated or absented or compartmentalised during the performance, this is one degree of a trance

experience continuum. Alternatively, the “normal” self may continue to be present during the performance as an observer or a “de-activated” self while a trance entity is embodied. At still another degree of the trance experience continuum (towards the least dissociative end of the scale), the “normal” self remains present and active during the performance, but is “compelled by the inner image” to enact particular behaviour or emotions, and to voice particular words or thoughts. It is at this end of the continuum that “conventional” acting and performance is most commonly practised, however, moments of “creativity” or “inspiration” or “improvisation” draw it towards the more dissociative end of the spectrum. Just as an initial reading of a play can require a “clean slate” from a performer in order to minimise any influences from any prejudices and presumptions that the performer might hold, so an “initiation” into a particular trance practice requires the shedding of any “baggage” that might interfere with the performer’s experience of the practice, and therefore the practice itself.

Hypnosis and Belief Systems

Taking into account studies undertaken in hypnosis research allows some postulations on the induction and experience of trance performance, through an understanding of the conventions and contracts invoked by hypnotic techniques – to arrive at a developed understanding of the function and manipulation of belief systems. In doing so, an elaboration of different types of trance states is undertaken using findings of research into the practice of hypnosis. Trance forms or practices can be regarded along the different categories identified in hypnosis research. For example, some trance forms are amnesic and others are not; some trance forms emphasise analgesic effects, such as those that involve fire-walking or body-piercing; some trance forms strive for regression or transgression of the “normal” self, as in efforts to find “authenticity”, spirit possession, characterisation, and other pursuits; some trance forms strive to generate psychosomatic or placebo-type effects to bring about relief from illnesses; some trance forms strive to generate hallucinatory effects; some trance forms strive to access various “libraries” or “banks” of memory sets; some trance forms emphasise transformative effects. Questions of trance depths are also ever-present. In addition, trance is seen from either and both “special states processes” or “social-psychological-cognitive” perspectives.

In employing the vocabulary of the practice of hypnosis, this study is concerned with two central hypotheses. The first hypothesis is concerned with the idea that the subject of the trance state and the practitioner of trance performance must be highly susceptible to the acceptance of particular beliefs encapsulated in suggestions, instructions and information presented by an accepted authority figure. This susceptibility is a capacity that is either developed or disrupted. The second hypothesis is concerned with the notion that the power of the transgressive or transformative effect – such as a “placebo effect” – directly relates to the subject’s or practitioner’s ability to believe, as much as the ability of the accepted authority figure – such as the “healer” – to persuade. The “therapy” metaphor or ethos will be considered to analyse the dynamic by which the acceptance of particular beliefs transforms “self” experience by invoking a particular definition of such experience.

The phenomenon of “dissociation” will be investigated to consider the ways in which the attributions of agency and responsibility serve to define experiences. Some trance experiences are dissociative to the point of being non-reportable in “normal” conscious states, while other trance states maintain reportability. The reliance upon subjective reporting in defining dissociative states presents key problems in attribution – how are agency and responsibility accounted for when the “normal” self is not considered to be “present”. In grappling with this problem, a “therapy ethos” suggests a particular definition of the experience which frames the “self” experience within a particular system of beliefs. Anthropologist Erika Bourguignon noted that despite the influence of publications such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the process of categorisation itself becomes problematic; in “DSM-III-R... it is not always clear to observers (including psychiatrists) what is religion and what is pathology, and, perhaps, what is both... the beliefs in the possessing spirit do not ‘cause’ the attacks but provide an idiom through which distress is expressed”.

Evidently, it is not the trance experience in or by itself which causes distress and suffering. It is rather the perception and interpretation of the trance experience, both by the subject and those around the subject, which leads to the fear or pain. Thus the ‘therapy ethos’ can sometimes pathologise some trance experiences, just as a religious ethos had once demonised it.

---

A Spirituality of Sorts

Trance performances can represent a human striving for some form of cosmological reasoning – for a “guiding force” or “higher entity” capable of directing human action towards “its own image” – towards what might be seen as a more “evolved” form of action or being. The techniques that are applied by practices that employ trance performances appear to invoke a kind of sensitised “artistic imagination” that can also be seen as a receptor, an “antenna” to environmental and cultural material. Thus it can be speculated that “psychics” are perhaps able to intuit the unspoken agendas encountered through a range of communicated signals. Some forms of trance can therefore induce a sensitised imagination that may enable the trance personality to engage in “illuminating” dialogues with clients.

The connection posited by Stanislavski and Strasberg between “affective memory” and creativity, can be seen as a connection between “affective memory” and fantasy. Thus memory, creativity and fantasy describe areas or states of consciousness that function as fields of interaction amongst and between individuals and groups. Trance states access fields of what Stanislavski referred to as “wordless communion”, which might include the elements of received knowledge, body language and cultural memory – as programmatic information or instruction that influence the conduct and characteristics of the “ways of life” of individuals and groups. These elements therefore contain the sum of all belief systems to which an individual or group has access or subscribes to. Belief systems are the basic and implicit cultural assumptions that are held by the individual and the group.

Beliefs are personally held statements that reflect a particular understanding of the nature of the self within existence... Beliefs inform the self of its ontological underpinning for the purpose of defining and encouraging its relationship within the totality of existence. Beliefs are essential aspects of an individual’s evolving sense of self, identity, and relationship.

Therefore, it is particularly important to consider the individual and cultural impact of what cultural anthropologist Fritz Kramer noted as “the historical loss of belief in deities and spirits as self-determining powers” with the advent of modernism, upon the performance traditions that have been developed from the work of Stanislavski and

---

30 Strasberg.: pp. 115-118.
Strasberg. The notions of ‘consciousness’, ‘unconscious’, ‘subconscious’, ‘multiple personalities’, ‘hysterics’ and ‘psychological realism’ all emerged from very similar cultural contexts at around the same era – the 19th century and the rise of modernism.

Spirits can thus be seen to have been “dispossessed” in the materialist paradigm. In lieu of a “spiritual world”, psychological realism offers us the “fictional world”. A world inhabited by characters whose qualities are recognised and empathised with by its audience, to varying degrees. The fictional world becomes the means for accessing the “other” and the language of Psychological Realism is the way in which the “other” is apprehended.

![Figure 2: Cave art in Chauvet and Lascaux in France dating back between 15,000 and 30,000 years. Photo: Jean Clottes (Chauvet) and Douglas Mazonowicz (Lascaux).](image)

One “primal” type can be described as the “hunter”. Ancient cave art is strongly suggestive of preoccupations with fertility and hunting symbolisms, this indicates that hunting cults may have been highly important as a social and cultural grouping, that may have used ritualistic and mimetic practices anticipating performative elements. From these ritual leaders may have come the shamanic traditions. In those times it would have been necessary for the social organism to have had some good hunters amongst its individuals – for a good hunt meant a great deal and a lean hunt meant suffering. Thus there appears to have evolved the rituals and artefacts of the hunter. With passage of time, as repetition became tradition and as modes of organisation were developed, the hunt became an art. In our current reality, since the agrarian revolution, the hunter can be seen to have been transmuted to become the “warrior”.

The hunter and the warrior, beyond being social-psychological roles, function as “spirits” which compel the organism to embody and manifest it. As spirits, they are stored in the fields of cultural memory. These spirits, or “archetypes”, can “possess” the organism when they are summoned, usually by initiation or induction – in this way the
spirit is able to recognise itself and distinct sets of expected behaviours are applied. In later chapters, contemporary processes by which the hunter and warrior spirit are invoked will be examined. This study analyses cinematic references to the “warrior” in Stanley Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket (1987), to investigate the process and portrayal of induction into the United States Marine Corps during times of war and the “possession” of aspiring soldiers.

Thus spirits function as transgressive powers within particular consciousness sets, serving both to reinforce normativity as well as to release “other-ness” or transformativity – the transformative potential. Arguably, the embodiment of spirit itself expresses the transformative potential of human consciousness. In trance, embodiment is a way in which the organism in turn is able to apprehend and appropriate the “other”. Trance in this study is viewed as a state of consciousness, and as a social-psychological process, and also as a mode of embodiment. These are considered to be the various aspects of trance.

When particular states of consciousness are described as “pathological” or “abnormal” – as with conditions like autism, schizophrenia, or spirit possession – what are referred to are the intrinsic levels of normative acceptability. These norms allow us to designate and function within a “consensus reality”; an inability to function or participate in such a reality determines the perception of normativity.

In some trance traditions, one indicator of trance capacity in an individual is seen in the tendency to sweat profusely during the trance state. The reasons for this may have had something to do with the high energy that is perceived to be released with heavy perspiration – itself an indication of high capacity functioning – as the body is compelled to embody and enact particular forms and function in particular and extraordinary ways. “Form” can be actualised in the organism, in much the way that athletes strive to actualise the athletic “form” in their performance states. Athletes actualise a predominantly physical form with strong psychological overtones, while trance performers actualise a predominantly psychological form with physical effort and traces. Thus in much the way that a trance performer can “dance” the form of the “entity” – likewise, a channel can “speak” the form of the “intelligence”. When informants talk of “channeling energy” or when dancers “step into the form”, they describe the actualisation of the “potential state” of form awakened by creative processes – by the transgressive language of “heretics”.

Trance Forms
Ronaldo Morelos 2004
Ernest Hilgard refers to two main ways of producing an active trance state. The first one employs the more usually recognised relaxation method utilised in hypnotherapy, and then “converting” to a more active and alert condition through further suggestions. This has been the method that was popularised by the stage hypnotist. The second way is to begin with an “alert induction” which does not attempt to detach the individual subject from the usual reality orientation. Alert inductions relate to most inductions of trance performance states, particularly those that employ elements such as music, rhythm and dance. Alert inductions also occur in many athletic activities. For example, running produces alterations in perceptual experience and activates specific characteristics in the organism. Hilgard used a stationary laboratory bicycle as an induction instrument and found that it increased hypnotic responsiveness over the “normal” waking condition.33

Hilgard believed that in hypnosis an individual who inherently possesses certain decision-making faculties that can be identified as a “central executive function” relegates this function to the hypnotist. As part of the “hypnotic contract”, the individual’s executive function also “orders” a reduction in the amount of critical scanning of stimuli from the hypnotist, who is perceived as authority.34 The performance process is underpinned by a similar contract, one which requires both the performer and the observer to “suspend disbelief” – to reduce critical scanning – in order to enter the constructed reality of the performance. Similarly, it can be said that whatever we believe on an “unchallenged” level, is that which we set out to manifest.

The basic elements of hypnosis as defined by theorists such as Hilgard (1977), Spiegel (1978) and Gilligan (1987) – such as relaxation, suggestibility, enhanced imagination, visual memories, reduction of reality testing, and others – strongly relate to Stanislavski’s prerequisites for the “creative state”. The concept of the “self” that influenced Stanislavski clearly was the same concept that William James, Frederick Myers, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung all worked with. It was a notion of the self that was multi-layered, with a “core” self as a primary personality identity. Between the “conscious” and the “unconscious”, the self and the non-self, were the areas that became experienced by terms such as the “subliminal” self or the “subconscious”. Such terms describe fields of experience that are just beyond the reach of current

“normal” consciousness, but are accessible by a number of different social, psychological and physical techniques.

One problem discussed in hypnosis and communications studies concerns the “compliance” hypothesis – the extents to which implicit expectations influence actions and behaviours that are interpreted as performance. This problem is central to the concerns of this study. However, a social-psychological perspective on trance performance such as this does not necessarily exclude the concepts of “state” or “consciousness”. This study considers such compliance to represent the suspension of “normal” awakened behavioural processes (states of consciousness) in order to allow “trance” behaviour with all its possibilities. Compliance is active in the sense that a performer discriminates and chooses between “normal” behaviour and behaviour that is appropriate to the form and character of the performance. “State” is a condition as demonstrated by observed behaviour. Furthermore, the performer actively restrains normal behaviour and allows performative behaviour – creativity – to manifest. Trance, hypnosis and performance all entail the acceptance – internalisation – and utilisation of “conventions”. Compliance serves to facilitate the operations of imagination. Therefore “imagination” is considered to be most closely related to “consciousness”.

The process by which dissociative phenomena are considered to occur relies on the idea that acts of identification engaged in by the “self” result in the attribution of agency and responsibility to particular identity structures. An individual with high hypnotisability profile or trance capacity might experience a traumatic incident such as sexual abuse at an early age or a death-related guilt, if the individual is unable to integrate such an experience into their primary personality consciousness set then they might relegate it and compartmentalise the experiential memory into a discreet memory subset which has the potential to develop into an identity structure in itself. This identity structure is often activated by external stimuli which appeals to its experiential concerns.

Form is neither eternal nor ideal. Therefore, it is important to consider the notion of “roles”. The practice of trance invariably invokes particular roles and expectations that are socially and culturally defined, which are thus employed in rhetorical practice.

---

34 Ibid.: pp. 228-231.
A key question of concern is the influence of the social and political environment upon the capacity of an individual to suspend critical abilities – the extent to which susceptibility is cultivated. How much does the socio-political setting contribute to individual hypnotisability? Do individuals enculturated into authoritarian environments become more likely to develop their level of hypnotisability than individuals from non-authoritarian settings? Central to this question are the processes by which trance practice as performance addresses the issue of “source credibility”.

The trance communication has heightened efficacy when it is experienced as a response to an audience “need”. This communication is characterised and read as emanating from a perceived “source of higher intelligence” or “wisdom” – from credible authority – and also by the persuasive power of the trance communication as an associative and hypnotic experience – one of “de-centering” for its audience. These effects are aesthetic elements. The conception of consciousness as streams of association – as a flow of ideas and thoughts that are induced and maintained as individual and group experiences – is therefore central to this study.

In this chapter, the notions that have influenced and shaped the contemporary understanding of “trance” have been briefly considered in their historical contexts. Such notions have been shown to be developed as the understanding of the notion of “self” and some of the processes involved in the practice of hypnosis have also been developed. The notion of “cults” has been considered in the context of the processes by which group defined belief systems produce or inhibit particular forms of embodiment and enactment – performances of both normative and transgressive ideals. A cult of Psychological Realism was considered as one such form of enacted and embodied knowledge by which performativity is driven and compelled. The notions of “consciousness” and “spirit” were further interrogated to arrive at an understanding of these terms that enable a comprehensively grounded investigation of the processes of motivation, association and narratisation that influence performances – in order to avoid a recourse to mysticism or a refuge in ineffability, and to define the limits of the study. Central to developing the understanding of such processes, the acts of identification engaged in by the performer has been highlighted as a most important aspect of this study. In the following chapter, such acts of identification are further considered in the context of the theories of consciousness that are employed and developed in this study, in order to locate the performative process and the
understanding of "trance" within a schema that can account for the ways in which beliefs influence and determine performances.
3. Performed States of Consciousness

To Be In the Flow

The notion of a “flow” state, that is commonly referred to in improvisational performance, has been described as “optimal experience” that is “so desirable that one wishes to replicate it as often as possible” and as the feeling attained when things are “going well as an almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness”. Furthermore, the experiences that lead to such feelings were found to have “often involved painful, risky, difficult activities that stretched the person’s capacity and involved an element of novelty and discovery”. The experience of flow has been considered to closely correspond to the “creative state” in dramatic performance. In studies of the “flow experience”, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi reported nine characteristics that were used to describe such states across a wide range of experiential contexts. Such experiences were said to have involved sensations of “clear goals every step of the way”; of “immediate feedback to one’s actions”; of “a balance between challenges and skills”; that “action and awareness are merged”; that “distractions are excluded from consciousness”; that “there is no worry of failure”; that “self-consciousness disappears”; that “the sense of time becomes distorted”; and finally, that “the activity becomes… an end in itself”. The elements of satisfaction, challenge and achievement invoked by such experiences help explain the states of “ecstasy” and “well-being” that are often connected with culturally-sanctioned trance experiences. Art and trance can both be seen as doorways through the “self” to other “mental” or “spiritual” dimensions. The performance of actions and expressions can function as ‘ripple’ effects, that have central points of influence in any one particular dimension and resonate out towards other dimensions. Aesthetic phenomena such as a dramatic performances can have central points of action and expression in a physical dimension – a single performed physical gesture, for instance – whilst generating resonance out towards the mental, mythical and transpersonal dimensions. The resonance that is achieved operates on the levels of imagination, emotion and memory of the performer and the observer of the performance. Shared aesthetics reflect the “dreaming” of the group – they are elements that transcend individual existence.

---

2 Strasberg.; pp. 108-125.
3 Csikszentmihalyi *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention.*; pp. 110-113.
Trance performance is about performing roles according to predetermined expectations. The roles played are embedded in cultural ‘seeds’ that are cultivated and animated by the performer. The seeds are - to employ a computational model of consciousness - programmes of recorded memory and tradition, communicable and storable as memory subsets such as scripts or archetypes or stereotypes or characters or roles. This thesis argues that the list includes spirits, angels and demons. This thesis also argues that possession and trance states are identifiable by their inherent narratives and physical characteristics, therefore they are roles performed by practitioners of particular traditions.

Trance states engage and embody cultural roles and expectations. These roles and expectations are the constructs – the belief systems – that are transmitted in the subsets of memory, the scripts and spirits of the roles. These subsets of memory function as programmes of states of consciousness, brought to life by the human organism. As one perspective, a computational model of consciousness offers some useful insight to the notion of the trance state as a performed state of consciousness. By seeing roles – the scripts and spirits embodied – as social and cultural programmes or sets of instructions, the roles in their constituent parts and their observable manifestations become more comprehensible. As a form of software, the roles are effectively contained within cultural traditions recorded in memory in various forms. This software operates on the consciousness of the human organism, the inner world of the human being.

In instances of channeling and possession, the scripts and spirits evoked can emerge from memory subsets of the individual performer as well as subsets and systems of cultural memory. In speaking of systems of memory, it is possible to consider the processes by which information is processed as well as stored, and the technology by which the performance is manifested. Systems of memory serve as programmes that allow the performer to engage and employ particular states of consciousness that are necessary for manifesting particular performances. They are the techniques of the practitioner, and the processes by which the performance is generated. In channeling and possession, these subsets and systems of memory are identified as entities and spirits that communicate and interact with the material dimension.
Therefore roles function as cultural artefacts and effects. In the tradition of Psychological Realism, for example, the cultural artefacts are not merely the performances observable on the films that audiences are able to view and access. The artefacts include the scripts of the films, any costumes or properties or performers that may still be around, and most importantly, the resonance that those roles evoked in that tradition, and have evoked in turn upon the viewers of the artefact. The role, the artefact and the effect can therefore be seen to function upon the inner world of the human being who partakes of it. They function as software upon the human organism. The artefacts and effects of Psychological Realism are embodiments of particular values and traditions, modes of being that are communicable in the roles and narratives employed. The state of consciousness required in order to perform Psychological Realism involves the internalisation of those particular values and traditions that are involved in the production of the performance.

Psychological Realism is a largely materialistic and psychoanalytical view of existence, therefore the performances evoked and technology employed draw upon the values and traditions inherent in that particular view. The belief systems that produce performances of Psychological Realism constitute a particular social and cultural context. These beliefs resonate a particular sense of the self and the environment. They run particular programmes that become the reflections and filters through which the human organism and being can view existence.

Theatre: The Meeting Ground

In Naturalism and Psychological Realism, what are performed are less to do with deities and spirits as they are to do with aspects of the “human spirit”. In elaborating upon the notion of performance, Stanislavski reflected the broader understandings of motivation and action, grounded in particular notions of agency and “truth” informed by contemporary developments in the field of psychology:

The actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place on the stage, and most of all he must believe in what he himself is doing. And one can believe only in the truth... it is necessary to feel this truth at all times, to know how to find it... to develop one’s artistic sensitivity to truth.4

Truth on the stage is whatever we can believe in with sincerity... Truth cannot be separated from belief, not belief from truth. They cannot exist without each other and without both of them it is impossible to live your part, or to create anything...

4 Stanislavski My Life in Art: p. 465.
the reality of the inner life of a human spirit in a part and a belief in that reality... there are two kinds of truth and sense of belief-- First, there is the one that is created automatically and on the plane of actual fact... second, there is the scenic type which is equally truthful but which originates on the plane of imaginative and artistic fiction. ...an audience wishes, above all, to believe everything that happens on the stage.5

The questions of “authenticity” and “reality” in characterisation thus raise further questions on the notions of “truth” as a construct of the classical thinking – from Plato onwards – that modernism builds upon. At the same time, artistic traditions can offer challenges to these notions. Therefore, it is important to consider trance performance from the practitioner’s perspective. Balinese trance traditions, for example, are clearly regarded as performing arts - this is evident in where they are publicised and performed, in how they are framed. Arguably, the same can be said of many other, if not all, trance practices. Artistic traditions function in the realm of liminality; catharsis, poesis and mimesis are the processes by which these traditions influence the environment. Notions of the “real” and the “fake” are Western classical constructs that warrant careful interrogation in this context. Such interrogations have also been carried out by various exponents of Avant Garde artistic traditions. Artaud is worth noting for his search for the “authentic” and his “failures” in such endeavours. Perhaps what he found was that the “authentic self” can be encountered in many different “levels”, and not consistently in all of those “levels”, thus there was no hope of finding total “authenticity”. It is from these “failures” of “authenticity” that the Avant Garde theatre movement derived its mission and influence.

**Cultures and Narratives**

This study invokes an analytical framework that considers the belief system – the mythology – that drives and informs performance traditions, their practitioners and discursive streams. With such a framework, it is possible to argue that the traditions of empiricism or materialism are as narrow – or at least limited – sets of beliefs as any others. With such a framework, it is possible to argue that scientific Rationalism is as much a religion as Catholicism, however much the scientific traditions might rely on the principles and processes of “falsification” that underpin its “truth” claims. Thus the primary concern of this study are the narratives – the dominating and dissenting streams – by which individuals or groups make “sense” out of experience and existence. This study is principally concerned with the processes by which, for

---

5 Stanislavski *An Actor Prepares*; pp. 128-129, 133. Emphases added.
example, the existence of “spirit” is predicated by belief systems, which in turn reveal something about the constructs and functions of particular states of consciousness. As a comparative study of performance traditions and the belief systems that comprise such performances, it becomes possible and at times necessary to apply conceptual frameworks from one set of traditions in order to illuminate processes described in other traditions. Therefore at various points, this study proposes comparative analyses of aesthetics, cosmologies, and technologies of the various performance traditions that are investigated. For example, it is apparent that a primary concern in Stanislavski’s work was the search for ways to access the “creative emotions” and the “unconscious objectives” of characters and performers. Clearly in trance practices generally these are also chief concerns – the performed acts are seen to be “driven” or “inspired” by spirits, entities or stimuli. It may also be possible to note the various “objectives” that trance personalities or entities possess and strive for in their manifestations – the “super-objectives” of such entities.

**Channeling in the New Age**

This study considers the traditions of “channeling” that have been grounded in the New Age or Human Potentials movement of the 1970s onwards as performance traditions that have catered to and served a particular audience base by employing a culturally defined rhetorical practice. Just as universities and other educational organisations sell knowledge – in contemporary parlance “information” – as service providers, so contemporary channels sell the promise of “peace of mind” through the provision of “authoritative” advice. Channels can be said to access fields that are similar to what Stanislavski and Strasberg referred to as “sense memory”. Channels can also be seen to perform “dramatic portrayals” of multiplicity and transformation, as demonstrations that the “unknown” can be brought under control in a cooperative arrangement.6 This cooperative ideal is most strongly expressed in the held notions that channels “blend” with entities, rather than being considered to be “possessed” by spirits.7


“creative state”. In the performances of channeling, therapeutic and aesthetic imperatives intersect producing a liminal state wherein the “healing” process is promised or expected to occur. These liminal states are subject to valuations of credibility and authority that are measured by the degrees of “other-ness” exhibited by the channel and the perceived “wisdom” of the messages imparted whilst in the channeling state. The consideration of the economic functions of channeling performances reveals similar tensions to the perceived relationship between theatre performances and commercialism in many cultural traditions. Perceptions of “self gain” often influence the valuations of credibility and authority that are applied to such performances – indications of “altruism” often heighten perceptions of credibility and authority. Many of the criticisms of channels’ “marketing strategies” are reflected in theatre criticisms, particularly in relation to notions of art and commerciality. They are clearly both performance practices. Channeling and trance performance, like conventional performance, are grounded in the traditions and practices of rhetoric, the art and craft thereof.

Some critics of channeling point to tendencies amongst practitioners or “entities” to generally exercise a “relentless focus on human universals” rather than “make critical judgements that help to discern whether one idea is better than another”. However, this problem becomes most salient when the channeled entities come to be regarded as providers or sources of definitive “solutions” – when such practices are expected to provide “answers”. Such criticisms complain of an “obsession with self” that subjugates the concerns of the broader community. By doing so, such criticisms suggest the possibility that there might be some benefit in “applying channeling’s insights to the solution of social problems”. These criticisms, however, simply reinforce the belief systems that they attempt to critically regard, and seem to forget that such practices operate on one aspect of human experience – the individual experience of “empowerment”. The social experience is a different and more highly negotiable process – one that is constantly contested. After all, the clients and audiences of channeling performances do not part with their money in order to make “the world” a better place – however much that might be claimed in the rhetoric – but rather to make “their world” or their experience of their world more “meaningful” or palatable. To expect one “entity” or one facet of human experience to “cure” all ills is simply overly idealistic, and hints of a return to pre-modern religiosity. Communities are created by

---

8 Brown.: pp. 186-188.
individuals acting in concert with others, not by “maps” provided by “supernatural beings” revealed in performance.

**Channel Inductions**

The term “states of consciousness” refers to the qualities of and the changes in perception and embodiment, the transformations in the manifested form. For the duration of a performance, an actor as a professional artisan suspends their existing or actual personality, the normatively adjusted personality, as part of the contract implicit in the role of performer. The actor suspends their “normal” acts of identification – their sense of self is replaced during performance. In this way, the forms and the stories of the actor’s culture are accessed; and the knowledge of the particular society and era are embodied. For instance, the mask is a tradition that is passed on from one generation to another; a tradition that works with different states of consciousness – various physical and psychological characteristics that are absorbed through the mask and expressed in the performer’s body. In finding the states where the mask is made present, existent and alive, one finds the “creative state” that Stanislavski described – the point wherein the performer accesses and is imbued by the form of the mask or the character.

More than just being the individual experience of the human organism’s brain, the mind participates in our consummate reality – the cultural, social, economic, physical, psychological reality. The brain generates the mind which participates in the consensus “outer” world – the “group mind”, the collective intelligence and function. The individual mind participates in and supports that construct or existence. The individual mind is reliant on the outer world in one form or another, constantly involved in negotiation and contestation. The “treaty” that produces consensus reality is always under consideration and undergoing change. Consensus reality is the reality that we “know” or that we believe we know.

When we perceive and express the “narratisation” of experience, we “make sense” of our existence. Through the “narrative”, the ongoing voice inside of us and the executive function or witness within us, we mark our “presence” in consensus reality where we participate as an embodied personality for generally around 12 to 20 hours of each day – our “waking hours”. We say and expect that the “normal” personality is present in those waking hours, and is “unconscious” when the organism sleeps. We
“experience” dreams in our inner world – our “inner reality”. These are the states of consciousness that we are most familiar with.

There is also the reality which is the “aesthetic reality” – the reality of our myths, our stories, our entertainment, our shared narratives, our cyberspaces. This is a reality that exists over and beyond the organism’s existence. This is a medium that is outside the existence of any singular individual, and is reliant upon the artefacts of our culture – our sciences, our engineering, and our industries which produce such items as VCRs so that we can view the videotapes that show the films that tell the stories of our shared humanity.

The role of the sense of “self” in performance practices such as mask and channeling is considered to be one of “non-interference”. The sense of “letting go” that is demanded of the performer in improvised performance raises the issue of the “executive function” and its role in creative work. The process of “letting go” is a process wherein aspects of the “normal” individual personality are dissociated from the experience of performing – activity motivated by the “normal” self are considered to be inhibitory to the experience of the creative state. Therefore questions arise as to what level of preparation is necessary in order for the performer to access the creative state. Questions also arise as to how “spontaneous” a trance performance must be for it to be not considered “contrived”.

These questions are of particular importance in considering the practice of “channeling” and other trance performances wherein the perception of the communication source impacts upon the reception of the performance message. Amongst a range of notions considered, it might be argued that the act of channeling accesses particular forms of intelligence which may be embodied or disembodied; forms of intelligence which are considered to exist in realms and dimensions that we begin to access when we attend to objects, gaze out into space, speculate on experience, or remember stories. It might also be claimed that the channel simply connects to an intelligence that is available to them. This functions as an intelligence that is in “the back of the head” beyond the sense of self and its limits. In this notion, the channel is accessing more than just an aspect of their self because that sense of self is necessarily limited and conditional. The actor possesses a sense of self which does not attempt to interfere with the personality portrayed in performance. An actor
who plays Hamlet, for example, must reach beyond the stores of memory associated with their “normal” individual personality to the stores of “cultural memory” that inform the embodiment of the role. Similarly, the channel is considered to embody a particular form that emerges from cultural memory. It has been suggested by channels that what they access are manifestations of a “spiritual master within” – an “archetype” and a role which clearly informs the embodiment. The manifested state of consciousness consists of ways of perceiving and expressing experience, and it is through these filters that the channeled communication comes into existence.

The notion of “intelligence” need not be limited to the activities of the individual human brain. Within the single organism, intelligence can manifest in more than just the “mental” dimension. Intelligence is stored in one of the various forms and media of documentation that we utilise and recognise, ready to be accessed by conscious beings that are able to understand it. When we access and utilise intelligence, then we are able to be conscious of it. Can it be said that the hard drive of a computer is an intelligence? It can be considered to be an intelligence when suitable hardware is “powered up” and when software that produces traces of what we would recognise as intelligence is operating on it. Intelligence involves memory storage and recall, information processing, and the ability to be creative. Intelligence is manifested in the realms of the kinaesthetic, sciences, arts, history, bureaucracy, military, mysticism, economy, theology, philosophy, political, and other forms of knowledge. As such it is stored in various fields and artefacts, as well as in the cellular structures of the organism. Intelligence is simply a product of perception and experience.

It may be possible to maintain a sense of rationality in considering the notion that channeling accesses such forms of intelligence in the trance state. When the products of channeling are examined, it is possible to consider the channeled communications as a work of art or science, as a product of an embodied state of consciousness – by analysing the functional, symbolic and discursive values contained within. In the sense that a dramatic character can exist within the world of the performance, a channeled “entity” exists within the conventions of the channel’s performance. The “entity” exists in the same way that a dramatic “mask” exists – as both a potential for and a result of embodiment by the performer. The invoked entity can exist as a “closed system” state that generates a distinct sense of identity. The channel practitioner is effectively
performing from a “creative state” that enables the accessing of forms of intelligence from cultural memory.

One important aspect of the trance state is the experience of “dissociation”. However, not all trance states include the element of dissociation, as evident in the notion of the “light” trance. In the light trance state, the practitioner is seen as able to allow an expression of a state of consciousness distinct from their “normal” state whilst maintaining that “normal” state, which is aware but not active in the expressive act; the practitioner does not experience amnesia in relation to the expressive act.

Dissociation is a “drift” away from the “normal” and “familiar” ways of experiencing and perceiving existence. The dream-like state between waking and sleeping is often considered to be a classic trance state, with its own modes of experience, values and logic. In these conditions, one dominant aspect of the individual personality and nature is separated or disjointed from the totality of experience, from the experience of executive function.9 The notion of executive function is a foundation for our measures and judgements of “sanity”.10 The “dissociation” phenomenon is part of our preoccupation with the “personality” and the “self” – the “individual”. There is certainly a lack of conceptual frameworks to cope with it, other than by pathologisation or aestheticisation – as in Multiple Personality Disorder and trance performance. There is a lack of adjustment and adaptability in considering those experiences – making them extra-ordinary as experiences. Dissociative states are indicative of trance states because it is there that the “normal” experience is suspended, and the apparent quality and vividness of dream-like and trance-like states are invoked most powerfully.

The induction utilised by the channelling practitioner is the preparation of the sense of self, for the dissociation required in the embodiment of a different state of consciousness. Often, the preparation involves the image of the “self” standing aside or in some way allowing a different personality to take the place of the executive function. Such visualisation serve to signal the transformation from one state of consciousness to another.

These performance traditions are, in addition, centrally concerned with another set of performance imperatives, grounded in notions of “transformation”.

9 Ibid.
Transformation is the basis of theatre and trance. The concerns of trance performance is the transformation of some undesired personal or social element. The concern of contemporary channels is transformation towards the “higher self”. Transformation is both the process and the content. Trance is an instrument for the performance and perception of transformations. These transformations are effected upon the performer to give rise to the “entities” and the new narratives offered within the “healing” processes of channeling traditions, as well as the “character” complexes of Psychological Realism. In much the same way that Stanislavski and Strasberg offered the System or Method as a way of accessing the “creative state” to bring about transformation on the stage, channels offer their work as a way of accessing transformational “energy” that is considered to illuminate upon daily existence and facilitate desired transformations in life.

Trance and Emergent Consciousness

To develop an understanding of trance, it is important to analyse processes of identification and interaction that serve to delineate the normative streams of experience from the extra-ordinary modes of being that are considered to depart from normativity. In this section, these processes are considered in the light of their adaptive functions – as survival techniques and more. To begin to unravel this puzzle, this study will turn to a number of models of consciousness that have been formulated by recent writers in that field of study.

The split-brain studies conducted by Nobel laureate and psychobiologist Roger Wolcott Sperry (1913-1994) between the 1950s and 1970s provided indications that distinct conscious systems can and do develop within the individual brain. Cerebral activity patterns and individual nerve impulses were found to be processed – influenced and governed – by “encompassing emergent properties” which were taken to constitute “conscious awareness”. Sperry proposed a theory of “emergent interactionism” that served to account for consciousness on the basis of the “supervening” influence of a system over its parts. The “whole” organism was capable of becoming conscious because, as Sperry suggested, “individual nerve impulses and associated elemental excitatory events are obliged to operate within larger circuit-system configurations” of which they are a part. The “circuit-system configurations” of

10 See “DSM IV”.
discrete neural events are thought of as “functional entities” that have “their own dynamics in cerebral activity with their own qualities and properties”. Furthermore, Sperry considered these configurations to “interact causally with one another …as entities”.12

The value of the theory of emergent interactionism for a theory of performed states of consciousness, that this study has undertaken to develop, lies in its conceptualisation of an “organizational hierarchy” in “the collected sum of neuro-physico-chemical events” from which “conscious phenomena” emerge. In addition, the conceptualisation that such a “pattern” of neural events can come to “function as an entity” allows for a view of cerebral activity that accounts for key “organizational features” that can result in the emergence of the “higher order phenomena of mental experience”.13 This study proposes a further organisational feature that significantly enhances the consolidation process of the emergence of consciousness, this feature is the identification of the “entity” – the naming of the phenomenon which occurs at different levels of experience.

For instance, Sperry found in split-brain studies that both the left hemisphere and right hemisphere of the brain has the potential to function as a “separate, cognitive domain” with distinct “perceptual, learning and memory experiences” – “its own learning processes with its own separate chain of memories” – that are “oblivious of corresponding events in the other hemisphere” and “inaccessible to conscious experience of the other hemisphere”. This suggests that each hemisphere can conceivably function as a distinct “person” if it were to engage in acts of identification that can produce stabilised identity structures or – as was the case in the subjects of the split-brain studies – if the identity structure of the subject was maintained by the functioning hemisphere. Sperry added that hemispheric delineations were perhaps overly simplistic, he acknowledged the possibility that conscious experience need not be defined by left-right organisational elements – that up-down, front-back, and other forms of cerebral differentiation, localisation and specialisation might be possible.14 These notions offer the possibility to account for fugue-type or amnesic-type experiences that render some aspects of experiential memories inaccessible to the functional “executive” of a person. In addition, the process of identification appears to

---

occur at all levels of experience. All neural events that engage attention thus become categorised in executive and regulative operations.

Another Nobel laureate, neuroscientist and biophysicist Gerald Edelman, described such processes of categorisations as occurrences, of selective discrimination of objects or events, that are related to an organism's ability to adapt. Edelman considered such processes to occur on differing levels of complexity. At the simplest levels of operations are the occurrences of “perceptual categorization” – basic synaptic associations and activities in response to stimuli or signals that result in sensorial, direct or automatic experiences. Another level of operations is seen as a process of “conceptual categorization” which requires the involvement of memory sets – complex networks of synaptic associations and activities – that may be constructed from previously processed products of perceptual categorisation. These operations mark the thresholds of a “primary consciousness” which Edelman described as “animal” experience.

Through further and more complex occurrences of categorisations, which in human beings has been greatly facilitated by a developed capacity for language, the individual and group organism can come to be endowed with “symbolic memory”. This endowment marks the threshold of the ability to engage in ever-increasing complex meaning-making processes which Edelman referred to as “higher-order consciousness” – through which the experience and existence of a sense of “self” and “the world” is made possible in a context of “past” and “future”. Edelman considered the basis of symbolic memory to be found in the capacity to process and organise spatio-temporally ordered sets of categorisations of events as “scenes” – ordered according to value systems that are shaped in an ongoing learning process. Thus, the experience of higher-order consciousness serves as an ability to process and organise conceptual and symbolic models that enable the organism to operate beyond ongoing perceptual experience. This ability to model the past, present, future, the self, and the world is effectively based on the capacity and propensity for constructing narratives – scenes – out of existence and experience.

Psychologist Julian Jaynes (1920-1997) provoked a great deal of controversy with the publication of *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*.  

---

Mind in 1976. Jaynes suggested that substantial qualitative differences are evident between the sensations of agency and subjectivity in the human “mentality” of the ancients – prior to 3000 years ago – to that in the modern type of consciousness that we experience now. According to Jaynes, these differences were based on the manners in which the left and right hemispheres of the brain operated and interacted, and resulted in major differences in the experience and attribution of authority, agency and responsibility by individuals and groups of each era – accounting for the experiences of authorisation and possession, “gods” and “voices” made possible by the “bicameral” mind of individuals in those “bicameral” civilisations. These conclusions were derived from Jaynes’ analyses of Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey as well as other examples of ancient literature, and apparent conceptualisations of the time such as the notion of psyche.17

In attempting to examine the symbolic memory of the ancients through the recorded narratives and imageries that our own era has inherited, Jaynes was faced with the problem of a hypothesis that effectively could not be verified using the cases that he had developed his theory with. However, Jaynes was able to make a more substantial contribution to the understanding of consciousness through his approach on the problem that was based on the notion of “narratization”.18 For Jaynes, the “I” and the “me” become “the main figures in the stories of our lives” – an “ongoing story” that is “spatialized into a journey” and that serves as a basis for accounting for “anything we happen to find ourselves doing” as well as “everything else in consciousness”. In this way, Jaynes accounted for consciousness itself “as an operation, rather than a thing, a repository, or a function” – by which the “metaphorical space” of the self and the world is constructed.19 Jaynes argued that the process of narratisation employed by any individual or group determines the experience of the world and “reality” that comes to be held as the definitions of existence by which meaning is derived.

By these models, it is possible to see the processes by which consciousness emerges. To investigate the processes by which states of consciousness are produced, it is necessary to develop the concept of “narratization” further. From these models of consciousness, it is also possible to see the processes by which individual and group definitions of experience and existence are shaped, formulated and fixed.

16 Ibid.: pp. 118-135.
This allows the construction of a schema for comprehending the processes by which states of consciousness are experienced and maintained. The act of narratisation – the “thought process” – will be seen to be central to such states.

![Diagram of Trance Forms Model]

Figure 3: A schema model of emergent consciousness based on the work of Sperry (1969-1981), Jaynes (1976), and Edelman (1992).

The construction of a narrative entails the organisation of information into a form that is recorded as memory sets in various forms and media. Clearly the process described here is not solely concerned with textual information, but with all records of experiences and images in memory – instead of narratisation, it is useful to consider processes of association. The accumulation and activation of such memory sets enable the organism to become imaginatively and affectively involved in the imagery and associations – the scenes – implied by the information that comes within the attentional frame of the organism. The intensity of involvement that is elicited by the information determines the degree of absorption experienced by the organism. This involvement or absorption is the basis of the state of consciousness that is enacted and embodied. Thus the narratives that elicit the involvement or absorption also serve to identify the type of experience or state of consciousness that is induced. The
processes of identification serve to consolidate the conscious experience with “actual” or other experiences as the “world” wherein performance occurs – the experiential field.

Conceptual frameworks suggested in more recent studies of consciousness are also useful in developing a theory of performed state of consciousness. The “multiple drafts” model proposed by Daniel Dennett (1991) and the “autobiographical self” model proposed by Antonio Damasio (1999) provide useful starting points for this study. Multiple versions of the autobiographical self are effectively constructed from the total repository of individual and group memories. These different versions are endowed with a range of potentialities according to its construction. Each version displays personality traits, intelligence, knowledge, social and cultural influences that might be unique to itself, distinguishing one version from another. These constructs are organised in and emerge from outside the attentional frame of what is considered to be the core and normal autobiographical self – as distinct sets of autobiographical memories or constructs; each is able to present itself as an object to the “core self”.21

For example, the phenomenon of “higher wisdom” communicated or embodied in some trance practices is attributable to the human organism’s propensity for adaptation and evolution, for survival in all sorts of environments; “wisdom” in this case implying perspectives drawn from “vision” unencumbered by complexities of daily life encountered by the normal autobiographical self (seen to be dissociated in trance) as a kind of reified or “archetypal” vision of extended consciousness – a kind of “conscience” or knowledge source. The multiple drafts model of consciousness proposed that perception occurs as “parallel, multitrack processes of interpretation and elaboration” subject to “editorial” processes, which yield “streams of content” that can – though not always – be apprehended as “narrative fragments”.22

Thus, by such operations the conscious organism comes to formulate its belief systems. These beliefs, in turn, influence the embodiment and enactment of the performative state. With the embodied performance, the organism interacts with others and the environment thus generating or maintaining particular states of consciousness from which further beliefs are formulated. In this cycle, the experiential field of the

22 Dennett.: pp. 111-113.
performance – the “world” in which the performer is involved – is perpetuated for as long as that field is maintained, and experienced as a “closed system” state.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4:** A “closed system” state that generates an experiential field.

Problems of normative continuity occur when actions or behaviours are engaged in that are deemed to be contradictory to a dominant or “normal” narrative stream, the process of identification becomes complicated by the contradictions which in turn necessitates an elaborated identification that somehow accounts for the presence of such contradictions. This process is most apparent in the phenomenon of “dissociation”. Dissociation is a mechanism that allows the preservation of a “core self” concept, by distancing certain actions, behaviours or perceptions from that core self identity structure. Therefore it might be a necessary part of trance experiences that the “normal” self is “suspended” in order to prevent the integrity of “normal” self-concept from being compromised or complicated. Sexual experiences sometimes are of a highly dissociative nature. For this reason, multiple personality disorders and schizophrenia are often traced back and attributed to early developmental trauma related to sexual experiences of abusive natures. These experiences trigger or activate dissociative faculties and tendencies in the individual. Sexual experiences can sometimes seem to be expressions of personality traits and characteristics that are so far removed from expressions of the “normal” personality and self. The individual engaged and immersed in a sexual experience can sometimes be said to be “carried away” or “possessed” by sexual and carnal desires or impulses – this belies a capacity to induce dissociative faculties akin to trance. Strasberg refers to such experiences as

---

23 Farthing.: pp. 40-42.
“strong eruptions of unconscious impulses”. Thus the phenomenon of dissociation can serve an adaptive function that is related to a form of “self” preservation, made necessary by problems of agency and responsibility.

Problems of agency and responsibility are further addressed through the invocation of a group-defined identity. The formation of a sect or a group is a common occurrence in both trance and theatre sub-cultures. Groups that are formed on the basis of shared beliefs are most important when these beliefs are the foundation blocks of the practices of the individuals in the group. For both Stanislavski and Strasberg the formations of the Moscow Studios and the Group Theatre allowed for a phase of development in the practices they had espoused that could only have occurred in the context of a group, and the various cults that are examined in this study demonstrate the ways in which the acts of identification that individuals have engaged in are validated by a group-defined identity. By this process of group validation, any forms of dissociation that an individual might experience becomes contextualised by the acts of identification of group members with that individual, thus “normalising” any traces of dissociative complications. The action or behaviour of the individual becomes acceptable to a group-defined “reality” as long as it is consistent with that group’s objectives and imperatives.

This study is concerned with the ways in which the performer can listen to both “internal” and “external” voices – the voices of the individual or the group – and be compelled to act by those voices. The level of belief that we allow any voice is ultimately our decision. In this sense, the faculties of suggestibility and critical ability can and, at best, should work together. However more often than not, as this study will show, one faculty dominates at the expense of the other. For instance, it is apparent that some trance states are strongly “emotion-centred”, it appears the “emotion trance” is one level of trance experience, one form of trance practice. Method’s “Affective Memory” and some examples of trance performance – for example, the Kris dance in Bali – access such levels of consciousness. Affective resonance and absorption serve as an essential component of trance states. Performances of such states requires a high level of “abandon” – a capacity to allow oneself to be “carried away” by the affective weight of the moment and perform with that emotive quality. This requires a certain level of susceptibility on the part of performer to the affective stimuli – images

25 For example, see Irwin 1996.
and narratives that must “come to life” in the imaginative world of the performer. The critical faculty is most useful in analytical tasks, and must dominate in the performative modes that require such a stance; however, criticality can interfere with other performative modes that might require a type of creativity that eludes, resists or avoids analysis such as the practice of channeling entities from “other” worlds.

In this study, consciousness is taken to be multi-layered; however, notions of the “subconscious” or the “unconscious” do not offer a great deal of insight, by their very nature, into the dynamics of trance states. The “normal” consciousness is comprised of aspects whose functionality ranges from most basic and simple tasks to the processes that require increasing degrees of complexity and richness. Such states of consciousness are prescribed within the social and cultural practices with which the individual or group identifies. It is important to consider the memory or consciousness of the group that engages and perpetuates such practices. Cultural memory or “collective consciousness” does not exist in autonomy of individual human consciousness except as “potential”. When activated by individuals with consciousness that are able to apprehend and access it, cultural memory becomes actuated as “cultural consciousness”. From this emerges such entities as archetypes, stereotypes, personalities, social complexes, role models, gender and race affinities or preferences, and other culturally-defined factors.

In considering cultural memory and practices, this study becomes concerned with the nature of these constructs and the functions that language serves in the their formation and perpetuation. Language is here considered to be a “programming tool” for consciousness. Through our use of language, we create and generate consciousness. Consciousness is inhabited and elaborated by symbols. At the same time, symbols are generated by consciousness. In the workings of consciousness, symbols are the entities that process perceptual “noise” into conceptual meanings. Complex symbols are generated by language, which itself is a system of signs and symbols. While some complex machines can generate symbols, it is a huge leap at this stage to claim that they might generate consciousness. The distinction between machine and human – the threshold of consciousness – can perhaps be located in the capacity of the human to become an “extended” self. This capacity is found in such abilities as empathy and creativity – the ability to identify as and with an “other”. The
extended self is an aspect of consciousness – the extended self, by its nature, can be further extended. The extended consciousness is constructed in the course of a lifetime – thus, it is a symbolic creation that is capable of growth and decay. Extended consciousness is therefore experienced in potentiality. The limits of extended consciousness are also constructed, thus we create our consensual realities – our sense of the natural and normal. In Damasio’s concept of the autobiographical self, this capacity to extend the self is accounted for as the tendency of the “core self” to “change continuously as a result of experience”.

Consciousness is a transitive process and an effect of transitive processes. Consciousness results from an interaction between pure undifferentiated awareness and cumulative socialised and enculturated awareness, resulting from the shared symbols assimilated in the process of interaction with others. For example, awareness of the self can only result from the assimilation of a concept of “self” as distinct from a concept of the “other”. Without such concepts, the development of self-awareness cannot occur. In the process of enculturation, concepts are developed in a kind of “consensualised osmosis”, absorbed and generated by members of that culture, and function as a determinant of that particular cultural reality. Thus individualised consciousness results from a constant process of “dialogue” with an external environment, the development of human consciousness being accelerated by the development of language, which allowed for an increase in quantity and quality of dialogue. The symbol of “self” is a cultural construct, rooted in language precepts. The notion of consciousness itself is a cultural precept, the experience of consciousness is made possible by the assimilation of such a precept. This assimilation is made possible by transitive processes – dialogues – with an environment. Awareness is purely biological, whereas knowledge results from such transitive processes.

Applying Damasio’s model of consciousness, in a trance experience the “autobiographical self” of the performer is put aside while the core self remains intact, and a different autobiographical self emerges to temporarily replace the normal extended consciousness of the performer. Some performers of trance experience partial or total amnesia in relation to the “abnormal” autobiographical self, while others are able to maintain the awareness of the normal autobiographical self as a passive observer while the abnormal autobiographical self is in control. This process occurs

---

within the extended consciousness of the performer, from which both normal and abnormal autobiographical selves or “memory sets” emerge. Alternatively in the case of an absence of amnesic symptoms, the normal autobiographical self may be suspended but the core self maintains awareness whilst the abnormal autobiographical self has dominant control; and upon the reactivation of the normal autobiographical self, the core self is able to access the experience of the abnormal autobiographical self and relate that to the normal autobiographical self which is then able to integrate the experience as trance – as objective knowledge – and conceptualise the experience in this way.

This study is concerned with the process of “symbolisation” that creates a world inhabited by constructs.27 These worlds are both inherited and modified, in the processes of individual and social adaptation. They possess a vocabulary and a syntax – they are expressed as language. These worlds are the play grounds and garden beds of consciousness. These worlds are the means by which the human organism constructs meaning out of their physical environment – the means by which consciousness is enriched and developed. The lack of such worlds leads to impoverishment and, eventually, starvation of consciousness. As constructs they have their own measure of truth or reality, measures that are often difficult to translate into empirical terms, but apprehensible in aesthetic terms. In this gap of meaning – the liminal space of performance – the problematic divide between “body” and “mind”, the solid and ephemeral experiences, is found. Nevertheless, the ephemeral experience demands an acceptance or internalisation of its own innate logic in order for engagement to occur. The process of symbolisation encompasses all modes of abstraction, and results in such pursuits as science, religion, art, commerce, history, spirituality, philosophy, ideology, communication, politics and all other constructs of the experiential entity as individuals or groups – images, maps and representations of environmental objects. Thus culture is experienced as an environmental factor. Cultural “memory” is experienced as the collective memory bank of a particular culture or group.

Central to understanding the trance experience are the a priori assumptions that are held regarding notions of identity. In instances such as multiple personality, dramatic characterisation, and spirit channeling, the “normal” identity of an individual

27 Deacon.: pp. 21-23.
might be seen to be “suspended” by both implicit and explicit conventions. These conventions are, fundamentally, cultural constructs, be they scientific or artistic. The dissociative elements and effects encountered in such experiences reflect an inherent need to “compartmentalise” identity structures in order to preserve their respective integrities, i.e., the narratives embodied by each identity structure. Archetypes, stereotypes, role models, gender, race, affinities and preferences are all elements of identity structures – many of which reside in cultural memory or collective consciousness.

This study regards trance as a social-psychological process rather than an “altered” state of consciousness. The “altered states” problem is unnecessary when the approach to trance is made from a social-psychological perspective. The data – the subjects’ overt behaviours and verbal reports on subjective experiences – can stand more firmly on their own. Such data is also less subject to notions of “mysticism” that are inherent in the notions of “altered states”, “unconscious”, and “subconscious”. In considering trance as a social-psychological process, we regard the notion of “role” – as it applies to artistic practice, but also beyond this to a much more broad social context.

Cultural memory, roles, texts and scripts influence us from the day we are born. They exist out of and in autonomy of the human organism. Awareness in contact with these various constructs can generate various forms of consciousness. This notion is apparent in the very idea of “consciousness” itself. In regarding consciousness as a cultural construct, it is seen as a way of perceiving a phenomenon of nature – “consciousness” labels an effect or an experience of the natural world. Being absolutely self-reflexive in that it is a way of perceiving our way of perceiving, “consciousness” therefore is a most problematic concept. Nevertheless the concept is a construct as much as any other conceptual framework. The processes by which such concepts and constructs become “real” are driven by the capacity of the organism to believe. The faculty for belief, as with critical ability, is a quality of consciousness. We choose to believe what we believe, or are persuaded to believe. Belief is central to theatre and trance, as it is central to our fundamental life-views. Why we believe is as important as what we believe. Cultural predispositions are central to these determinations.

---

As part of a cultural inheritance, for example, we keep Shakespeare’s Hamlet “alive” so long as we maintain and nourish the character and the tradition. Hamlet exists outside of and independent of any one human being, including Shakespeare and any one actor who has ever played Hamlet. It is a “part” – an entity – in our cultural memory, for as long as we cultivate its existence. It is possible to attempt to extinguish Shakespeare’s Hamlet from cultural memory, but paradoxically, this would mean acknowledging its existence to begin with in order to extinguish it. More likely, it would “die” of neglect or ignorance, or it will be transformed into another form of the experiential set that we now call “Hamlet” which will take its place in cultural memory. Hamlet, the entity, exists as a “field” or “resonance”; as a distinct personality, that is also a potentiality of embodiment and enactment. In order to be physicalised, it must be activated by a suitably skilled organism – a human being. In potentiality, Hamlet is a non-physical entity, an abstract as much as Law and Science are abstractions, activated in interaction with physical entities. Heaven and Hell are only as “real” as we make them. They are constructs which, while they are real, exist in autonomy to individual organisms and individual consciousness. “Consciousness” as a construct – a way of perceiving a particular phenomenon – can be seen to have been “born” in the 18th century, and undoubtedly as “mortal” as Hamlet and ourselves. Trance entities can be understood in this nature. Theatre and performance is about “belief”, not “proof”. In trance performance, the capacity for belief is directly related to the manifestation of trance – its embodiment and its interpretation. Hamlet exists, albeit as an abstraction (a non-physical form). He is as existent and as real as any human organism. Knowledge and belief make him real.

As another inheritance or as an element of cultural memory, it is possible to consider “pain” as abstraction – a cultural construct or form – as well as “gross” or “natural” experience. Forms of suggestion can re-create “pain” (as in an actor’s exercise or performance, to varying degrees) or anaesthetise (as in particular trance states). Pain functions as a “basic” or fundamental (universal) human experience, but the concept of pain is culturally defined. Consciousness perceives particular types of experiences as “pain”. Various states of consciousness facilitate a range of perceptions and awareness of the experience and concept of “pain”, as in whether one will react or not react, and if so, what type of reaction is elicited.
Whether a cultural reality can include or account for actions or behaviours that are interpreted or experienced in some contexts as a “trance” state is largely a matter of the types of conceptual frameworks available to that “reality” set. A trance state and performance cannot exist without a cultural context, without a set of beliefs with which the natural phenomena that are expressed, are filtered and interpreted. These constructs and beliefs are absolutely necessary for the existence and experience of trance, as well as the products of performance traditions in general. To regard the beliefs inherent in the practice of trance is to view the aesthetic and technical frameworks of trance performance practice. What beliefs and techniques are necessary in order to successfully perform trance forms? To answer this question, this study employs a comparative epistemological analysis.

Stanislavski reflected in My Life in Art – “We have created a technique and methods for the artistic interpretation of Chekhov, but we do not possess a technique for the saying of artistic truth in the plays of Shakespeare”. Cultural and linguistic differentiations denied Stanislavski the “feeling of truth” in Shakespeare. Trance performances embody cultural and linguistic “feelings of truth” which cannot be fully appreciated if belief is not activated through intellectual and emotional resonance. One cannot be forced to search for the feeling of truth and effect a suspension of disbelief adequately. For a “spirit” to be invoked or activated, it must be able to resonate. Therefore, the concept or abstraction of the “spirit” must exist, in the first instance, in cultural memory; and secondly it must be adequately internalised by the potential receptor for the possibility of resonance to be present. Therefore, North American anthropologists could never hope to access Balinese trance spirits because suspension of disbelief could never be adequately achieved. Just as Stanislavski could never “successfully” interpret Shakespeare, or a Balinese trance performer interpret Death of a Salesman. Performance is culturally specific, always.

**Scripts or Spirits**

It is important to acknowledge that there are numerous ways of conceptualising the kinds of experience which, in this study, are referred to as ‘trance’. One possibility is to account for it as the agency of an external force or energy. In this sense, it is possible to talk about spirits that possess the individual. At the same time, it is useful to talk about the scripts and expectations that come with particular roles, or the energies.
that emerge from particular environments or contexts, or the influences that result from interaction with others. All these ways of conceptualising the forces which possess the individual point to sources that are outside of the individual organism’s consciousness set. However the consciousness of the individual might contain belief systems which are activated by the external influences with which the individual might interact. In this sense, elements of both the internal and external worlds of the individual are essential in the processes of resonated meaning or activated potential.

One other possibility, in viewing the various phenomena that are thought of as trance, is to consider them to be manifestations which exclusively emanate from the internal world of the individual – as events that come totally from the imagination and action of the person. This study favours the possibility that the manifestations of what are considered to be ‘trance’ emerge out of an interaction between an individual’s internal reality and external world. In this sense, the position taken is that of allowing for the possibility that there is no single definitive external reality. Rather there are models of reality which are endowed with levels of belief that make them ‘definitive’ – it is beyond question when we suspend disbelief. The presumption of a multiplicity of realities allows the focus of the study to then be the belief systems that give rise to the sense of truth, rather than the pursuit of ‘truth’ itself. Thus trance is considered to be an aesthetic phenomenon, in that it provides an entry point into a unique and distinct world of truths.

Trance and possession deal with questions of normativity in regard to the actions and expressions of the performer – who is seen to transgress the normative boundaries of behaviour. Their role as the ‘transgressor’ determines the manner in which the society transgressed deals with them. Possession by spirits provokes a similar dynamic – with the event being endowed with transgressive and extra-ordinary qualities. The transgressions of the boundaries of normality are perceived as something to be either honoured or purged, in accordance with the belief systems involved. Thus the ‘beingness’ of the embodiment, as it is perceived, develops in the interactions between the performer, the environment, the observers of the performance, and the other performers.

Stanislavski My Life in Art; pp. 350-351.
To unravel the influences of such constructs as ‘individual identity’ upon the experience and perception of the trance performance state, it is important to consider the origins of the terms “consciousness” (William James) and “dissociation” (Pierre Janet). How have these terms evolved? What has come to be implied in these terms through the development of the field of Psychology, from which they have been drawn? Consideration must be given to the context in which the uses of the terms occur; that is, the then current view of the terms that have influenced the various authors’ meanings. The inherited beliefs that have become inherent in these terms are the filters through which the notions of ‘consciousness’ and ‘dissociation’ are understood. These filters are coloured by the presumptions of a pathologic and therapeutic ethos. Thus the phenomenon of dissociation has come to be viewed as an experience that is undesirable, for instance. It is useful to speculate how different our perceptions of such states might be had these terms originated from the fields of artistic endeavour, for example.

**Inductions and States**

This study considers the idea that human existence is experienced as states of consciousness that qualitatively vary according to the conditions and situations undergone. In this sense, human beings are in one form of trance state or another, according to the conditions of the environment and the cults to which the individual subscribes. The dominant states define the normative states of human existence and experience – the ‘ordinary’ states against which other states of consciousness are measured and judged.

The normative states define the sense of the normal self, the “consensus trance” or view of any culture or group. Such states or views are by no means fixed. As McKenzie argues, “normative forces” can easily become “transformational forces” in processes that are often “overcoded by demands for efficiency”. Different identity structures have their own individual memory sets. Some memory sets cannot be accommodated within some particular identity structures. This is integral in the processes by which traumatic stress and sexual abuse can sometimes result in different identity structures within the one individual human organism. Therefore,

---

30 Farthing.: pp. 4-6.
31 McKenzie.: p. 92.
certain memory sets are compartmentalised or designated into distinct and discreet identity structures as the organism strives for an “efficiency” of social functioning.

This study argues that there are techniques and conditions that facilitate the induction of particular states of consciousness, and that are constantly utilised both intentionally and unintentionally. This study focuses on the idea of inductions as techniques that facilitate the processes of ‘becoming’ – into and out of particular states of consciousness.

In analysing trance states, this study considers different strategies for the maintenance of those trance states, such as repetition, movement flow, and remembrance. These strategies indicate that the attention of the performer requires both concentration and a continuous flow of information. If either is interrupted, then the particular trance state will most likely be also interrupted.

**Why Consciousness? Why Trance?**

Consciousness is useful as a frame for performance analysis because it describes the performer’s technical and motivational tools for enactment and embodiment. The subjective nature of consciousness necessitates the analysis of the *a priori* elements, the assumptions of the performer – the belief systems that generate the states of consciousness of the performer. The state of consciousness is observable in the interactions of the performer – the objective phenomena of the subjective states – and somewhat describable in the introspective verbal reports of the performer. Assumptions and expectations are central to the experience of trance and possession states. Concepts of trance and possession states are necessary for the definition and maintenance of states of normativity, precisely because such states represent conditions of other-ness.

Performance consists of the interaction of belief systems – those of the performers, those of the others who are receptors of the performance, and those that actualise and influence the environment of the performer and the performance. The performance state can exist as a set of concentric closed system states, which are created in either the individual or social experience or both, according to the perspective of the analytical frame applied. Each performance tradition will possess a unique locus for the performance state. There are perhaps as many loci as there are
cultures or cults. On the questions of ‘inside/out’ or ‘outside/in’ in the performance process, neither can be exclusively privileged. States of consciousness are observable in any physical action, as much as physicality follows from the state of consciousness of the performer.\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, the question of causality is effectively illusory. When an audience observes a performed character decide, choose, agree, argue, persuade, contemplate or engage in other such acts which are interpreted as types of behaviour, these acts are taken to be indicators of human processes and states of consciousness. These types of acts are considered to reveal the presence of motivation in some form.

This study considers the processes of induction that are used in the performance of various states of consciousness. In particular, this study focuses on the function of textual information in induction processes – that is, in the text as induction. Here, the notion of “text” is taken to include all spoken, written, illustrated and demonstrated products of social and cultural processes that are also regarded as communicating some form of authority or information which are cited, quoted, and referred to as a source in other texts. The verbal and physical texts provide informational and focal elements which the performer uses to invoke the necessary and appropriate states for performance. This understanding of the notion of “text” relates to the understanding of “culture” proposed by Clifford Geertz – as a “public” and “acted document”\textsuperscript{33} – as well as to McKenzie’s notion of the “discursive performative”.\textsuperscript{34} This study analyses textual elements utilised in performance forms in order to analyse the efficacy of the various texts as suggestions within the frame of hypnotic practices. Texts are seen to provide the instructional and informational elements in the process of induction. Together with images, the texts are the processes by which both the performers and the receptors of the performance access the states of consciousness pointed to by the performance form. Examples of text demonstrate the various ways in which ideas and images can be invoked through a process of induction.

A central concern of the study is the function of identity structures in performance states. Constructions of identity necessitate the formulation of both the self and the other, the ‘me’ and the ‘not-me’. These are essential components in the process of induction. Another key concern will be the ways in which the performance state relies upon narratives and the sense of self. Narratives are constructed and perpetuated in

\textsuperscript{34} McKenzie.: pp. 24-25.
order to define and maintain individual and collective identities – as strategies for self-inscription and self-preservation. Narrative and identity impact upon the actions of the performer when such elements are internalised in the performance.

The question arises – does consciousness generate embodiment, or does the embodiment generate consciousness? The process may be both reciprocal and cyclical, as neither can be conclusively claimed to be the exclusive source of the other. The body cannot be said to be the source of consciousness nor vice versa; it is a ‘chicken or egg’ problem. Consciousness and embodiment are mutually generative through interaction, and arguably better seen to be inseparable – as a self-perpetuating cycle and closed system.

This study is essentially concerned with symbolic interactions and bodily practices. In trance performances, both symbolic and physical processes are at work. The intense absorption that results from concentrated attention is able to activate the organism through resonance generated by images and ideas. The character, score, script or spirit are examples of culturally accessed complexes of images and ideas. These complexes can only be experienced and expressed through interactions with others and the environment. Each interaction is comprised of contextualised and framed bodily practices – as embodiments and enactments. In reading a performance in this way, it must be considered that the shared cultural codes necessary in order to read a ‘trance’ performance will not always be present, particularly where a heterogeneity of cultural context is involved. For this reason, the term ‘trance’ has been and continues to be inherently problematic.

In this chapter, the notion of “flow” was considered as a prelude to a consideration of the notions of “authenticity”, “truth” and “reality”. A brief survey of some important questions raised by the contemporary practice of “channeling” outlines some of the problems posed by the concept of “trance” that are tackled later in this study, particularly in relation to the cultures and narratives that support such practices. Central to these considerations is the understanding of the notion of “consciousness” by which such practices are apprehended. The notion of consciousness as it applies in this study has been elaborated on with the use of the notions of “emergent interactionism” as proposed by Roger Sperry, modes of “categorizations” and the concept of “higher-order consciousness” as proposed by Gerald Edelman, the notion of
“narratization” put forward by Julian Jaynes as complimented by models of consciousness proposed by Daniel Dennett and Antonio Damasio. The notions of “reality” and “normativity” have been addressed in the context of analysing the interplay between the raw undifferentiated awareness of an individual and the socialised or enculturated awareness that results from group-defined acts of identification. The processes by which these belief systems come to be embodied and enacted by the performer have been framed in the context of the induction of various states required by particular performances. Thus the framework of “states of consciousness” has been developed in order to contain the dynamics of beliefs and actions by which performances are manifested and apprehended. In the following chapter, key elements of contemporary performance practices of a globalised dramatic tradition are analysed in order to regard the function of the concepts of “trance” as elements of praxis and training.
PART TWO

Theatrical Drama
4. Performing the Mask

This chapter frames the notion of trance within the context of contemporary performance practices, traditions and beliefs. The findings presented in this chapter are developed from a set of in-depth interviews with a small number (10) of performance practitioners in the fields of dance and drama. The interviewees were recruited through personal networks and recommendations, and selected on the basis of professional “live” performance experience and exposure to a range performance training traditions. The sample was limited to performance practitioners who worked in Melbourne. The selection was based on personal knowledge of the interviewees’ work and participant observation of workshops or rehearsals. The same set of questions was used as starting points in each interview,1 with follow-up questions used to pursue lines of inquiry opened up in responses. Interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed; in some cases where statements were unclear, the transcripts were returned to interviewees for clarification and corrections.

The performance experience of the interviewees vary from 10 to 30 years as professionals in their respective disciplines. The sample consists of four women and six men. Four of the performers were graduates of three years training in Dance or Drama at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in Melbourne between 1985 and 1992; two of the practitioners have been senior teachers at this same institution for between 10 and 15 years, including a former Dean of the VCA School of Drama, David Latham; and four practitioners trained through other institutions, classes and workshops. The drama practitioners share varied levels of familiarity and proficiency with acting methods derived from the Stanislavski, Strasberg and Adler schools of Naturalism and Psychological Realism, as well as Mask work, improvisation, and various forms of physical theatre. The dance practitioners share a grounding in contemporary dance forms and practice. Four practitioners have varied levels of involvement in forms of physical theatre inspired by the Japanese Butoh form. At least one performer engages in what is self-described as “trance” performance.

1 See Appendix A.
The aim of this chapter is to investigate the belief systems that these various performers employ in order to generate their particular forms of performance. These beliefs include the conceptualisations of individual experience – of notions of “self” – as well as conceptualisations of the key terms of the study – “performance”, “consciousness” and “trance”. The ways in which these conceptualisations can influence or generate particular performance states are investigated. Particular aspects of interest to this study are the acts of identification that are engaged in by the various performers in their work. A range of factors and issues that can contribute to the generation of various performance states are also analysed. These elements are regarded within a conceptual framework that elaborates upon the processes by which the various performance states are induced and exited, as well as the ways by which these states are differentiated from what serve as the “normative” states of the performers and their environments. Thus these interviews are used as a basis for the examination of a number of key hypotheses developed in this study.

The intended state appears to be related to the state described by Keith Johnstone when he talks about “attending to” the Mask,\(^2\) using the metaphor of hearing a noise in the dense forest and awaiting for it to repeat itself or for further sounds – listening to hear. Johnstone talks about the process of regarding the Mask until the edges start to blur and become fluid before one puts it on. This creates a sense of the Mask being “switched on”, of being activated or ready to be worn and physically embodied.

Mask is a myth-making process, and a process that emerges from myth. Latham refers to a state wherein “you sense yourself in the image, while the image is within you”.\(^3\) The circularity of these ideas belie the “cyclic” nature of the creative act. The notion of the “feedback loop” encapsulates the idea of an intensified and directed focus of attention heightened by the interaction between the subject and the object of attention. The inner world of cultural constructs is perceived by the organism in the outer world of physical reality and material forms. This circularity of focus contributes to the embodiment of the mask, the character, the god, the demon, or the entity by creating a “closed system” state.

\(^3\) David Latham 2000, author’s workshop notes.
Masks embody “form” – they are ready-made templates in much the same way that spirits, gods and demons encapsulate particular forms – that are reinforced by tradition and ritual. Thus these forms are readily invoked to “possess” the performer. Forms are authorities – they resonate within a sphere of influence – and models. As poetic metaphors, these forms can attain heightened power in trance states – they “take on a life of their own”.

Trance practitioners and Mask performers learn in training traditions to adopt a “low-status” approach to these forms, an approach that is arguably necessary to the full endowment of physicality to the trance entity, the mask and the dramatic character. The adoption of a “subordinate” or “service” approach by the performer is seen to be an important element of the belief system that produces the desired performance states – central to the process of displacing the sense of the “normal autobiographical self” or “executive control” from the locus of agency and attribution.

Masks and characters have parallel functions for the performer – they both enshroud the personality of the performer, the organism, in order to be embodied. As forms, their efficacy lies in their ability to generate resonance in the social organism. A character like Hamlet, in cultures where Shakespeare's works or the play Hamlet are known, is endowed with enormous power of resonance. The resonance that such performances are able to evoke comes from its discursive power, as they touch upon themes of major concern. In Hamlet, the major concern revolves around the theme of death. In contemporary performance, another powerful “discursive performative” is found in performances that touch upon the theme of sexuality. The sexual appeal or “aura” of a character are seen as a “mask” endowed with enormous power of resonance. The power of resonance of the “masks” of eros and death in their various versions illustrate some of the dynamics by which focus and absorption of attention are invoked in both the performer and the audience. Death and sexuality belong to the most durable of “mysteries” and the most powerful of symbols, based on their capacities to elicit affective and imaginative involvement. The masks of death and eros are commonly and regularly invoked by the popular entertainment industries, this gives an indication of their efficacy.

\section*{Mask Induction}

\footnote{Johnstone.: p. 92.}
Mask is useful as a case study of a performed state of consciousness because it certainly tackles the question of identity most strongly. For example, the Neutral Mask is considered to obliterate all personality and psychology, as an expression of pure physicality. The Neutral Mask is considered to be a totally open and “space-filled” mask. Whereas in the Character or Expressive Masks, a developing personality and psychology is considered to present itself to the performer in order to be embodied.

I say, ‘Imagine you’re in a great forest and you hear a sound you can’t identify quite close to you. Is it a bear? Is it dangerous? The mind goes empty as you stay motionless waiting for the sound to be repeated. This mindless listening is like attending to a Mask.’ This usually works. If you attend to a Mask you’ll see it start to change probably because your eyes are getting tired. Don’t stop these changes. The edges crawl about, it may suddenly seem like a real face in your hands. Fine, don’t lose the sensation, put the Mask on gently and hold the image in your mind. If you lose it, take the Mask off.5

The Mask is seen to be a type of trance performance in that it is a way of expressing cultural forms through the invocation of “altered” states of consciousness. These modes of performance manipulate the state of consciousness of the performer; the performer’s craft involves the expression of particular states of consciousness. Drama itself can be seen as a form of shamanism, in that stories of the culture are transmitted through a transformative medium, with varying degrees of social efficacy and viability. The Mask can access particular forms, constructs and patterns; audiences see a character, psychology, or “spirit” in the mask. The performer has to believe that there is a “spirit” in the mask; and that spirit is the tradition – the imbued aesthetic that manifests itself as this embodiment of “embodying”.

In the context of masks and trance performances, embodiment is the result of a tradition that is transmitted or learnt through observation and enculturation – mimesis and osmosis. The embodiment is influenced by physical, psychological, gender, social, economic and other factors that contribute to the nature of the personality that is performed and that exists in the dimensions that are invoked. That state of consciousness is what is required in the practice of embodying the Mask.

Mask is humanity, as Latham says in the Neutral Mask workshops. The Mask is not a person, the Mask is “the person”. The Mask is “the woman” or “the man”. The Neutral Mask is “the human”. The Mask requires both an “altered” state of consciousness and an embodiment. Many anecdotes describe what happens when a

5 Ibid.: p. 166.
new Mask is put on by a performer, of how the body seems to simply “snap” into a shape and a character that is consistent with other embodiments of that particular Mask. The Mask is psychologically based and imbued with specific “discursive performatives” – an “inner world” construct manifested and embodied in the material physical realm. The body of the performer is “moved” and “compelled” – it is considered almost unnatural not to take on the physicality suggested by the Mask.

Johnstone commented on “the way that Masks compel certain sorts of behaviour” and the notion that in order to enter the world of the Mask the performer strives “to feel the presence of ‘spirits’” He recalls an example of a newly made Mask that was being discovered in a class. “A student tried it out and turned into a hunched, twisted, gurgling creature. Then a latecomer arrived, picked up the same Mask, and the identical creature appeared”. For Johnstone, “it really makes no sense that a Mask should be able to transmit that sort of information to its wearer”.6 Nobody has to teach us that the arm moves in a particular way, or that the hand tilts back this way – there is a sense that we “know” it, the body knows it. Aesthetic sensibility recognises the form and informs the performer, as a sense from the “inner world” that is embodied in the outer world. That is the Mask before it is performed – something that is produced from the inner world and reproduced in actual reality as an object. The Mask embodies a tradition, certain characteristics (or lack thereof in the case of the Neutral Mask), it embodies a psychology, it embodies a certain attitude or a certain emotion. In this way, the Mask can be a powerful text. The body recognises and reproduces it. The body is compelled to manifest it, to embody it. Such is the power of the Mask, of the tradition. Such is the strength of that particular form of knowledge which can also be seen to function as an element of cultural memory.

For Johnstone, the use of a mirror is essential in bringing about a performer’s full sense of embodying the Mask. “I don’t want them to think about being another creature, I want them to experience being another creature”.

I ...say: ‘Relax. Don’t think of anything. When I show you the mirror, make your mouth, fit the Mask, and hold it so that the mouth and the Mask make one face. You’ll know all about the creature in the mirror, so you don’t have to think about it. Become the thing you see, turn away from the mirror, and go to the table. There’ll be something that it wants. Let it find it. Disobey anything I’m saying if it wants to, but if I say “Take the Mask off”, then you must take it off.’

6 Ibid.: p. 165.
7 Ibid.: p. 166.
Seen as parahypnotic suggestions, the instructions given to the Mask performer are equally essential to the manifestation of a Mask performance state of consciousness – such instructions supplement and contextualise the text of the Mask. Quite a few similarities are drawn between the Mask inductions utilised by both Latham and Johnstone, and the induction techniques utilised by hypnotherapy practitioners. For example, an exercise wherein performers “reached” for the horizon out of an impulse from within the Mask induction state was very similar to the “arm levitation” test in the “Hypnotic Induction Profile” used by hypnotherapists Herbert and David Spiegel \(^8\) and the hypnotisability tests used by Ernest Hilgard\(^9\). Such tests and exercises serve to develop the sense of extra-ordinary motivations or control for actions performed, as a frame for the experience.

The warm-up is essential in finding the sense and state of “compelled” movement that is so important in improvised performance – as one strives to work with the “impulse” and the sense of “being moved” that is generated from within the embodiment. This is an important preparation in the induction process of the Mask, and of the hypnotic state. The status that Latham performed as facilitator was consistent with Johnstone’s descriptions of the high status role conducive to Mask work.\(^10\) The sense of “safety” generated within the Mask performer by such a status play acts as reassurance that there is an element of control regardless of how strong the sense of being “out of control” gets in the course of embodying the Mask. Such a status play is also consistent with the relationship that a hypnosis practitioner would employ with a subject. This seems to be central in what is described as a “shamanistic” role that sets the atmosphere for transformation to occur, and for generating highly particular states of consciousness.

Masks are “roles” in the sense that the performer adopts characteristics, physicalities, psychologies, expectations and complications (or lack thereof), in the embodiments of them as characters. Characterisation is a phenomenon wherein one personality “possesses” another – in this sense, the craft of the actor is considered “shamanistic” as it is transformative of the embodying medium. The actor transforms on film or in the theatre, and in the inner world experience. The actor remains as the individual personality who utilises their own body to embody an other – a character, a

\(^8\) Spiegel and Spiegel.: pp. 35-44.
\(^9\) Hilgard.: pp. 257-266.
\(^10\) Johnstone.: p. 164.
“spirit”, an “energy”, a manifestation in one form or another of a “cultural complex”. The term “complex” refers to the conglomerate of constructs, the realities that are heaped upon other realities that are created, which can take on physical and non-physical forms – the Mask being such a physical form. The Mask embodies, in itself and separate from the organism, a tradition and an image – a form which is entered, in the way that a dancer might “step into” a form.

The problem is not one of getting the students to experience the ‘presence’ of another personality ...the difficulty lies in stopping the student from making the change ‘himself’. There’s no reason for the student to start ‘thinking’ when he already ‘knows’ intuitively exactly what sort of creature he is. Getting him to hold his mouth in a fixed position, and having him make sounds helps to block verbalisation, and ‘finding a prop’ helps to tear the Mask away from the mirror.11

The Mask is simply an object and an artefact, in the sense that the Mask is “life-less” unless it is regarded by one that is able to access it. Because it is regarded by us, as human beings, a transformation can occur. It becomes more than a simple object and becomes an embodiment of being – an embodiment of a particular state of consciousness. The image of the Mask generates a powerful resonance in our inner world. The cultural richness and information recorded in it, in the interaction with the conscious being, that is the human actor, transforms the artefact into something more than the object. The conscious being can only activate the Mask if that being is able to perceive and understand the information contained in the Mask.

**Induction of Spirits**

I may say ‘When you look in the mirror let the Mask make a sound, and keep the sound going all through the scene.’ This is a meditation technique very effective in blocking verbalisation ...I often say things like ‘Yes, that’s excellent’, or ‘Who is it?’ or ‘Amazing’ even before students have looked in the mirror, so that the feeling of being different, and hidden, is reinforced.12

The study of consciousness offers an insight into the importance of the inner voice – the narratisation – within each individual that reflects our perceptions and experience, as an ongoing and usually silent verbalisation. When Masks begin to speak, as in the case of the Half Masks, the narratisation becomes more involved in the trance state. In this way, the consciousness of the performer becomes further involved in the state that was described by Stanislavski as the “creative state”.

---

The Mask is an embodiment of a particular state of consciousness. As a text, the Mask embodies a particular way of being and perceiving; a particular physicality and a particular psychology (or lack thereof). The Mask is a whole series of suggestions, each Mask suggests various ways of embodying it. When one is “reading” the Mask, “imaging” or “sensing” the Mask, in the induction and preparation process, one is “attending” to the Mask as Johnstone says. One is “taking in” or “breathing in” the Mask. One is preparing to embody the Mask, therefore one is connecting to it. On one level, the performer is taking in and accepting suggestions from the Mask in the form of images, emotive responses, or “gut” reactions to that particular Mask, as one regards the Mask in preparation. As one looks at the Mask in one’s hand, the Mask is read and regarded. The performer derives imagery from and responses to the Mask. These are what the performers invoke in putting on the Mask.

In the induction, during the brief period of time spent in preparation, the performer undergoes an experience that invokes an experience of what is considered to be an “essence”; considered as “pre-psychological” in the embodiment of the Neutral Mask, and characteristically psychological in the case of the Expressive Masks. This is one form of suggestion that brings about the parahypnotic state necessary for the preparation for embodiment – the actual ritual and induction procedure of putting on the Mask. The induction procedure of the Mask is the act of putting on the Mask – of breathing in and becoming the Mask. The instance of preparation involves the act of “letting go”. This is a meditative state in that one is compelled to await and to breathe in the Mask. The breath is an important aspect in the imagery of the induction procedure, to “breathe” is to be endowed with life. One also “breathes in” the information contained in the Mask, one becomes open to and able to absorb the influence of the Mask through the metaphor of the breath.

The Mask is regarded as a cultural record and documentation. The Neutral Mask is a record of what can be considered a face of death, a face that is cleansed of all personality and psychology. The Mask confronts us with that sense and imagery – the “letting go” of everything except of that which makes us human, that which makes us an embodied being. It confronts us with pure physicality, with the sense of the organism. The term “organism” refers to the physical embodiment – the purely material manifestation – and the psychological is seen as an emergent phenomenon of the physical, which gives a reflexive view of experience. The circularity that is suggested
by this is similar to the circularity of the breathing in of the Mask. The circularity invokes a “closed system” that is intensified with focused attention into an experiential field – a particular state of consciousness. Actors can perform in various hypnotic states wherein events “really happen”. The level of belief that the actor manages to generate internally can impact upon the “believability” of the performance and the level of “suspension of disbelief” that is effected in its audience. It is useful to compare Johnstone’s accounts of students’ experiences with Jane Belo’s accounts of trancers’ experiences in Bali and find some significant similarities.\footnote{Belo, Jane (1960). \textit{Trance in Bali}. New York, Columbia University Press.: pp. 66-195.}

The individualist paradigm attributes art to “self-expression”. By doing so exclusively it is made less conducive to developing the ability to conceptualise, let alone internalise, the notion of the “artist” as a “medium through which something else operated”, as Johnstone argued. “Once we believe that art is self-expression, then the individual can be criticised not only for his skill... but simply for being what he is”.\footnote{Johnstone.: pp. 78-79.} Thus the paradigm of the individual in society, together with the propensity for judgement, has the potential to be prime inhibitors of creativity – in much the same way that the trance state can be pathologised or demonised by various traditions and beliefs. Furthermore, individualism also offers a promise by positing “the subject who is self-contained and self-determining, the possessor of free will, and a capacity for objective knowledge ...in imaging the social subject as autonomous and free”.\footnote{Counsell, Colin (1996). \textit{Signs of Performance: An Introduction to Twentieth-century Theatre}. New York, Routledge.: p. 46.}

\textbf{The Performer in Trance}

The analysis will now turn to the experiences and perceptions of a number of dance and drama practitioners that were interviewed for this study. Aside from two practitioners, the interviewees are not identified for the sake of brevity and confidentiality. The small number of interviewees limits the breadth of the claims that are made and drawn on the basis of the evidence, however, the depth of the material gathered allows for a range of hypotheses to be developed. These hypotheses address the problem of what conceptual and technical elements comprise the induction and maintenance of a trance, or trance-like, state in the practices and experiences of the performers interviewed.
The performer is trained in and develops a set of practices by which they are able to engage imaginative and affective triggers that allow them to embody and enact particular cultural constructs that have been determined to provide a certain type of effect upon observers and the social milieu within which the performance occurs. Thus, trance is said to occur when the attribution of actions and motivations of the performer is interpreted by both performer and audience as originating from beyond the performer’s normative capacities and behavioural vocabulary.

In this sense, trance induction is reliant upon the intensification of the sense and conviction that “other-ness” is being enacted and embodied. An example of this dynamic is seen in the varied conceptualisations that describe the state of consciousness of the performer in the cultural setting of the interviewees. The notions of “conscious”, “subconscious”, and “unconscious” experience and material represent differentiations in the vocabulary and memory that are invoked in performance. Therefore, the degree to which the vocabularies and memories approximate the narratised normative experiences of the performer and the audience of the performance reflects the extent to which the performance is transgressive of “normal” or “realistic” experience, and the extent to which the sense of “other-ness” is intensified. This intensification is achieved through imaginative and affective involvement. Such involvement necessarily engages particular belief systems that are, in turn, shaped and modified by cultural factors elements, and processes. The performative and communicative force generated by such involvements determine the power of the enacted and embodied performances upon an enculturated audience.

**Basics and Beliefs: Constructs and Contracts**

The notion of performance has been conceptualised in various ways by various performance traditions. Such conceptualisations can determine the type of experience undergone by the performer. One way of understanding performance is expressed as an experience of an “other world”. Performers talk particularly about the notion of worlds – “the experience of performing, for me, means entering a different world, entering a particular state of focus”. Performance is seen to be “a kind of doorway” or “a window to link an inner world, somewhere, to the outer world” and the performative act is seen as “a kind of communication between these two worlds” – with the qualification that “this outer world is society”. Thus, performance is seen to function “beyond… where we live in the daily life – mundane routine living – performance for me
is beyond that area” and is therefore, in a sense, “unnatural”. While it is seen as “a constructed thing” and “make-believe”, the act of performing is considered to be “a kind of a servicing of my self to that kind of experience” in “a display of an experience”. Thus the notion of worlds is combined with the imperative of communication – “a performance is showing something, whether it is external or internal”; to perform is “to express something”.

Therefore, the notion that “performance is art” is elaborated with the idea that “art” for the performer “is about communication”; the performer’s relationship with their material or “information” is seen as a matter of “connecting with that material and then communication with the audience” and thus is seen as “probably the closest thing I have to a spiritual existence” or “a spiritual experience”. The performer’s experience is seen as “involving a certain state of consciousness… a state of concentration that involves one’s physical self… a physical presence, a physicality” combined with “a desire to channel something, or have this particular concentration inform the physical presence between the performer and the audience… there has to be a certain intention”. Thus, the performative and communicative force is seen to serve a social purpose, “it is about politics, in a very broad definition of what politics means – politics is about having a attitude, ideas, beliefs, and then the desire to communicate them”. A fundamental notion is that “performance is done for somebody to see it”; that it is “done for the benefit of an audience, or even for an unseen audience” and that it “always is to some degree, interactive with the audience, and the public, and the space” – the performer engages in a “dialogue with others”.

In considering the notion of consciousness, the factor of “awareness” was frequently used to grasp and elaborate upon the experience of being conscious. Consciousness was repeatedly described as an “awareness of self” and particularly as an “awareness of your self as a separate individual operating entity” and also as “being aware of oneself, as a mystery”. Thus the sense of individual self can be fundamental in the conceptualisation of consciousness; it is “something that exists as a ground for personality, but apart from personality… alive-ness… my consciousness is my knowledge that I am alive… my sense of self… my sense of uniqueness… my sense of being centered in where I am” though it can also “exist beyond that sense of self”.. This sense can also be conceptualised as an autonomous entity in itself, in an image reminiscent of the Cartesian “ghost in the machine”. “Consciousness is awareness.
Consciousness is a little person sitting in the back of my head. Watching what is happening in my life, documenting it and keeping a diary of it, giving me feedback at the end of the day. That is who consciousness is to me”. Consciousness can also be understood in terms of “internal and external” differentiations, as “a consciousness of what you are going through” and as “an awareness of... external factors”. Thus consciousness is grasped in terms of the interactions and involvements of the individual self with the environment; it is defined by “what I am aware of... the sentient, the sensory things” and by the sense that “it has, or there could be thought attached, or it seems to involve that – consciousness seems to connect to thought... I might become conscious and thought goes to those things that I attend to, but there’s ...a lot that seems, outside of that reflective state” – which nevertheless points to the notion that “consciousness seems to be awareness that has thoughtfulness”.

The element of thought thus brings into question the factor of “mind” and the elaboration of consciousness through notions of the “unconscious” and the “subconscious” – elaborating on what it is by illustrating what it is not. Thus, “consciousness is a way of knowing... a kind of awareness that involves, ironically, the subconscious... to be conscious is to choose what you want, when you have a choice... what your idea of light is... as opposed to darkness... there are many levels of being conscious”. That which eludes description or articulation is therefore relegated into the “darkness”. Consciousness is seen as “something from the mind... through your words, which for me is consciousness. So you can say something, articulate something... Describe it. Unconscious or subconscious, or other things, you cannot describe. Sometimes you cannot articulate it in words”. “It is very hard to put into words. It can be compared with light. You could say it is your awake-ness, except there is a certain consciousness that you have when you are asleep, that allows you to remember your dreams”. The experience of dreams is seen as another way of understanding states of consciousness – “awareness within a dream state... that is an altered consciousness... an environment that may take place within the mind... that we all interact with... that is a creation or a production of what your mind processes or has processed, as opposed to working within... what we would define as reality as such”.

Therefore, the conceptualisations of consciousness that these practitioners employ are comprehensively reliant upon the experience of the individual self, as defined by those elements of experience that are not identified with – as “unconscious”,...
“subconscious”, “darkness”, “external” and other notions. Thus, in reporting that “the conscious is... information that you can, that you do have access to, by will”, these practitioners reflect a particular view of consciousness that is grounded upon the experience of individual agency.

In analysing held notions of “trance”, the practitioners interviewed conveyed perceptions of such experiences understood through the conceptual framework of “altered states”. One practitioner saw trance as an “altered state of being... entering into another state of being that requires, in a way, the self to actually be left behind” and that this involves “some kind of surrendering... entering something else... to go into an altered state... a possession, it may not be always a choice”. Another practitioner elaborated on the idea of “possession” as an aspect of “altered” states:

Trance to me is an altered state. To be in a trance is, generally, to allow something to some other force, some other energy to take control, or have control of your actions... trance to me is a place where you can allow other possibilities to happen, or other energies, other forces. Whether it be a god or whether it be a spirit entity, or whether it be a dead grandmother, or whether it be a character, or whether it be a part, or a woolly mammoth, or something, some energy, some force... in my thought it’s to be possessed by an energy outside of one’s self.

However, other practitioners are less prepared to employ notions of a motivating force that is “outside” of the individual self, preferring the idea that “unconscious” or “subconscious” factors may be involved. Trance can therefore be seen as “another level... possibly subconscious level, where you draw forth from experiences or what not”. The experience is seen as emerging from “areas” that are not always accessible, from “an unconscious level... trance is an area that you cannot describe”. Therefore, in this sense the experience is seen on the basis of a relationship between “areas” of consciousness that are divided and categorised as “conscious”, “subconscious” and “unconscious” elements:

Trance is a state of consciousness... different states of consciousness can be just different states of trance. I think trance is also how much you allow yourself to be at the subconscious which is not the unconscious for the subconscious to take over... Trance is losing the conscious control, and I think the subconscious takes over... There are just different levels of trance to it. You can have different levels of conscious control.

The notion of a divided consciousness brings into highlight the problem of “mind” which is equated with the “conscious” area with which the individual self most readily identifies. Thus the experience of trance is considered as “a point where you have
deliberately quietened your mind" and where a shift in focus might occur in the individual act of identification:

We often think of trance as something where you are in a quite alienated state, dissociated state. Something that is quite distant, something that is quite split off from a normal state. I just don’t experience such a split. I suppose if I were to let go, and if I were to go into deeper trance than being in performance it would mean letting go of control more. I suppose it can mean perhaps letting go of the ego, that 'I' sense. It is a non ordinary state where your mind is much quieter than usual, and it is achieved by focus on a particular thing.

Furthermore, the problem of “mind” is directly related to the issue of “control” – that which is perceived as the motivating force for actions, and that to which the sense of agency is attributed. This issue becomes of major importance when the performer is placed in the performance setting and is expected to engage in an act of identification that, to varying degrees, depart from the sense of a normative self. Latham sees the experience of trance as a relevant framework by which to regard the practice and problems of performance:

We are afraid that we will get out of control, and that we will do whatever... you can’t control it, you can’t stay in control. But I often think that ‘in control’ that we talk about, is exactly the in control that we don’t want... things like trance develop such kind of bad associations... to talk about trance and going into a trance, people go ‘oh my god’. Whereas that is what performing is... you are in a trance. I think even when you perform in a naturalistic play onstage you are in a trance. There is a trance state. It may not be huge but there is one because otherwise where are you? Because it’s not real life, you’re not in real life. So you can’t just be on stage in real life just saying words you have learnt. The whole thing of saying... 'now I am in this castle' or whatever, one has entered a level of trance... I think it is to do with control and loss of control, and all those kinds of things. And it’s to do with people having the very odd experience.

The application of the conceptual framework of “trance” – as proposed in this study – allows for the observation and analysis of the performer’s experience in a performance setting that highlights such elements as the performer’s involvement with their material – the level of engagement that the performer achieves with the belief systems that they are expected to embody and enact – and the degree to which that involvement influences the experience of the audience of the performance. If the concept of trance initially appears to be foreign to a particular performer’s experience, an examination of that experience reveals the relevance of such a concept:

I wasn’t aware of really exploring trance... I think connection is a word that has the greatest relevance. Maybe it is more than just connection, maybe there is a depth to it, maybe there is a strength or a power to that connection. But I think if there is connection, there is at least trance like things going on. There is a passion... words like obsession actually come to mind. If you are obsessed with some thing, you are so connected to it that it becomes trance like, because
nothing else comes in, or everything else is pushed away rather. It doesn't mean other things are not there.

Thus, another element that the framework of “trance” can highlight is the experience of a divided consciousness that might eventuate in or necessitate the sense of isolation – the perception that a particular aspect of the individual self that is conceived of as “conscious” or “mind” or “normal” becomes separated or suspended in the experience of performance. Although this isolation from the “normal” environment of the performer also takes the form of physical separation, the “inner” experience of separation and suspension can only be apprehended through the perceived and reported experiences of the performer. Therefore, an understanding of trance is reliant upon an appreciation of the types of isolation that a performer experiences or requires in order to attain appropriate levels of imaginative and affective involvement:

For me, trance is not necessarily about... everything else disappears and you only have a trance – a hypnotic trance where you don’t know anything else in the world exists. That may be a form of trance... it can also be like my experience that I spoke about with the hypnotherapist, where we spoke about this voice in the back of your head that is overseeing. It is like you can be in a hypnotic trance state and still have that voice there. You can also, as my therapist often did, ask that voice to shut up and just watch, and not interrupt. Which was quite interesting. But yes I think passionate connection...

The sense of trance as “mystical” – the communicated sense of “other-ness” – substantively contributes to the performative power that it is able to generate. However, such performances invariably require some level of training, be it formal or informal, intentional or unintentional. The framework of trance proposed in this study considers a key aspect of such training or preparation to be the instruction or information that the performer receives or employs. These include the techniques and the texts that comprise the performance tradition as a whole. Another key aspect of the preparation for performance is the process of initiation that the performer receives – the practice by which the performer gets a sense that they have undertaken a role or a function that belongs to a particular performance tradition or culture. This aspect relates to the process of invocation that the performer utilises in order to commence a particular imaginative or affective involvement. These aspects are the learnt components of the performance practice that a performer requires in order to identify with or as the “other” that is to be embodied and enacted. For Latham:

If one is talking about going into trance, then you have to learn how to do it. It’s not just a case of sitting there and waiting. Because I think a lot of things that are termed ‘mystical’ or whatever, aren’t. They are termed mystical because somebody either does not know what they’re doing, or they want to give it something that it
does not necessarily have. If you're going to start working in an area whether it's trance or whatever it is, you have to know what you're doing... You do have to know how to get in, you have to know how to get out. You have to be able to do those things...

**Boundaries and Building Blocks**

A number of the practitioners interviewed shared varied levels of experience of working with Neutral and Character Masks. Thus it was possible to investigate to a certain degree the performer's experience in working with Masks, particularly the perceptions of the performance states that were felt to be essential aspects of the experience. Latham was the Dean of the VCA School of Drama between 1988 and 1997; he has extensively employed the Neutral and Character Mask in the course of training actors for professional careers in theatre, film and television. At least four of the practitioners interviewed had participated in performance workshops conducted by Latham. In describing Mask work, he stated a belief that:

when you enter the Mask, in a kind of a way, you enter another world. The world of the Mask is not our world, but nor is it the world of a, what you'd say, a kind of standard text based play. As soon as the Mask goes on the entire world, the entire theatrical world changes, so that you are dealing in... something that, for want of a better word, is truth. But it's not truth that exists in a kind of TV truth or a movie truth or naturalistic truth at all. It's a truth that is true to those Masks. Which means that in order to play the Mask you have to kind of transform into the Mask... as a result discover what that world is that you have transformed into... to perform in the Mask is to, first of all to transform into it... to perform, first the all, you've got to go to another state of consciousness. Because you can't perform the Mask, you can't really work in the Mask, if you just stay at your same kind of state of consciousness as you are when you perform normally on the stage. If you perform in a kind of naturalistic drama on the stage, you can't then put on the Mask and be in that same state of consciousness, and perform the Mask. It doesn't work. Because the Mask itself is larger than life. So you got to find that state of consciousness within yourself, that will allow those kinds of energies that the Mask demands. That will allow those to happen.

These beliefs are reflected in Keith Johnstone's chapter on “Masks and Trance” in his book *Impro* (1979) and thus represent a widely accepted view on the “transformative power” of Mask work. It is possible then to analyse the conceptualisations that comprise these beliefs in the quality of the performance state achieved in Mask work in order to formulate an understanding of the ways in which this belief system engages the imaginative and affective capacities of the performer to induce a particular state of consciousness. An essential component of this belief system entails the isolation of the sense of normative self through processes that were variously described by such metaphors as “emptying” or “surrendering”:

I need to quieten the self right down... process of emptying... a process of surrender... to enter that, it is both a physical and a mental thing... noisy head,
that’s part of the quietening down, of the letting go, not listening too much to all
that kind of rattle... going ‘well right now I need to be here, and right now what is
important is this Mask’... on a mental level, there is that process of letting go, and
on a physical level... attention to breath, being present to breath, and being
present to be the Mask... the process of... the taking in... looking at the Mask...
the focus actually on the Mask... seeing it as outside of me to begin with... there
would be a process of maybe talking to the Mask, of actually communicating, of
really trying to see it and not just what I might want it to be... because that might
be how I’m feeling or something else, but that might not really be in the Mask...
to see what it is, what it is asking of me, how the Mask actually wants to come to
life... I always have the feeling that... somehow the Mask... knows what is... it
knows how it wants to come to life... it’s part of that sort of conversation, that
process of actually looking at the Mask... putting the Mask on, again so much
about breath, and the breathing in, the taking in of the Mask... an experience...
my edges don’t exist in the same way that I know them... an experience of feeling
like the Mask actually enters me. So I enter it but it actually enters me... a sense
of actually expanding to actually meet it, and therefore it meets me. So my own
sense of self definition kind of shifts in quite tangible sort of kinaesthetic ways...
it feels like it’s an energy thing...

As the sense of normative self is isolated the performer engages in an act of
identification that is associated with the process of breath; the performer is informed by
the Mask through this “conversation” then identifies with the Mask before bringing it “to
life”. In associating the putting on of the Mask with the process of breathing in, the idea
that the Mask is about to be brought to life or enter the performer is reinforced by the
physiological imperative and certainty – the “truth” – of taking in breath. The above
performer had also described performance as an act of “service” in relation to the self,
this concept further enhances the intensity of the perceived transformation that is
undergone. In describing the moment of transformation – the invocation process – this
performer states that:

it was kind of a breathing in, a sort of an allowing breath. And so I had kind of
totally imagined that I am breathing in, taking inside of myself, this Mask... as
part of that I empty myself... it is a real challenge to the ego... I get angry or I just
get frustrated with myself when I haven’t actually entered. Because I just feel like,
at an ego level, there is something that actually has gotten in the way. Because
what is important here is the Mask, or what is important here is the execution of
this movement, and this material, and that moment. I am not important here, the
way I am perceived; I am not important here. Which is probably a better way of
describing the service thing.

This performer described the performance state invoked as being imbued with a
transformative power that was directly related to the level of isolation of the sense of
normative self that is attained:

I experienced the power of some kind of weird anonymity. Some sort of sense of
being able to leave myself somewhere, and enter the Mask... the thing that so
amazed me about that work, that Mask work, was... this surrendering that was
kind of asked of the performer to actually enter that Mask also kind of rendered
the performer so incredibly visible, in a way that I could not have expected to
happen. So there was an incredible visibility... in a sense I am seeing more about that performer as a human being, and yet they have in a sense kind of stepped away from themselves. They have taken away the expressiveness of their own personal face and put that behind that the Mask... maybe that was the experience for me of the power of that whilst I was actually performing.... The experience of anonymity allowed me to expose more than I perhaps would feel comfortable with, or choose to kind of explore in a normal character or text or something. There was a sense of limitless possibility and range and potential.

In contrast, another performer described the consequences of not successfully achieving an appropriate degree of isolation of the sense of normative self in Mask work, after describing another performance experience wherein an internal “critical voice” caused a kind of paralysis during a piece:

I had some funny experiences doing Mask. I had... what David Latham later called, a ‘paralysis of integrity’, doing Expressive Mask... where again that voice, that questioning, actually totally paralysed me, for a large chunk of the course. I got over it enough to be able to start to do things. But for about three or four classes, I literally just put the Mask on and stood still. Because I couldn't find a way to shut off those voices... anything I did I just felt was false, and fake and all the rest of it. But basically it was quite a strong experience. Really loud sort of voices.

The state that Stanislavski calls “tragic inaction” is comparable to what is effectively a dissociative trance state experienced by this performer, wherein the “normal” self is effectively paralysed but conscious of an “altered personality” state. This performer recalled experiencing “total failure and shame” at the time. This performer had also expressed a strong belief in the notion that performance always involves the portrayal of aspects of the self. “I don't believe in character... it's that old cliché that ‘we are all performing all the time’ and we perform aspects of our selves”.

Given the strength of this stated conviction, this type of “questioning” voice may be related to the sense of normative self that Stanislavski considered to be counter-productive in the attainment of a “creative state” in performance, which Latham considered to closely relate to the performance state that is sought in Mask work:

what you do when you get into the Mask is... you get beyond that commentary. You get beyond the thing that is saying in your head 'oh god this is really no good isn't it', ‘this is really awful, this is terrible’. Because you're so alive with the Mask that you push yourself beyond that state. So whatever is going on, comes out. So you don’t judge it... Sometimes it's not stuff that you retain. But you go beyond your own kind 'judge mental'. And of course when you do that, often it is very very exciting... sometimes it just happens once and never ever happens again... it is in that area of 'creative state', whatever you want to call it... Because if you are making a commentary on what you’re doing all the time, then actually you would never do it. Because some of the things that happen in the Mask are so stupid, they are so ridiculous, that you'd go 'I can't do that'. But if in your mind you’re on that kind of level, then somewhere the energy is not right, the energy is not with

the Mask. The energy is with your own persona, or your own way of looking at life, and your own kind of judgements. Whereas your energy has got to be focused somewhere else... if you are performing the Mask and at the same time you’re doing this, you are commenting about it in your head or where ever you are, that is actually what comes through... the Mask is incredibly revealing, the Mask does not hide, you put the Mask on to hide things but the Mask doesn’t hide anything. The Mask actually reveals things. It really reveals what’s going on... We may not see it in so many words, we don’t say ‘oh this is what’s going on’, we may go ‘there’s something a bit weird here’. There is something that doesn’t quite work with us, and to me that is what it is; it shows. It shows up those moments that are really not totally there, those moments that are, in the end one would term, ‘untruthful’.

A number of techniques are utilised in order to shift the performer’s focus “beyond that commentary”. One technique used by Latham has the effect of shifting focus to a particular notion of “energy” – a corporeal sense of held force – by associating the bodily sensations generated in the act of running. The exercise, referred to as “running on the inside”, served as a preparation for the initial uses of the Mask:

that is about finding the energy. Because that is one of the most difficult things finding the energy level where that Mask exists. Because often people deal with the Mask under energised. They deal with the Mask on an energy level that is day to day, and that just doesn’t work... You've got to find a way of working with the Mask at an energy level that is different from the energy level where our persona exists... to me it is one of the very simple and very quick ways of being able to do that. Because the body becomes charged, without becoming rigid. It just becomes charged with energy, and it’s breathing.

Another technique used by Latham employs a form of circular suggestion that functions in much the same way that a koan would in Zen meditation practice17 by invoking metaphorical imagery that demands a kind of “side-step” of rational thought processes:

To me the essence of it is ‘you are in the image, the image is within you’... the essence of the work. And it isn’t something you can write about... you either understand it or you don’t. But it is not understanding it in an intellectual way really, it is to do with sensing it. There comes a point when you actually just sense, and you go ‘oh yes’. But of course as soon as you go ‘oh yes’ you lose it. But it is an absolutely essential part of my work. Because the work is to do with finding the world of the Mask which exists in a whole different set of images. Working with images is fundamental to my work anyway, what ever work I do, when I work with text or whatever. Finding the images that exist. What are the images that give rise to this language? That to me is very important, essential to my work.

These techniques function as processes that lead to an isolation of the sense of normative self by providing stimuli for the imaginative and affective capacities of the performer that shifts attention away from the narratisation processes that are
intrinsically associated with the normative self – that is, the narrative of the “me” of the performer. The isolation of normative self is experienced as a “quietening down” of the internal “voice” of the performer. Whereas, an inability to produce this isolation could lead to an experience of a “paralysis of integrity” or a persistence of the “questioning” or critical internal “voice” that will not “surrender” to the required performance state. Thus these issues highlight the importance of the notions that a performer holds with regard to the question of the “self” in relation to the performance state. These experiences indicate that the notion of performance based on “aspects of the self” presents some critical problems and limitations upon the performer’s ability to enact and embody certain performance states. Some performance states, such as the performance of Masks, necessitate conceptualisations that allow for the notion of “transformation” – that allow for acts of identification that encompass information beyond the limits of the normative self and its various “aspects”. Latham expresses a belief that a performer working with Masks is invariably required to reach beyond such limits:

You have to let it take you. So there is a certain amount of surrender. You have to surrender yourself to the Mask, so that it will take you into another place. You will allow yourself to be transformed by the Mask. It’s not really a popular concept that, for actors to transform. Because actors, like everyone, want to play one part every time they do whatever. But to me, it really is the essence of acting... one can be transformed by all kinds of things, but I think the power of transformation that the Mask has can be something that is instant and total, and quite unforgettable... to have had the experience of transforming and to know what it is, then the thing for me would be to be able to do it without the Mask. And to take that next step, having had experience of transformation and still be able to do it.

**Theatre and the Possibility of Spirituality**

In more general discussions of performance, other performers described comparable experiences with an internal monitoring element. One performer described an aspect of awareness in the performance state that reflected a concern with the technical “quality” of the performance, speaking of it as one of the factors that were perceived to inhibit rather than facilitate the attainment of what is considered to be an optimum performance or “flow” state:

Lack of focus inhibits performance. Also, yes this quality control thing, this concern with technique at the time of performance. This concern with trying to control it, to make sure it is OK, and not just trusting that performance to take over. Not allowing it to take on a life of its own... I tend to have a measure of

---

17 For example – *The Gateless Gate*, a famous collection of koans (a koan is a short story, often a dialog between a student and a teacher, that points towards some essence of the spirit of Zen). Also *Zen Koans* by Venerable Gyomay Kubose (1973).
control to make sure I am doing what I am doing ... quality control, it is a bit of an obsession with me.

The optimum performance state and its attainment can thus be seen to be a significant concern for the practitioners interviewed. This state can also be seen to be considered as characterised by the absence of critical “voices” or of such monitoring elements. However, the monitoring element is not always considered to be a hindrance to an effective performance, it can also be seen to assist the performer. Thus the “quality control” element can also be seen to provide an important function in relation to the type of performance experience that is considered by a performer to be desirable or of an appropriate “artistic standard”. For another performer, the internal monitoring element took the form of a “stage manager” figure that serves as an organising and reassuring element of the performer’s self concept in action; particularly where performance situations become subject to factors that can generate stress or anxiety for the performer, such as unexpected problems arising during performance:

I am aware of that consciousness of the stress, but I am also consciously aware that I am still there in that place. That character still feels, I am saying the words, I am connected with what I am doing and saying, but there is a little element at the back, that is a kind of like my stage manager in the back of my head, just making sure ‘it is okay, just keep going everything else will fall into place’. Whatever it is, there is a voice there, there is an awareness there... the character did a lot of stuff that had to be done. I was there, I mean the voice in the back looking at it thinking ‘Do I fix it now? No, this character can do it, let him do it. Okay go do it,’ the stage manager. That voice in the back saying ‘leave it... somebody else will deal with it’ or ‘deal with it now’. And that was actually a fun experience... in that example, it didn’t take anything away from the show, in fact it added to it.

These monitoring elements are directly related to the notion of the “hidden observer” described in studies of hypnosis and the notion of “executive control” as used in this study. An account from another performer described an experience of “channeling” that they had during a “meditation and psychic development” workshop. For this performer, the experience began as a group meditation session from which, as they were instructed by the facilitator, “one of you won’t come out”. When it became apparent that “this time it was different... I didn’t come out... I was going ‘oh I’m still here’... I sensed that everyone was awake. I could hear them talking”, the facilitator suggested to this performer that “right now there is an entity standing behind you who wants to speak, allow them in”. From this induction the channeling session began, and the performer reported that:

---

18 Hilgard.: pp. 185-215.
I had a sense... in my visual mind there is a room with a big chair in it, and if you sit in the chair, you're in control of the body. So I thought that's where you normally sit. And yet this time it was a strong sense of standing off the chair and letting someone else sit in there for a bit. This something sat down and started talking away, and they were asking questions... I had more of a sense of standing beside the chair than the person who was saying the questions.

This experience indicates that aside from the necessity to effect an isolation of the sense of normative self, the induction of such performance states as those investigated in this study requires the invocation of an alternative source of information. This source provides the contents of the communicative and performative acts of the performer. Thus the source can take the form of narratives implicit in characters, physicalities, entities and environments; or the imaginative and affective dynamics generated by interactions implicit in the acts performed.

The information that is embodied and enacted is experienced by the performer and apprehended through a vocabulary of metaphorical terms that approximate the experience of the performance state. Thus the performers interviewed used a range of terms to describe the processes by which these alternative sources of information are invoked. Some of the terms used are descriptors of a spatial nature – performers spoke of “connections”, “paths”, “explorations”, “being present”, “being lost”, “to enter”, “to flow”, “internal” or “external”, and “journey”. Some performers used descriptors of a temporal nature – “moment”, “history”, “contemporary”. Some other descriptors may be focal in nature – these are terms such as “energy”, “accumulation”, and “mystery”. The significance of “conviction” as a factor is also apparent in the type of approach required in relation to information that is invoked in performance.

Thus whether examining the experience of playing a character or channeling an entity, similar dynamics are found in terms of the processes by which the performer induces a dissociation from the sense of the normative self and invokes a body of information that is to be communicated to an audience. These processes are distinct acts of identification that a performer engages in:

I am aware of going into a performance state. I am not aware of it as something that is... continuous with my normal personality, but it is not something that I would forget. It is not as if you are being hypnotised... although I suppose it might be. I suppose it is some kind of light trance, but not such a deep trance that I would forget about it afterwards... Yes, I am aware of being another... of being a different personality, of being quite a different being when I am on stage, because I feel very comfortable in front of an audience. I feel that I am larger than life at that stage. Yes, it is almost like I have an everyday personality that deals with banalities, and then I have that, on stage. I am dealing with, just expressing, things...
that have more to do with the soul, the non ordinary aspects... I can be quite shy in normal social relations, relationships where it is a one on one, where you’re actually making one on one connection with someone, and you are judged in that way. On stage you are larger than life, or I am a larger than life person, so I do not have to make connections in that way. I am making connections to a mass.

The process of performance is seen to involve a function that is beyond the “normal” and the “ordinary”. Therefore, by engaging in performance, the individual performer becomes identified with a social and cultural function that is seen to be transcendent of the individual self. The performer identifies with the performance material, and the level of “conviction” or belief that they are able to exercise determines the intensity of the imaginative and affective involvement of the performance experience and the performative act. One performer described the type of resonance that some material might evoke for them:

If I read it and I connect with it, it is almost like that connection where maybe in another lifetime I could have written it, because it is so ‘me’. It is so much about something, perhaps one of those ‘me’s’ inside me connects with it so much that it is something that I need to say or want to say. I then can take that, and place that information with me on a stage in front of people, and through connecting with that material and then communicating it with the audience, for me that becomes like a spiritual experience... There would be no need to express anything if you had nothing to express. And that does not take away the value or validity of others that just need to move, or need to whatever. They are happy to speak other people’s words and they don’t care what they are. And that is totally valid. But it is a different thing to what it is for me... personally for me, it is probably the closest thing I have to a spiritual existence.

Cultural Programming and Survival Techniques

A number of performers interviewed had engaged in a type of performance that was explicitly described as “trance” performance. This work was led by Tony Yap, a Melbourne-based practitioner who was born in Malaysia. Yap recalled witnessing various forms of trance possession practice as a child in Malaysia, one instance recalled was of a washer-woman who was said to have been “possessed by demons”
– such instances were “quite common in those days, when they had these psychic wars... our house was a temple and we had a medium every night”. In such an environment, the notions of “trance” and “possession” were a prominent part of the social and cultural milieu. Yet, for a child witnessing an instance of possession, a deep impression would have had to have been made:

...you see her, she was just transformed, it was amazing. It was awesome. As a child, I don’t think I was afraid. You were just struck with awe, I suppose. You look and you did not understand what happened. Fear is only when you realise what is happening. When adults tell you it’s the devil or that it could happen to you, then you have fear. But the state you are in is a kind of awe. I don’t know whether it is good or bad. I like it.

What struck Yap as a child was the display of apparent physical strength that was considered to be well beyond the capacity of the washer-woman; this was also seen as evidence that the possession had transformed the woman totally – “it was definitely someone else... she was very strong, far beyond her physical means... they would tie her up and she would just break the ropes, and they couldn’t control her. Anything she wanted they gave her, with fear”. In addition, Yap also regularly witnessed consultations with possession trance practitioners that would come to the family house:

the villagers would consult their different gods... Every time a particular god possessed a medium, they would go into the same mannerisms. If it was the monkey god, it had all these sort of things. It does some feats, like burning your skin with incense, and chopping their back with an axe... certain gods or deities have a particular set of choreography and acting. But what they tell you is different, the message is always different. That’s why they keep coming, because all people who come there seem to have a different need every night, or problems. And they help them.

As an adult and an artist, Yap studied and trained in the Japanese Butoh form of physical theatre and was highly influenced by Grotowski’s styles and theories of performance. Using words like “stylised”, “grotesque”, and “raw” to describe this type of performance, Yap believes that “Butoh is this dark area... it is the area over from perhaps what Jung calls the shadow area, the darker area of one’s being”. Given the nature of the recalled childhood experiences, and the type of performance training chosen in later life, it seems natural that Yap would choose to engage in the type of performance work that incorporates some of these practices and beliefs.

The combination of influences that inform Yap’s performance practice can clearly be seen to be not confined to one particular social or cultural milieu, thus his work has
been described as resulting from a “hybridisation of form and context”. Yap is highly unique amongst the contemporary theatre culture of Melbourne as someone who proposes and advocates the practice of “trance” performance, earning a place for it in this cultural setting to the extent of being awarded a highly prestigious theatre industry prize – a 1999 Green Room Award for Best Male Dancer. This acknowledgement also indicates somewhat the extent to which the notion of trance as performance has been accepted within this particular social and cultural environment, albeit through the “hybridised” performance practice of an artist whose identity in this environment is imbued with a certain degree of “other-ness”. Thus in this instance, the performance of trance is effectively an enactment and embodiment of a culturally – or inter-culturally – constructed and defined “other”.

This notion of the performance of the “other” is strongly apparent in an important element of preparation that Yap described as having employed, by which the performer’s attentional absorption is secured and maintained:

the thought of death... not all that time, but I remember at the strong moments when I feel I’d die. I am no longer me. At that moment I die. It is almost like a death; I suppose a death of ego and the personality. That is what I mean by dying. I suppose. Fears come from the ego, expectations come from the ego, and the personality is because of this. But I die because I just don’t want this at the moment, there is just nothing. It’s just going into that... I suppose that is the biggest preparation, and it might lead and tune the focusing.

**Sustainment and Interruption of States**

However, the phenomenon of trance as performance can also be seen to occur in settings that invoke the sense of the “familiar”. This is particularly the case in the performance of characters within the form of Naturalism or Psychological Realism. Performance in such forms requires the performer to engage in acts of identification that are confined within a behavioural vocabulary that is conventionally recognised as “realistic”. Nevertheless, the performer is also required to be sufficiently absorbed in the performance of character – however much the performed character is recognised as an aspect of the performer’s “normal” self – for the enactment and embodiment to be “convincing”. Thus, for a number of the performers interviewed, the techniques developed and associated by the Stanislavski, Strasberg and Adler traditions of acting provided the means by which the attentional absorption of the performers were achieved and maintained. One performer described the way in which a technique from

19 Eckersall, Peter (2000). What Can’t be Seen Can be Seen: Butoh Politics and (Body) Play. Body Show/s: Australian Viewings of
Strasberg’s Method – the “overall-sensation exercise”\textsuperscript{20} – served such a purpose, to induce imaginative and affective involvement:

It is about the space, the place, the time, that you consciously are connected to. And if you keep that connection, it doesn't mean that you are not aware of other things there are going on. A great one in Method is the ‘overall’... it might be a pain, you focus on a sore elbow... that is all you have to focus on. And that becomes a core element of this particular character. Or a sore knee, so it’s creates a limp and it creates other thing. But it is not the limp that creates the character, it is actually in the pain. And you focus on that pain, and you can come in and out of it. Because you are dealing with other elements as a performance. But at every moment where you require to ensure you are there, it is like a guarantee, you just go back to it. Go back to the pain. In a Method class, if you are dealing with that, you will sit there and you start doing something and the teacher, the side coach, will say ‘go back to the pain, keep the pain’. And you keep doing, you keep talking, you keep acting, whatever your moment is. But your mind goes... okay, yes I'm here, I am still here, it is there, I am here. And it is just a link, it is like a safety line that keeps you in that place.

Another performer described an instance wherein the technique of “emotion memory” helped produce an experience of becoming absorbed into a character's experience and “world”:

doing this little kitchen sink drama... we set up this living room... I was doing this scene with this girl and we were improvising, we got into this scene via the sense memory... getting into this sort of situation, just a genuine sort of emotional reality, that is the character’s emotions rather than my own. Although perhaps because I had experienced something similar to the character, it was... but it was more like the character's emotions rather than my stuff. It was the character's stuff... Yes, just a genuine emotional connection with the character's situation... This increased sort of emotionality goes towards being ecstatic in a small way, it is just... richer than every day consciousness... It is like a charge, if you are expressing an emotion you are just plugged into a charge... you are plugging yourself into very strong charged psychic energies.

This performer also considered some of the other elements of the constructed “world” that served to facilitate and intensify the imaginative and affective involvement. Such elements included the objects and the settings that served to intensify the sense of being in the character's world:

We had props to play with. So it’s was like chopping up vegies and stuff like that, and you could do things with the knife to sort of express or get into the character’s anger... this character had a whole physical existence, with the props and the things and the sitting down and the whole environment. Like we actually did set up an environment as well to help that situation. But actually, you’re talking about the emotional strength of it, that helped get me into the character's skin, that actually came from being able to live in the character, to find my way into the character. I suppose it was again plugging myself into something.

\textsuperscript{20} Strasberg: pp. 138-141.
These examples demonstrate the processes by which imaginative and affective involvement are invoked by objects from memory and by objects in the environment of the performance – “emotion memory” and “props” provide texts and contexts from which a performance is embodied and enacted. These instances demonstrate the functions of the transformative dynamics that are found in the notion of trance, and the extent to which these dynamics apply to a performance form and a conceptualisation of performance that presents itself as “realistic”. Thus, these examples further demonstrate the ways in which a “realistic” trance is embodied and enacted – induced and sustained – through the process of imaginative and affective involvement.

In this chapter, the use of masks as an element of performance training in the dramatic arts has been investigated as an inroad into understanding the extent to which concepts of “trance” and “states of consciousness” have become part of a globalised contemporary performance practice tradition, as evident in the sampling of a range of performers practising in the city of Melbourne in the year 2000. This representative sample indicates that the concepts at the centre of this study have been an integral part of contemporary performance practice resulting from an interplay of belief systems from a range of cultural traditions. In particular, the processes employed in the performance of masks have shown that the frameworks of “states of consciousness” and “trance” are widely accepted within this influential performance tradition, so much so as to have become an important part of contemporary actor-training. The analysis of the interviews with the sample of performers further indicates the extent to which the themes and narratives by which performances are deemed effective and meaningful address the notion of the “everyday self” as an object to be subjugated to what is to be performed in striving for an ideal. Thus the spectrum containing the senses of normativity and transformativity has been shown to function as an important framework by which to regard and evaluate these types of performances. Elements of the performance practices investigated have also been demonstrated to serve as a process of induction by which various acts of identification produce the desired performances. Furthermore, elements of various practices have been shown to serve as tools by which the desired performance states are maintained or resolved. These elements have been shown to serve as frameworks by which performances identified as “contemporary” theatre or drama are practised, regarded, evaluated, and conveyed as tradition. In the following chapter, the tradition identified as Psychological Realism is analysed in order to develop an understanding of a highly
influential and pervasive performance tradition in the context of the state of consciousness that is embodied and enacted.
The idea of ‘true life’ encapsulated in Realism is concerned with “dirt on the street, cigarettes, traffic, buses, advertisements, family” and other signifiers of the modern world; these are all culturally specified elements. The social conflicts that are addressed, in this type of performance, are operative on both the individual psychological level and on the mass social level of experience. Realism strives to create the illusion of “reality” in the performance of the “great truth.”

During a channeling session in Melbourne by Jani King of the entity P’taah, a child asked “what happens to Jani?” It is difficult to imagine that an audience member of a Naturalistic or Realistic play would ask this of the actor playing the character – ‘what happens to the actor?’ It is a given that the notion of character and characterisation enables us to conceptualise the process of the actor’s individual personality being suspended while the character is being performed. The individual human organism that takes on the social function – the role – of the actor is expected to further take on the role of the character. The sense of self of the organism and the train of thought of the individual organism is held under control – within the frame of the role of the ‘actor’ – for the duration of the performance. The craft of the actor thus conventionalises this dynamic.

This chapter considers the notion that the basis of Psychological Realism is the experience of the individual agent. The “self” that is defined by individual identity, is taken to be fundamentally autonomous of the social and cultural influences of its environment. This construction of the self assumes that it exists as an entity beyond embodied social roles or expectations, and it is idealised as the neutral or essential ‘me’ that is seen as the locus of agency and attribution. This conceptualisation of self considers its limits and boundaries to be defined by the individual physical body and its behaviours. This is considered to be the primary locus of agency and responsibility, group identity is considered to be defined by the actions and expressions of its individual members. Thus the ideal self comes to be regarded as a unified and
independent entity, with the attainment of the “true individual” as an ideal is seen as a fundamental goal of experience and existence.

This chapter considers the idea that Psychological Realism, as a style of representation and performance, illustrates and embodies a particular way of perceiving an individual’s relationship and experience of others and the environment – a particular way of being. This perception serves as a filter for experience and existence, considering “reality” to be characterised as both naturalistic and realistic, with an underlyingly scientific and materialistic view of human existence. This filter, this way of being, is embodied and animated by the characters of Naturalism and Realism through interactions with other characters and the environments in which they live. The characters are the states of consciousness pointed to by the scripts of the plays, as revealed by the performed words and actions of the text. The characters of Psychological Realism can therefore be viewed as performed states of consciousness. They are states of consciousness in the sense that they are representations of human experience and perception that are embodied by the actor and the performance. The state of consciousness of a performed character may be clearly identical to and identifiable with the actor’s normal everyday state of consciousness or sense of self, or the actor’s own state of consciousness may also be said to undergo qualitative alterations and adjustments in order to embody a character. Nevertheless, the effective portrayal of a character requires the perception of a particular state of consciousness in the performed character by the audience the performance. The observer must see the ‘lights on’ in the internal world of the character, a profound psychological depth of a character in a realistic experience and environment.

Psychological Realism represents a tradition of performance which originated in Northern Europe in the late 1800s, going back to the first centuries of industry and the first printed novels. Since then, this tradition has come to dominate as a cultural form of storytelling through drama, theatre, film and television. In the narratives constructed and conveyed, and in the characters and roles portrayed, the cultural body and consciousness of the social organism – the group – that created them can be discerned. The traditions of Psychological Realism also incorporated and conveyed a set of beliefs regarding consciousness and meanings of existence, norms and notions of truth and reality.

3 Ibid.: pp. 3-17.
In one sense, Psychological Realism is embodied in the canon of dramatic texts by such playwrights as Zola, Ibsen, Chekhov and Strindberg,\(^4\) as well as the subsequent works that they had influenced. In another sense, Psychological Realism describes the body of actor training techniques and performance technology as practised by dramatists such as Stanislavski and Strasberg. Both senses must be considered in regarding Psychological Realism; the text and the performances of the spoken words and actions must be examined. Together they create the experience and perception of Psychological Realism. To the extent that Psychological Realism filters our perceptions and experiences, it is clearly observable as a belief system by which we, individually and culturally, make sense of human existence. Thus it is appropriate to analyse these belief systems within the context of a cult of Psychological Realism - as a posited ultimate system of values that offered truth, meaning and authenticity.

Human experiences and perceptions are subjectively interpreted on the basis of subsets of memory which comprise the filters of consciousness, our ways of being in the world. The “multiple drafts” model of consciousness proposed by Dennett is useful to consider in this regard.\(^5\) Dennett referred to such interpretations of experience and perception as “editorial processes” that occur as ongoing “revisions” over “fractions of a second”. These processes rely upon “spatially and temporally distributed content-fixations in the brain” – products of previous “detections”, “discriminations” or “observations” of “features” as information. As incoming “information content” is “fixed”, processes of “content-discriminations” result in sensations of “a narrative stream or sequence” that are subjected to further processes of “continual editing”. The resulting “stream of content” is characterised by “multiplicity” and experienced as “multiple drafts” – experienced in memory as “narrative fragments at various stages of editing in various places”.\(^6\) Although Dennett considers these processes to be localised in the brain, this study considers the notion that the filtering of information can also occur in other parts of the body, as suggested by such processes as Stanislavski’s “Method of Physical Action” and physical training of various forms. Thus, in this study the body in totality is considered to be the locus of experience and consciousness – as embodiment and enactment informed by memory.

---

\(^4\) Ibid.: pp. 21-23.
\(^5\) Dennett.: pp. 111-113.
\(^6\) Ibid.
One particular type of memory subset that is of interest to this thesis is that which is referred to as the ‘character’ in the dramatic process of characterisation. That process is based on the construction of a particular set of experiences or circumstances; a particular set of propensities, abilities, tendencies, biases, world-views or mindsets which form a particular self identity that, in this case, is different to the self identity of the performer of that character. There is a doubling of self identities. In that sense, the self identity that is the normal everyday self, the self identity that participates in consensus reality, steps aside in a sense, or ceases to be that particular dominant self identity as it becomes the character.

The physicality of the individual actor, the person, is still that particular self identity, but it takes on – it embodies – an other. It embodies an entity that is a trigger in the physical realm of performance for resonance in the inner world of the viewer and observer. This internal world experience is an aesthetic experience. It can also be said to be a spiritual, intellectual, psychic or physical experience. All these different ways of experiencing are themselves states of consciousness. Each one is a way of being aware.

Stanislavski developed a set of acting techniques which went on to become the System. The Stanislavski System was later adapted in the United States by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler and others to become the Method. It is possible to identify a particular form of performance that is said to embody characters which resonate in a particular way, both individually in the actor and culturally in its mass audience base. In this way the characters embody values, traditions, idiosyncrasies, education, economic power, political ideologies and gender to become the expression of the time and place, the actor’s environment. Stanislavski and then Strasberg presented a way of systematically approaching the craft of performance. Through the System and later the Method, an actor is enabled to enter an inner world creation which becomes the character’s world – the fictive world with the fictional ‘I’ or the performed ‘me’, the identifications of the character. The character is a conceptualisation inherited from Western empirical thought. A performed state of consciousness is something that is akin to characterisation – a representation that is able to evoke a resonance.

Psychological Realism can impose a psychoanalytic filter upon the character. Psychological Realism problematises the human being into a set of objectives, desires,
tasks, biographies, tendencies and talents. What is seen on the stage or screen is a particular view of human existence. A view that is coloured by the cult of Psychological Realism. A cult that is economically and artistically based. A cult that is aesthetically definable by such terms as naturalistic acting and realistic style. Psychological Realism comes out of the era of people such as psychologists William James and Sigmund Freud, whose views significantly influenced Stanislavski with his own interests in areas such as hypnosis. The phenomenon that Stanislavski described in the example of Kostya’s ‘Critic’ – of the critic possessing the actor and the interaction of the actor with Tortsov⁷ – demonstrates a view of a particular way of being and performing that is somewhat dissociative, that is somewhat awesome in its “archetypal” power and its resonances – its effects upon our world of representations, the internal worlds of the characters and the audiences, the inner worlds of the human organism.

Psychological Realism represents a performed state of consciousness within the realm of the fictional existence, within the ongoing dialogue of the internal voice influenced by the environment. In the contemporary social context, the internal voice is subject to such texts as the six o’clock news on television, the important e-mail that one has received, the correspondences and conversations, communications and interactions between the singular organism, the ‘individual’, and its environment. The ‘individual’ is also what is seen as material existence, the basic human organism. This is particularly the tendency in the performance mode of Psychological Realism. Beyond the physicality of the organism the words and thoughts – the internal world of that organism – are discernible. It is given that this is an internal world that is shared with others within a particular culture or social organisation. What is found in Psychological Realism is a performance form that is produced by a particular economic organisation, in this sense the studios and producers of the Hollywood cinematic industry. It is evident that particular sets of concerns, particular narrative interests are being pursued.

**From August Strindberg to Mike Leigh**

Psychological Realism is about the environment of the characters as much as it is about the internal world, the reflections, of the characters. It is the internal world, as a reflection upon the environment, that is culturally absorbed through the entranced

---

gaze of the viewer. These reflections are encoded and embedded in the artefacts, in the works that are published and that become the ‘great works of the canon’.

Analysis of one defining work of Psychological Realism, *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg (1888), illustrates some of the discursive streams generated. Strindberg’s concerns belie, among others, an interest in the suffrage movement in Norway at that time. *Miss Julie* is a story of a woman who undergoes a radical transformation of consciousness, a decision, a filter of experience that possesses the two central characters of the play.

The passion that possesses Julie and her valet Jean is seen by a number of different dynamics, prominent of which is the sexual politicking that is played out between the two characters. The possession is seen in the physical experiences of the characters, and interpreted in a particular way, to be seen as a sexual play. Of course it is much more than that. It is also a comment upon the experience of women at that particular time. However, the experience of Julie and Jean is the highlight of the play, and it is in the sense of Julie being perceived as transgressing her normative boundaries to embody a version of who she is in her social and cultural context. The Julie that exits at the end of the play is a profoundly transformed character from the one who enters at the beginning of the play.

In the Preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg wrote that he considered Julie to be “a modern character” – as “a relic of the old warrior nobility” and “a tragic legacy of Romanticism” that is “being dissipated by Naturalism”. The “circumstances” that motivate Julie’s “tragic fate” are considered by Strindberg to include “her mother’s ‘bad’ basic instincts; her father’s improper bringing up of the girl; her own nature and the influence {Jean’s} suggestions had on her weak, degenerate brain… the festive atmosphere {of that night}; her father’s absence; her period; her preoccupation with animals; the intoxicating effect of {a preceding} dance; the light summer night; the powerful aphrodisiac influence of the flowers {of midsummer}; and finally chance that drives {Julie and Jean} together in a room apart, plus the boldness of the aroused man”.

Strindberg considered himself to have made his dramatic “figures” as “characterless” in the sense of not being “fixed” or “set” or “summary judgements” – as
not being caricatured. They are taken as being “split and vacillating” – as “conglomerates”. However, Strindberg does provide a good deal of information regarding Julie’s “circumstances” and “tragic fate” to convey a very particular view of the world and the self that belies a particular frame for embodiment and enactment in the biases of the author and his milieu. These biases are indicated in Strindberg’s view of the theatre as “an elementary school for the young, the semi-educated, and women, who still retain the primitive capacity for deceiving themselves or for letting themselves be deceived, that is, for succumbing to illusions and to the hypnotic suggestions of the author”. In constructing the character of Julie, through the words of the script and the discourse that surrounds this “modern psychological drama”, Strindberg presents a template by which to embody and enact a performance of “hysteria” that he believed had characterised the “age of transition” in which he lived. Strindberg viewed Julie as a “victim” in “the spectacle of a desperate struggle against nature”.

The character of Julie is also of particular interest to this study because Strindberg makes use of a “waking suggestion” to dispatch of her. The performance of the character Julie requires the performer to portray a “hypnotic” trance by which she is compelled to commit suicide at the end of the play. This section of the play illustrates the process by which that trance is considered to be induced, and is informative of the understanding of trance states prevalent in its era. To put it into context, the build-up to this scene anticipates the terror that Julie and Jean feel with the arrival of the Count – Julie’s father – returning home to disrupt their passion play.8

The narrative of Miss Julie revolves around the identity of the character Julie, in who she is as a human being. The power of the play rests in the transformations of character, the inner world changes, that Julie undergoes – in the states of consciousness that Julie experiences in the course of the play, and in the disruptions of the narrative of self that the character is subject to. Therefore a narrative of self underlies that experience.

There are two shrill rings on the bell; MISS JULIE jumps to her feet; JEAN changes his coat.

JEAN: His Lordship's home! What if Kristin
  \hspace{1em} \textit{Goes to the speaking tube; knocks and listens.}

MISS JULIE: Has he been to his desk yet?

JEAN: This is Jean, sir! \textit{Listens. Note that the audience cannot hear what the COUNT says}
  \hspace{1em} Yes, sir! \textit{Listens Yes, sir! At once! \textit{Listens At once, sir! \textit{Listens Yes, sir, in half an hour!}}

MISS JULIE: \textit{extremely anxious} What did he say? For God's sake, what did he say?

JEAN: He wants his boots and his coffee in half an hour.

MISS JULIE: In half an hour, then! Oh, I'm so tired; I can't bring myself to do anything. I
can't repent, can't run away, can't stay, can't live – can't die! Help me, now!
Order me, and I'll obey like a dog! Do me this last service, save my honour,
save his name! You know what I ought to do, but can't, just will me to do it.
Order me!

JEAN: I don't know why – but now I can't either – I don't understand – it's just as if
this coat made me – I can't order you – and now, since his Lordship spoke to
me then – I can't explain it properly – but oh, it's this damned lackey sitting
on my back! I believe if his lordship came down now and ordered me to cut
my throat, I'd do it on the spot.

MISS JULIE: Then let's pretend you're him, and I'm you! You acted so well just now, when
you went down on your knees then you were the aristocrat or \textit{have you never been to the theatre and seen a hypnotist?} \textit{Jean gestures asent He says to
his subject, 'Take this broom!', and he takes it; he says, 'Sweep!', and it sweeps}

JEAN: \textit{taker the razor and places it in her hand} Here's the broom! Go now, while it's still
light \textit{out to the barn and...}

\textit{Whispers in her ear}

MISS JULIE: \textit{awake} Thank you. Now I'm going to rest. But just tell me one thing – that the
first may also receive the gift of grace. Tell me, even if you don't believe it.

JEAN: The first? No, I can't! But wait Miss Julie now I know! \textit{You're no longer among the first you're among the last.}

MISS JULIE: That's true – I'm among the very last; I am the last. Oh! But now I can't go—
Tell me to go, just one more time!

JEAN: No, I can't now either. I can't!

MISS JULIE: And the first shall be last.

JEAN: Don't think, don't think! You're taking all my strength away too, and making
me a coward \textit{What's that? I thought the bell moved!} No! Shall we stop it
with paper? \textit{To be so afraid of a bell!} Yes, but it's not just a bell there's
somebody behind it \textit{a hand sets it in motion} and something else sets that
hand in motion \textit{but if you stop your ears just stop your ears!} Yes, but then
he'll go on ringing even louder and keep on ringing until someone answers and
then it's too late! Then the police will come \textit{and then...}

\textit{Two loud rings on the bell.}

JEAN: \textit{cringes, then straightens himself up} It's horrible! But there is no other way! \textit{Go!}

\textit{MISS JULIE walks resolutely out through the door}

Table 2: Excerpt from Miss Julie by August Strindberg (1888).
In the pathological strand that runs through the narrative of Miss Julie, the character Julie is regarded in a psychoanalytical manner; as someone who is experiencing a particularly vulnerable stage of being which is subjected to other characters and the environment. In this sense she is someone who is expressing a number of circumstances that filters her inner world responses to her environment in a particular way, as her inner world experiences are played out in a struggle with the social world in which she lives. Julie goes through different states within that particular course of play, and it is this inner journey which carries away the viewer of the play. The character Julie is an embodiment of a particular narrative of self, that is further interpreted by the playwright Strindberg – a particular image of human experience. Miss Julie represents the environment of that time, Norway in the 1880s. The 19th century was coming to a close and in the world of thought, pursuits like the psychology of James and the psychoanalysis of Freud would come to be major influences upon the thinking of that time and place.

The process of characterisation is effectively a process of possession. The performer, the actor, allows their own body and being to be placed ‘in service’, to embody a character who is other than their own personal self, other than the normal everyday personality. The person that is seen on the screen or on the stage is not the person who walks in and out of the stage door of the theatre, the television studio or the movie set. The person that is seen on the screen or stage is constructed to become, for example, the character Ben Hur (who is also Charlton Heston) or the character Miss Julie. In addition, the audience can be possessed in the sense of being enculturated to construct or evaluate the narratives of our day-to-day experience in a qualitatively similar way that the narratives of Psychological Realism are fashioned. On Hollywood cinema, film theorist Robert Ray wrote:

Indeed, by helping to create desires, by reinforcing ideological proclivities, by encouraging certain forms of political action or inaction, the movies worked to create the very reality they then “reflected”.

The process by which Strindberg constructs a character such as Julie can be contrasted with another process by which characterisation is achieved to further develop the understanding of the elements that comprise the performance of

---

Psychological Realism. The processes employed by Stanislavski and Strasberg illustrate the ways in which the inherent belief systems within the System and the Method are related to the beliefs behind Strindberg’s dramaturgy – the discursive performatives. The work of a more recent practitioner illustrates some of these discursive performatives at work and some contextualisations by which the embodied performances have been developed.

The method of British writer, director and film-maker Mike Leigh, from his work in 1971 onwards,\(^\text{10}\) demonstrates another systematic approach to embodying – to becoming possessed by character. The work of Mike Leigh illustrates a process by which the performer, the actor, is induced into the service of the narrative, which in this case is the finished film. The actor allows themselves to be possessed by the character. They surrender their will, their vision, their imaging of their internal world, to the internal world of the character. The method of Mike Leigh is an induction process into a practice of Psychological Realism. Leigh’s techniques work like a process of constructed selfhood. The sense of individualism that is created by the actor in the character, and the interaction of that individual character with their environment and with other characters – the interaction with the pressures of normativity – defines that performed human experience which is the character. Leigh’s work in theatre and film has been described as “behavioral realism”\(^\text{11}\) because of the emphasis in the acting style upon the idiosyncratic physical and psychological minutiae of the characters.

Both the characters and the script are developed out of lengthy sustained improvisations. The work of the principal performers begin with “an interview and a work-out” in which each performer talks to Leigh about a specific person whom they know, or work through a list of such people, to outline individual biographical details; after which Leigh selects a particular person upon whose biography a character will be based.\(^\text{12}\) This is followed by a period of “private, solo rehearsals” during which the performer works with Leigh “to create a character with an entirely individual and particular identity”. Through improvisations and discussions, the performer develops “the life of the particular person in great detail” in total isolation from the other characters that they will later interact with. For Leigh, this “code of secrecy” is essential – “with this kind of work one character can’t afford to know more about another

\(^\text{12}\) Clements.: p. 23.
character than he or she would about any stranger, otherwise the improvisation would be bullshit.\textsuperscript{13} Rather than “invent information” – in much the same way that compliance might be elicited by perceived demand characteristics – Leigh expects the performer to “discover” the character, the world and the interactions of the play through sustained improvisations.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, Leigh selects performers whom he believes have “an ability to regard the character as a third person creation as opposed to a first person manifestation of the actor’s self” – he instructs performers to think of someone they know who could be a “model” for a character and to “use that person, do that person in the character’s situation… make that person be the character”.\textsuperscript{15} In discussions and in the analyses of improvisations with the performers, Leigh requires the performers to exercise their “objectivity” as they learn “how to play” and “how to control” their character.\textsuperscript{16}

Leigh’s rehearsals consist of “pre-rehearsal” and “structuring” stages; in the “pre-rehearsal” stage, the performers engage in “narrative work” and “behaviour work”. The “narrative work” involves improvisation and discussion to produce the biographies, the stories, the conflicts, the relationships, the “actual events” of the characters’ lives, the present, the past, and the memory of the characters. In the “behaviour work” the ideas, the culture, the consciousness and the physical characteristics of the characters are developed. In the “structuring” stage, the script is written, rehearsed, and the action is prepared for the theatre or film performance.\textsuperscript{17} Leigh goes to some length to emphasise the difference between the experiences of the actor and the “third person” character. With the level of detail in the narrative and biographical information of the character, as well as the behavioural information developed in sustained improvisation, the performer accumulates a wealth of material upon which they can develop their “belief in the reality” of their character. The performer constructs “the consciousness of the character” as a “filter” for experiencing or sustaining their “immersion” in the world of their character, as it is revealed in improvisations and interactions with other characters and the elements of that world.\textsuperscript{18}

The sustaining of improvisations and characters is an essential element of Leigh’s rehearsal processes. The performer works with the strict convention that they

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.: pp. 30-31.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.: pp. 49-50.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.: pp. 23-26.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.: pp. 35-51.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.: p. 33.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.: pp. 35-43.
can only “come out of character” when instructed to do so by Leigh.\(^9\) This requires the actor to maintain an adequate “sense of authenticity” in order to regard the improvisation as “a real event” experienced by their character.\(^10\) This “sense of authenticity” is a key element upon which the attention and effort of the performer is directed; this “authenticity” is generated through the enactment and embodiment that are perceived as a “real-life”\(^2\) character from “everyday life”.\(^22\) These qualities characterise the kind of “immersion” or trance state that is induced in the performance work that Leigh produces.

Trance in this sense can also be seen as the way in which the actor is possessed by the character. Trance in this sense can also be found in the induction processes utilised in order to alter the individual state of consciousness of the performer, the actor. Trance can also be the state in which the audience regards that creation, of the economic unit that is the movie, of the theatre experience, of the incident that is played out, the event that is spontaneous or manufactured. Trance is found in the engagement with the performed moment. In that moment, the audience member can also be immersed in a trance experience; when one becomes absorbed in the viewing of a movie, for instance. The process is clearly hypnotic. The world of the movie is entered by the conventions of the cinema house, the opening titles, the credits, and then the story. The set of images that are constructed and presented in a particular and intentional way bring us into the internal experience of the movie, into a state of consciousness in which a communication or an interaction occurs. In this sense the audience member clearly experiences a trance state. By seeing Psychological Realism and characterisation as forms of possession trance, their relationship with such phenomena as dissociative functioning and other forms of psychological experiences becomes apparent. The hysteria of Miss Julie or the quirkiness of the films of Mike Leigh illustrates such relationships, as justified by the dominant modes of thought of the period. Psychological Realism as a performed state of consciousness, within the cult of Psychological Realism is effectivly a major cultural influence upon our globalised culture and society. Therefore the messages and the experiences generated by the medium and filter of Psychological Realism comes to be one of the defining points of modern human experience. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge the influence and concerns of the Hollywood cinema industry.

---

\(^9\) Ibid.: p. 48.
\(^10\) Ibid.: pp. 38-43.
\(^2\) Ibid.: pp. 26-42.
\(^22\) Ibid.: pp. 171-180.
The hypnotic contract that is put into play when one views a film is very much a culturally specific action in nature. The hypnotic procedures that are employed in each practice vary greatly. However, they are found across the board in many trance practices. Elements are identifiable as techniques of hypnotic practices – in the trance state inductions, in the practice of performed states of consciousness, and in possession practices. This thesis argues that possession can occur by script or by spirit. Possession in the cult of Psychological Realism is viewable as a particular set of techniques that is identifiable as the actor’s craft. The actor’s craft has been expressed by such dramatists as Stanislavski and Strasberg, then applied and exploited by such mechanisms as Hollywood cinema. In possession trance, it is possible to see a social role enacted. In the cult of Psychological Realism, the social roles played out in the films and in the plays of the movement of Psychological Realism convey beliefs regarding the normative and transgressive social processes of the time and place from which it comes. These beliefs, comprise key elements of the discursive performative of this performance form. The audience member can also be seen to be possessed, by social roles and normative functions. Possession of particular concerns, as well as possession of particular narrative interests, are expressed in many different ways. These ways can be economic, ideological, gender-typical, heroic and epic. They are found in any of the different ways in which a narrative can influence.

The individual organism enters a range of states of consciousness in the course of participating in normal everyday consensus reality. Each task within each role that each one of us undertakes is a sequence of events and actions which the organism experiences and which attain significance in our internal and social worlds. This effect is apparent when an actor performs a sequence of events and actions, that becomes perceived as actions by a particular character in a particular environment. This is also the type of effect elicited by Stanislavski’s Method of Physical Action. The social image of the character is revealed by the physical embodiment of the actor. In order to do this the actor has to internally create and accept a particular internal world of individual self-perception, of a particular environment with other individuals, the social world of the character. This internal world of the character has both internal and external significance and manifestation. The internal world of the audience member may be influenced by the products of Psychological Realism through the drives and necessities that come to the fore of attention of the characters within the events.
Therefore in Psychological Realism, a particular belief system is expressed in a very material way; in the artefacts of plays, films and novels that portray inner world experiences that are profoundly psychological, expressing views grounded in a scientific and materialistic base. Psychological Realism as a filter of experience, is limited to that particular viewing of experience, of the realistic, and of the economic normative pressures being applied upon the individual in the interaction with the environment. In viewing a movie or seeing a play, the audience member becomes fundamentally involved in an economic interaction. It is for these interactions with the audience that the actor performs.

It is important to consider the functionality of performance, in the way it focuses the attention of performers and audiences. Some psychological 'afflictions' serve as bids for attention. The practice of performance is itself a bid, a play, for attention albeit displayed in a socially and culturally sanctioned and supported context. Such is the case with trance performance practice. All such behaviours may be linked to a primary drive that is a desire for attention. Each of these phenomena employ attributes and actions that are interpreted as extra-ordinary – as transgressive of normative boundaries, as actions worthy of attention. These primary drives are considered to be largely "pre-conscious" in nature and function. The expressions of these drives are culturally specified. The practice of performance is therefore valued for its transgressions and impositions of normativity as much as for its attention-focusing ability.

At a certain point in its development, the organism becomes able to construct and apprehend a biographical self, a sense of identity. When this self becomes a ‘being’, an autonomous and active self-identity is created in the inner world reality of the being and others in their environment. In the ‘fictional’ process, the characters are constructed by authors, actors, directors and designers. The authority of the character and role comes from the authority of the performer of the role.

The Multiple Drafts model of consciousness posits an identity-construction process that is flexible and active. Identity-construction is an ongoing process that

---

23 Dennett.
occurs throughout and sometimes beyond an individual lifetime.\textsuperscript{24} The performer is trained in the performances of the role, so that the organism can surrender or set aside its will and identity in the service of its forms. The performer is thus transformed in performance into the role that it effectively plays. The performer does this by following a set of conventions and practices, traditions and associations that produce particular types of performance.

\textit{From Moscow to Hollywood: A Cult of the Times}

In analysing the concepts and notions that comprise the cult of Psychological Realism, it is useful to consider the ways in which its early practitioners contextualised the elements of induction that were utilised by its performers. For example, the process of going from an “inner image” to an “outer image” that Stanislavski described is readily comparable with the process of trance induction – the invoking of a “possessed” state.\textsuperscript{25}

However, many of its conceptual frameworks had to be adapted and modified in order to accommodate other dominant cults that functioned in its social and cultural environments. One example of such a reconstruction concerned Stanislavski’s concept of “inner communication”. Strasberg dismissed Stanislavski’s Hindu-based speculations on the existence of “ray emissions and absorptions”\textsuperscript{26} in constructing the Method for the North American context.\textsuperscript{27} Considering the cultural environment of that time – apparent in the rise and dominance of Behaviourism as an account of actions and influences, for instance – concepts such as “rays” proved to be less than palatable. With contemporary belief systems and with influence of such cults as the New Age and the Human Potentials Movement, such concepts are more readily considered, as the rise of Neo-Paganism and Shamanism workshops demonstrate. These beliefs are further supported by the state of knowledge in such fields as electro physics, that consider the notion of a seemingly infinite range of electromagnetic fields and frequencies that are an integral part of our daily lives, and knowledge, in such fields as neurophysics, of the electromagnetic activities of the brain (as distinct from the mind) in the organism – it is perhaps more feasible to empirically entertain the notion of a range of non-verbal signals which organisms constantly transmit and receive, communicated

\textsuperscript{24} For example, consider the Tibetan Dalai Lama and the Lama selection tradition.
\textsuperscript{26} Stanislavski \textit{An Actor Prepares}.: pp. 193-222.
\textsuperscript{27} Strasberg.: pp. 61-62.
by our “natural” sensory mechanisms within and beyond levels of “ordinary” (sub-liminal) perceptions. Thus, as belief systems such as these become acceptable, the cult of Psychological Realism can reconsider and further reconstruct its conceptual frameworks, by the inclusion of such notions as “energy” for example.

Techniques such as the “Private Moments” and “Animal” exercises\(^{26}\) demonstrate the ways in which improvisations effectively begin to access areas of memory and consciousness that trance states also access – areas of what are considered to be the “free-flow” activity of consciousness. Trance states, however, can tap into more culturally generalised rather than individualised areas of consciousness. These areas contain memories or fields such as archetypes – myths and neuroses – and knowledge constructs or concerns. The “Animal” exercise can also be readily compared to possession states performances, particularly the numerous possession traditions that invoke animal spirits.

The process of characterisation developed by Stanislavski and Strasberg lends itself to the embodiment and expression of the dramatic form that has come to be known as “Psychological Realism” because it requires the actor to access cultural constructs and abstractions that are concerned with, expressive of, and limited by the focal points of the System or Method. These focal points have become variously described as “truth”, “authenticity”, “conditioning”, “natural”, “real”, “logical”, “perfection”, “neuroses”, “contradictions”, “insecurities”, “control”, “problems”, “intentions”, “experience”, “vulnerability” and other terms. These have been its themes and, accordingly, the constructs and abstractions that are accessed and expressed by the process are concerned with these themes. Actors undergo processes that are inductive, i.e., processes that facilitate particular states of mind or consciousness by relaxation and concentration of attention and awareness. Actors also require an “openness” to suggestions (from directors, fellow actors, text, design) in order to perform their task.

The actor’s suggestibility – their ability to believe, to enter into and to create a reality – is developed in training and activated by induction through relaxation and concentration of attention and awareness. The actor requires suggestibility particularly in the relationship with the director. It is the job of the drama director to harness and

\(^{26}\) Ibid.: pp. 143-148.
guide the actor’s ability to believe and to create realities towards directions that serve the play, the production and the performance. The actor thus undergoes induction processes – both self-induced and assisted – and works with suggestions. The resulting performance can thus be regarded and evaluated, in Psychological Realism, on a spectrum that can range from “pretending” to “being.”

The cult of Psychological Realism represents a set of beliefs and techniques that facilitate a particular form of embodiment and experience. It finds its most obvious expression in the dramatic art practised and articulated by Stanislavski and the social realist theatre of Russia from the late 19th and early 20th century, and later by Strasberg and Adler through an influence of theatre and cinema in the United States of the 20th century. Its scope, as a form and as a philosophy, is far greater than the localised artistic processes which had spawned it.

The influence of Psychological Realism extends to the ways in which cultural myths and narratives have been generated and proliferated; which includes the manner in which the receptors of such myths and narratives perceive them. Genres such as the “soap opera” and elements such as the “happy ending” are particularly influential aspects of the form, that have become so as a result of economic imperatives. In this way Psychological Realism has become a dominant cultural force; in the way that it has shaped the individual and the social view of “reality” and expectations placed upon such a reality. Although rarely described as a “cult”, the references to the religious nature of the artistic practice, its practitioners and its context (ritual, pope, temple, etc.) imply a desire and inkling to view it as such – a propensity shared by both insiders and observers. As such, these propensities imply a yearning for an expression of spirituality, one that is reflective and contemporary and perhaps anti-materialistic.

**Matters of Medium: Black Box to Cinema**

The cult of Psychological Realism is a belief system that produces a particular quality of performance and narrative. This quality can be described as “the style without a style”, “typically human”, “representative of humankind”, “self-evident”,

---

“common sense” or simply “good acting”.\textsuperscript{31} Psychological Realism represents a performed state of consciousness within the realm of the fictional existence of the performance, within the ongoing dialogue of the individual cultural subject’s internal voice as it is influenced by the environment. Psychological Realism is a performed state of consciousness in the sense that it is an enactment and embodiment of a character role sourced from pools of cultural knowledge and technology that were fed by both psychological and commercial paradigms. These derived from inner world experiences that produced ‘grounded’ and ‘recognisable’ character types which were performed by the actor. Thus, by adopting various personae or filters of reality, the actor adopts a particular way of experiencing and making sense of experience – a particular state of consciousness that is seen as the dramatic role.

Stanislavski developed a set of acting techniques which became known as the System. The Stanislavski System was later adapted in the United States by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler and others to become known as the Method. These techniques, generate a form of performance that embody characters which resonate – both individually in the actor and culturally in its mass audience base – as ‘real’. In this way the characters embody values, traditions, idiosyncrasies, education, economic power, political ideologies and gender concerns to become the expressions of the time and place – the actor’s environment. Stanislavski and then Strasberg presented a way of systematically approaching the craft of performance. Through the System and later the Method, an actor is enabled to enter an inner world creation which becomes the character’s world – the fictive world with the fictional ‘I’ or the performed ‘me’ – the identifications of the character. Induction processes and artistic traditions are utilised by the actor to enter the character role. In the System and the Method, the performer’s state of consciousness is induced and determined by such elements as ‘External Circumstances’, ‘Inner Circumstances’ and ‘Emotion Memory’ as applied to the performance script; and elaborated by such behaviouristic techniques as the ‘Private Moment’ and the ‘Animal’ exercises, as well as by the very concept of ‘role’ itself. The character is a conceptualisation that is accessed by the performer from the cultural body of Western empirical thought. Characterisation, in this sense, is a performed state of consciousness – a representation that is able to evoke a particular kind of resonance.

\textsuperscript{31} Counsell.: pp. 24-26. On the demise of the Romantic style of acting, see Innes.: p. 12.
The basis of Psychological Realism is the experience of the individual. The constructed self is presumed to be located in individual identity, to a certain extent autonomous of social and cultural influences. This constructed self is seen to be existent at a level that is uncoloured by embodied social roles – as an idealisation of a neutral and essential ‘me’. The self is conceptualised as being limited and bounded by the physical body and its behaviours. This ideal self is constructed as unified and independent, as a “true individual”.

The views and values – as meaning-making processes – that Psychological Realism embodies influence the perceptual and experiential filters of its viewers. As in ‘reality’ the character is an ‘individual’ in a ‘material’ world. The character is also an embodiment of particular states of consciousness, of profoundly psychological human beings that are the agents of the dramatic actions. These states of consciousness are explored, developed, technicalised and adopted by the actor in performance. Thus signifiers of the world are culturally specific, and conflicts addressed operate on an individual psychological level and on a mass social level.

Psychological Realism was a peripheral cult in its early decades, within the larger cult of ‘secular humanism’, ‘rationalism’ or ‘enlightened materialism’. As a dramatic form, Psychological Realism has been and continues to be perhaps the most influential body of performance work and theory in modern Western culture. Through the distributive power of Hollywood, the practices and theories developed by Stanislavski, Strasberg and others have been absorbed by mass audiences. The impact of Psychological Realism in the practice of actor training is immensely significant. Arguably, works of Psychological Realism have effectively become central to the worldviews, motivations and actions of the contemporary individual subject in the global society and culture.

Therefore Psychological Realism reflects a dominant way of making sense; ‘dominant’ in the sense of the social, economic and cultural worlds that we find ourselves in. The function of sense-making is the filter of reality. This filter may be further influenced by such things as the Evening News, films seen, books read, conversations had, just recently or in the distant past; influenced by the narratives that we hold, that we document in artefacts such as pieces of paper as records of thought processes, representations of experience, reflections upon practice. All these elements...
constitute the internal world of the organism as that organism forms and maintains a sense of selfhood. The “spirit” which the practice of Naturalism strives to invoke is the spirit of the “authentic” human experience – the “actual”.

The “human spirit” pointed to by Stanislavski indicates the underlying beliefs which guided the System that he had proposed – beliefs reflected in Humanist and Behaviourist accounts of experience and existence. Performance theorist Colin Counsell noted in *Signs of Performance* that “the humanistic System aims to evoke what is universal to humankind” by drawing upon “facets of existence” that are considered to be “common to all”. In making the claim that the “internal states” accessed by the System served to “shape the physical performance automatically”, Stanislavski drew upon a “model of the psyche” that was comprehensively informed and inspired by the school of Behaviourism in psychology, particularly by the works of Theodule Armand Ribot (1839-1916) in *Diseases of Memory* (1882), *The Psychology of the Emotions* (1897), and *The Psychology of Attention* (1890), and Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936) in *Conditioned Reflexes* (1926). In taking such a stance, Stanislavski viewed “behaviour as innately understandable, as a transcultural mode of communication” and this lead to the belief that “the Stanislavskian performance text offers an image of the illusory coherent self no matter what character is being portrayed”. These assumptions supported the belief that the System produced the sought-after qualities of “continuity” and “coherence” that were themselves seen as claims of truth, “to achieve a systematicity that is potentially meaningful, able to encode discourse – presenting not just a simulation of human behaviour but a construction of it”. This pursuit was taken on whole-heartedly by Strasberg in the United States with the Actors Studio, as the techniques of Psychological Realism became all the more “industrialised” with cinema and “the role made a commodity”. With Strasberg, the “cult of being real” found a place in Broadway and Hollywood, a performer from that time commenting that “the Method is a way to get away from myself; to bring all of myself to the character”. This seeming contradiction perhaps encapsulates the appeal and power of Psychological Realism, through its claim of “authentic” experience as a model of authority it is able to evoke an immersion in the “imaginary worlds” and

---

32 Stanislavski An Actor Prepares.: pp. 128-133.
33 Counsell.: p. 29.
34 Ibid.: pp. 29-30.
“imagistic associations” that were offered to its performers and audiences. The “cult of realism” can thus be seen as perhaps the most powerful 20th century religion, i.e. an important determinant factor in values and morals, as dominant symbols of a global culture.

There is, of course, a Bacchanalian or Dionysian or dark side which the work of ‘concentrated belief’ engenders, and is in itself, arguably, a trance performance or ‘possession’. These elements sometimes manifest themselves outside of the performance arena, at times somewhat symptomatic of hysteria. The talk of “private demons” reveal some of the ‘mythological narratives’ – the beliefs – of the North American Psychological Realism sub-culture. Counsell observed that “Method practices manufacture performances whose most distinctive feature is a spectacular failure of communication... a readable sign... the spectacle of actors struggling to express their roles” which in turn “signifies the character’s profound psychological depth”. Thus this “profound psychological depth” is posited as the ideal from which “authenticity” derives – as the unknowable that sanctions the “spectacular failures”, the “iconography of neurosis” and “the logic of psychic fracture”. The striving for “spirits” gives experience and existence some meaning. The references to Strasberg as a kind of “holy man” and of the Actors Studio as a kind of “temple” reveal the desires for religious referencing.

Grounds for Future Research

Finally, it might be useful to engage in some brief speculations at this point as to how performance training exercises and forms can be used to investigate phenomena of performed states of consciousness. It might be fruitful to consider the improvisational forms of commedia dell’arte and clowning as “possession trance”. Many techniques developed by Stanislavski, Strasberg and others applied in an experimental research context might provide important insights into the processes described by various models of consciousness. For instance, the “Private Moment” exercise can be employed as an experimental element to investigate processes of narratisation and their functions in creating particular states of consciousness. Such exercises (either

---

38 Counsell.: p. 56.
40 Counsell.: p. 67.
41 Ibid.: p. 70.
43 Kirby The Shamanistic Origins of Popular Entertainments.: pp. 146-149.
workshopped or recollected) can serve as springboards, or control and comparative factors from which to describe and analyse trance states and experiences. Such experimental studies can employ a wide range of technologies and conceptual frameworks developed in scientific fields such as neurophysics. Such research could provide useful insights into the processes by which narratisation as well as imaginative and affective involvements generate particular states of consciousness and particular performative norms, and in the processes by which a kind of imaginative and affective osmosis can be shown to occur.

In this chapter, the performative mode of Psychological Realism has been investigated to develop the understanding of the various elements of the practice that define and facilitate the effective performance in that mode. The belief system that constitutes such performances have been shown to be based on notions of the self and the environment emerging from discursive streams which found predominance in the 19th century in Europe and the early 20th century in the United States. The dissemination of such beliefs through novels, theatres, and films resulted in a widespread influence that gave credence to the claim of “reality” inherent in the performance tradition – an influence which in turn served to define “reality” in the social and cultural environment along the lines of the discursive streams that had spawned the tradition itself. The framework of “cult” has been employed to develop the understanding of the dynamics of such influence in an individual and group context. A lineage of influence has been shown in the examples cited, from Strindberg then Stanislavski, to Strasberg and then to Leigh, in order to demonstrate the developments of the performance tradition. The notion and practice of “characterisation” has been shown to be central to these developments. As the determinant of the performed embodiment and enactment, the tradition of Psychological Realism has been shown to provide and reinforce models of normativity and transformativity by which the “everyday self” of the social and cultural environment is defined – particularly in the notion of transgression that it presents. Thus the tradition of Psychological Realism has been shown to have been predominantly defined by a cult of individualism in these ways. In positing performative norms, the cult of Psychological Realism invoked an “other” mode of performance in Western theatrical traditions. The theatrical tradition of the Avant Garde offered an alternative view to the notions of the “self” and “world” defined by Psychological Realism. In the process the Avant Garde generated a cult that, although grounded in modernist sensibilities, was founded on transcendent...
notions of "mystical" or "radical" ideals by which performativity was inspired or valued. In the following chapter, a performance tradition that emerged as a response to Psychological Realism is investigated. The performative mode of the Avant Garde is considered in the context of the beliefs that it presents as alternatives to dominant modes of defining the embodiment and enactment of normative and transformative ideals.
6. Cults of the Mystical and the Radical

Artaud, Beckett and Grotowski

In searching for a conceptual framework that would encompass the aesthetic sensibilities of the performances of Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski and Samuel Beckett it is possible to say that they belong to an Avant Garde tradition, emerging from a 20th century European milieu. In 1967, Maria Ley-Piscator wrote that the “avant-garde is the synthesis of many experiments ...Preoccupied with meaning of life, and not only the observance of human law, it restores true meaning to the word “religion”. ...the avant-garde is never a result; it goes back to the roots, the roots of culture, a country, or a generation ...it communicates a new way of thinking, and therefore it demands a new way of doing”.

The dominance that Realism attained was met by artistic sensibilities which sought to present an alternative to it. These alternatives came to be identified with the Avant Garde. If Psychological Realism can be analysed in the context of a cult of Realism, the elements of the Avant Garde can be grouped into two distinct but often intermingled streams. Apparent in them, are a cult of Mysticism and a cult of Radicalism in operation. The Mysticism manifests itself as a pursuit of that which is ‘unknowable’, that which is ‘unattainable’ as an absolute expression of ‘other-ness’. The Radicalism manifests itself as a rejection of established orders, as a pursuit of the ‘original’, the sense of ‘novelty’ and of the ‘shocking’. Both these streams sought to diverge from normativity, from the sense of the everyday.

The states of consciousness embodied and enacted by such performances are related to the Romantic tradition, to a poetic state. Indeed poetry often found its way into the performances and the bodies of work of the Avant Garde traditions and movements. This poetry expressed itself in both a textual and a visual sense. The Avant Garde performance sought to diverge from the literal constructions of meaning, and later sought to question and challenge the very existence of meaning itself. The Avant Garde movement drew on the traditions of the spectacle and the event. What is embodied and enacted often challenged the distinctions and conventions of what were contemporarily considered to be ‘artistic’. By its nature, the Avant Garde came to

---

identify itself with “the Romantic rebel”, as a state of consciousness that sought to disrupt rather than reinforce the sense of normativity. Renato Poggioli observed that “avant garde art was historically impossible before the elaboration of the idea itself ...in the cultural field discovery is creation, consciousness is existence” and that furthermore, “the connection between avant-gardism and romanticism ...remains a parental bond”.

In analysing the performance of Realism, it is evident that the performance is driven by the idea of the ‘real’ or the ‘natural’ – these being the values toward which the performance aspires. In the performance of the Avant Garde, the values that guide the performance come from forms of meaning-making that challenged the established and ‘normalised’ forms of belief. The belief systems that underlie Avant Garde performance necessarily refers to the values that are under challenge, the process of meaning-making is reliant on previous meaning. Artaud challenged the forms of expression through which the pressures of normativity are applied. Beckett challenged human attitudes which perpetuated forms of meaning-making that he believed to have had diminishing relevance. Grotowski challenged ideas of performance that had become established forms of theatrical expression. Each of these artists presented views of human experience and sense of self that profoundly questioned generally held views and the previously well-established belief systems which defined the notion of normativity. At the same time, these artists sought to extend the boundaries of secular belief systems to encompass those elements of human existence that resisted or eluded the processes of ‘naturalisation’.

In the Avant Garde, expressions of a cult of Mysticism are apparent – a cult of the ‘other’ such as that which is portrayed in Waiting for Godot. The cult of Mysticism advocates a ‘return’ of theatre to religion – the ‘sacred’ space – believing theatre to have ‘roots’ or ‘essences’ that have been lost. Studies which regard the question of trance as performance and then fall into the pursuit of the idealised ‘essence’ are too easily dismissed as advocates of a ‘return to the past’ and present as gravely lacking critical insight into such phenomena. Thus in this study, it is imperative that the belief systems that drive and justify particular performances be regarded within a framework

which offers some distance, such as the notion of “cults”. The Avant Garde reflects a rejection of the values of Naturalism and Realism. The cult of Mysticism arose in reaction to the cult of Realism, casting a questionable separation between mythology and psychology – as incompatible systems of knowledge. Thus it often became reduced to a debate between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ performance styles. This study argues that the Mystic and the Realistic are two parts on a continuum. There is both a separation and combination of the two points, thus the relation is not one of polarised opposition – they are each distinct loci. Different points in the continuum necessitate the embodiment and enactment of distinct states of consciousness in performance.

To regard symbolic interactions and bodily practices is to examine the systems of meaning that apply for the performer. Many artists of the Avant Garde aspired to create work that could exist beyond attributed meaning – to transcend meaning – and fail spectacularly in this pursuit. Failure is regarded as success. To believe in the absence of meaning is a meaning-making process in itself, in this instance a belief system which attributes significance to formal qualities rather than to any representations that may be derived from the forms.

The desire or need for spiritual expressions and constructions of meaning are found in the notions of ‘transcendence’. The idea of the transcendent is also articulated in a range of social constructs in general. The individual organism constructs transcendent experiences in order to express and experience a reality beyond what it identifies as the individual material existence. In this way, the transcendent is objectified. The construction and objectification of the transcendent is integral in the process of experience and expression of identity structures beyond the individual self. The transcendence is achieved by social role or identity as a result of the individual organism’s interactions with the environment. What the process of transcendence provides is an extension of the individual organism’s sense of self.

It would not be of great use to invoke the interpretive logic of ‘spirituality’ or ‘shamanism’ – as inspired by Artaud, Grotowski, Brook, and others including the advocates of the ‘New Age’ – as these concepts are relatively foreign to the contemporary academic discipline. Furthermore, the spiritist belief system derives from the Cartesian model of ‘soul’. Therefore the notion of ‘possession’ is particularly influenced by this Cartesian model of experience. In ‘possession’ the ‘soul’ is
understood to be displaced and the body taken over by an outside ‘spirit’ – by the
‘other’. Shamanic traditions obviously cannot be assumed to be influenced by the
Cartesian model. However the contemporary understanding of shamanism being
advanced in neo-pagan discourse has evolved from systems of knowledge that have
certainly been influenced by the Cartesian ‘soul’.

Following on this, it can be seen that the Stanislavski tradition of performance
embodies an inherent fear or bias; not so much a fear of ‘being possessed’ as a fear of
the concept of ‘being possessed’ – a concept that is demonstrably specific to
Stanislavski’s cultural environment. This study advocates a shift from the concept of
‘soul’ towards the concept of ‘consciousness’ as related to the notions of ‘embodiment’
and ‘enactment’. The concept of ‘soul’ carries with it valuations of ‘sacredness’ that
function to preserve the mystique – ‘mystery’ serves as a filter to magnify the ‘other-
ness’ of the embodiment and enactment of the performer. Thus the mystery provides
the object of worship.

Christopher Innes’ suggestion in Avant Garde Theatre 1892-1992 that a cult of
Primitivism underlies the Avant Garde movement is useful but far too simplistic. There
appears to be a number of cults within the Avant Garde traditions, of which Primitivism
may be one and can be exemplified in Peter Brook’s work in the 1960s. Innes’
uncritical use of terms such as ‘essential being’ gravely weaken his argument, and is
common amongst advocates of theatre as ‘ritual’. In this case, ‘essential being’
becomes a convenient replacement for ‘soul’. This becomes another example of the
tendency to mysticise the performance process, highly reminiscent of Stanislavski’s
use of the terms ‘prana’ and ‘rays’, as well as the current tendency to resort to the term
‘energy’. In terms of systematic inquiry, they are simply not useful. It is perhaps for this
reason that these notions do not become part of the ‘realist’ culture that pervades actor
training itself. Actor training methodology is necessarily culturally specific; it must draw
upon beliefs that are profoundly internalised, rather than ‘foreign’ or ‘exotic’. As with
audiences, beliefs that are perceived and interpreted as ‘other’ resonate only
superficially, if at all. However, for the practitioners of Avant Garde performance, the
sense of the ‘other’ came to resonate as the ‘unattainable’ that drives the search, in
which there is little chance of success – the failure to reach the goal became a

---

6 Ibid.: p. 9.
7 Ibid.: p. 16.
fundamental tenet and expectation for action. In the works of Artaud, Beckett and Grotowski, such failures came to be related to an “overall sensation” of suffering, that was a guiding principle of the search to which humanity is seemingly resigned, and to which Avant Garde discourse responded with a mix of awe and rebellion – the respective drives behind the cults of the Mystical and the Radical.

**Artaud**

La ou ça sent la merde, ça sent l'être. L’homme aurait très bien pu ne pas chier, ne pas ouvrir la poche anale. Mais il a choisi de chier comme il aurait choisi de vivre, au lieu de consentir à vivre mort. C’est que pour ne pas faire caca, il y aurait fallu consentir à ne pas être. Mais il n’a pas pu se résoudre à perdre l’être. C’est à dire à mourir vivant. Il y a dans l’être quelque chose de particulièrement tentant pour l’homme. Et ce quelque chose est justement... le CACA!!

Whosoever shall feel the shit, shall feel their being. Humanity could have done well not to have shit, not to open the anal orifice. But it chose to shit as it has chosen to live, instead of agreeing to live as dead. For it not to make excrement, it would have been necessary for it to agree not to be. But it has not been able to come to terms with this loss of being. It has accepted that it is to die living. There is in being something particularly challenging for humanity. And this something is precisely... the SHIT!!!

**Table 3:** Excerpt from *The Search for the State of Shit* in “To Have Done with the Judgment of God” by Antonin Artaud (1947).

In the life and work of Antonin Artaud, the notion of the performance of theatre as therapy is most apparent. For Artaud the theatre was “therapeutic... medicinal, a means of curing an ailing psyche”.

Strongly related to this belief is the idea that “society’s ailments accrue from sickness within individuals” and that cultural performances such as literature and theatre can serve “to cure the ills of society”. This type of thinking attributes to theatre an ability to effect a “catharsis” that is said to “relieve the spectator of evil and terror repressed within the unconscious” – the “unconscious state” is here seen to be the seat of “latent drives and desires”. The “sickness” here is effectively borne of tensions between the “body” and the “form”.

A strong connection is found between Artaud’s beliefs and the beliefs of Gnosticism – particularly in the “conviction that the world of forms is a false creation... governed and directed through the work of evil” within which he was trapped. In the Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud sought to effect “an awakening” in order to “produce a

---

13 Ibid.; p. 22.  
revelatory awareness of... and incite a revolution against” the “control” of the “body”. In this view, the “body” is equated with “torments”, and “authenticity” is only attained through “the work of self-creation”. These tensions offer particular conceptualisations of the “body” and a “notion of consciousness as a morass of difficulty and suffering” – the “mind” is seen as a “body” that one cannot “possess” and “a mystical body” afflicted by a “disorder” by which Artaud saw himself as “possessed”. This state of consciousness is characterised by a sense of “martyrdom”. This sense is at least partially derived from the perception that Artaud’s works were expressions of “madness” and the definition of his experience as “psychosis”.

For Artaud, those subjected to “the repressive function of the concept of madness” were to be seen as “the heroes and martyrs of thought” whose torments were made greater by the sense of “alienation”. In Artaud, Susan Sontag observed the effects of the tension between the sense of normativity and the performativity of transgressions – the limits of identification gone beyond:

The perception that some people are crazy is part of the history of thought, and madness requires a historical definition. Madness means not making sense means saying what doesn’t have to be taken seriously. ...What is called insane denotes that which in the determination of a particular society must not be thought. Madness is a concept that fixes limits; the frontiers of madness define what is “other.” A mad person is someone whose voice society doesn’t want to listen to, whose behavior is intolerable, who ought to be suppressed.

Artaud posited his ideal of theatre in the essay On the Balinese Theatre – an idea of a theatre of other-ness, the exotic, and the mystical that reflected the central concerns of the subsequent Avant Garde theatre. This “other” was seen as ancient and abstract, beyond intellectual understanding. In this seminal text, Artaud expressed a need for mystery that is inherent in the Avant Garde ideals. The discourse of “other” that was proposed by Artaud came to represent “that which cannot or must not be admitted within the frontiers of an established system of understanding and knowledge” – a claim proudly worn by “the cultic exponents of the Theatre of Cruelty” for whom the sense of “other” represented its most valuable contribution. Thus, Artaud’s work came to be seen as “spiritual” expressions and Artaud himself came to be seen as “a

17 Goodall.: p. 5.
18 Sontag.: p. Iv.
19 Ibid.: p. liv.
21 Goodall.: p. 6.
shaman” whose “authority” derived from the ability to effect an “intense discomfort of the imagination” in its audiences.22

Artaud saw entertainment and religion as oppositional functions, with a “religious metaphysical position” understood to be the “original purpose” of theatre. Thus, the life and work of Artaud is effectively an endeavour for a type of “self-awareness... that presupposes a disharmony between the self of the artist and the community” – a consciousness that is seen to strive to “transform its own boundaries” through performance.23 This view of consciousness “as a process” is coloured, in Artaud, by a sense of “the unending misery and bafflement of consciousness seeking itself” perpetuated by the sense of a “chronic alienation from his own consciousness” which has resulted in a body of work that stands out as a “tireless and detailed... record of the microstructure of mental pain”.24

Artaud prepared the ground upon which Grotowski flourished and, in turn, was followed by the Avant Garde of the 1960s and 1970s. In the various works of the Avant Garde, the image and the non-verbal elements became assumed to be superior to the verbal expression as “an infinitely more secret and mysterious field” and as an “objective, animated enchantment”.25 However, as much as Artaud sought to enact and embody the “other” in his performances, he would not prevent the “cooptation” of his “madness” as his efforts to “subvert the theater” and establish a “spiritual hegemony” eventually came to be “assimilated as a new theatrical tradition” and regarded as “standard serious taste”.26

In Artaud, the Avant Garde is expressed in the work of an artist who, in the way that he suffered from his disease, was able to present a view that in his time and now, effectively challenged what was believed to be ‘normal’, the normative model of experience and existence. Artaud was not ‘normal’ nor could he have ever had a chance at being that with the kind of life that he had. Through his suffering, his affliction, as well as his literary and theatrical provocations, he became a mythic figure. Artaud is now a set of experiences that can be drawn upon, the memory set that is the life of Antonin Artaud. In Artaud, there is a body of work that is quite inherently

---

22 Sontag.: p. lviii.
23 Ibid.: p. xix.
24 Ibid.: p. xxi.
25 Artaud.: pp. 50-54.
26 Sontag.: p. xlv.
subversive and exuberant. A body of work that seeks to question with such anger and urgency – sheer disturbance. Artaud shows us a world that is not one that many would want to enter into or stay in.

Artaud was seen as the ‘crazy man’, the ‘Hanged Man’ of the Tarot. Artaud saw himself to be the sacrificial lamb. In his view, in what he was daring us to experience, he challenged us to experience his world, his state of consciousness. Sometimes we manage to and sometimes we do not; sometimes we sense a resonance that is not fully or rationally understood. Somehow or other we empathise. We see and experience some of it, and we respond to it. Artaud is significant as provocation, in his own time and now.

Because Artaud focused for some time on the theatre, as well as what he had written, he became concerned with the nature of performance. Artaud sought to enact and embody “the emotional power” and “the spiritual efficacy” in his theatre, and became identified with a “vessel of raging hunger for total transformation”. Sontag considered this urge for “transformation” to have been fed by a desire to purge the “madness” that controlled him:

Artaud imagines the theater as the place where the body would be reborn in thought and thought would be reborn in the body. Theater is a projected image necessarily an ideal dramatization of the dangerous, “inhuman” inner life that possessed him ...a homoeopathic technique for treating that mangled, passionate inner life ...a kind of emotional and moral surgery upon consciousness... For Artaud, the decisive part of the analogy is that theater and consciousness can change. For not only does consciousness resemble theater but, as Artaud constructs it, theater resembles consciousness, and therefore lends itself to being turned into a theater laboratory in which to conduct research in changing consciousness. ...By giving vent to extreme passions and cultural nightmares, theater exorcises them.

Arguably, Artaud’s most accessible performances are those found in his writings. As an example of his writing, All Writing is Pigshit... demonstrates how Artaud’s literature functions as performance. Such a performance is driven by a strong relationship with its subject matter – it is an expression of a “contempt for literature” motivated by “a specific experience of suffering” that is seen to “authenticate” the writing – and seeks to resist the “corruption” of “artistry” and the “banalization of suffering”. Thus Artaud proposed an incontrovertible relationship between the

---

27 Ibid.: p. xix.
28 Compare this with David Latham’s comments on ‘the image within’ (p. 75).
29 Sontag.: pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
experience of the writer – the “suffering” or the “quality of one’s consciousness” – and the “truth” of the written statement, the writing is seen as the “mirror of consciousness”.

All writing is pigshit.
People who come out of nowhere and try to define whatever it is that goes on in their heads, are pigs.

The whole literary scene is a pigpen, especially this one.
All those who have points of reference in their minds, I mean, on some side or other of their heads and in a few strictly localized areas of their brains, all those who are masters of their language, all those for whom words have meanings, all those for whom words have meanings, all those for whom there exist higher levels of the soul and currents of thought, those who represent the spirit of the times, and who have named these currents of thought, I am thinking of their meticulous works, and of that mechanical creaking that delivers their spirit to the winds
are pigs.
Those for whom certain words have meaning, and certain modes of being, those who are so precise, those for whom emotions can be classified and who quibble over some point of their hilarious classifications, those who still believe in “terms,” those who discuss whatever ideologies belong to the hierarchy of the times; those whom women discuss so intelligently and the women themselves who speak so well and who discuss the contemporary currents of thought; those who still believe in some orientation of the spirit; those who follow paths, who drop names, who recommend books, these
are the worst kind of pigs.
You are quite unnecessary, young man !
No, I am thinking of bearded critics.
And I told you so: no works of art, no language, no word, no thought, nothing.
Nothing; unless maybe a fine Brain Storm.
A kind of incomprehensible stopping place in the mind, right in the middle of everything...

Table 4: Excerpt from “All Writing is Pigshit...” by Artaud. Translations from Helen Weaver (1976) in Antonin Artaud, Selected Writings and David Rattray (1965) in Antonin Artaud Anthology.

Beckett

The performance of Beckett is the performance of a particular view of existence, a particular state of consciousness. In Waiting for Godot, there is a state of consciousness that is grounded in an Existentialist belief system – the cluster of beliefs which Beckett professed, owned and identified with, and the filter through which he created the poetry, this particular script. In Waiting for Godot, the world that Beckett creates, enacts and embodies in the words and actions of his characters is in turn vicariously experienced by the audience.

Godot is a commentary on Modernism and Christianity, emerging from Beckett’s belief systems (as shared by his social and cultural milieu) as an effort to challenge the process of meaning-making and in its turn define ‘ultimate reality’. Beckett looks at notions of choice and responsibility in Waiting for Godot. Gogo and Didi choose to wait, out of responsibility, and the act of waiting is seen to be a state of consciousness in itself. The character of Lucky embodies the negation of choice, he is a slave. His thoughts locate responsibility in a lost god that has left him ‘to shrink and dwindle’ in his existence. Where Gogo and Didi still choose, Lucky is resigned in his anti-thesis.

Lucky’s monologue, in the first act of Beckett’s play, is a desperate and grasping attempt to make sense of the grand themes of humanity. Lucky ‘thinks’ his way around three grand narratives – the existence and indifference of a personal God; the shrinking spiritual life of humanity; and the putrefaction of human existence. This desperate and grasping attempt is necessarily unsuccessful; the success of its failure measured by the level of frustration generated in the listener and apparent in the performance of Lucky. The speech encapsulates the central concerns of Waiting for Godot and, to a certain extent, Beckett's project.

Lucky’s attempt and failure at making meaning reflects Beckett's view of human existence and endeavour. In the context of the play, Lucky performs his ‘thoughts’ for the other three characters. Beckett dramatises, in Lucky’s desperation and failure, the individual’s effort to construct conceptual structures to account for its existences and experiences, in such a way that reflects Beckett’s own belief systems on the process of meaning-making and human subjectivity.

The world that an audience views in a piece such as Lucky’s ‘think’ tirade is a world of a very particular quality. It can be described as a confused world. This effect is achieved through the application of what has been described in hypnosis research as ‘confusion techniques’ in the text. Confusion techniques in hypnosis practice use disjunctive and resonant imagery or text to induce particular states of consciousness.

One strand of Lucky’s speech effectively operates as a confusion element. Another strand of the speech operates as a discursive element. Still another strand operates as a rhythmic element. The discursive element serves to capture and hold rational

attention. The rhythmic element serves to capture and hold musical attention. The confusion element serves to dislocate the performance from a normative frame.

The speech is experienced as ‘abnormal’ – a glimpse of Lucky’s world, an old, confused, and shrinking, but unfinished world. A world that Beckett experienced in having gone through the two world wars, and a world view shared by his contemporaries, Jean Paul Sartre and the Existentialist school of philosophy. This play comes out of Beckett’s experience and view of existence.

Beckett dramatises a Lucky that is grasping for the unattainable. But if Lucky’s speech did not have a discursive position, it is no more than a slab of gibberish. Beckett gives Lucky a clear and strong discursive position to begin with, one that is grounded in Existentialist sensibilities. In many ways, the form of the speech mirrors the overall form of the play.

Beckett uses the repetition of phrases and themes to advance or amplify the central arguments in both the speech and the play. Beckett also utilises confusion as a strategy to disorient both the performer as character and the audience as listener. One component of the performance that Beckett could not control is the rhythm with which the speech is delivered, which in a production would most likely derive from the overall rhythm of the entire performance. As a whole, however, the speech inevitably creates the effect of a ‘desperate discourse’ regardless of the rhythm imposed upon it. In this effect, it is possible to detect and perceive the state of consciousness performed by the actor playing Lucky.

Lucky’s speech is inductive in the sense that it carries the performer along a particularly shaped experience of delivering the desperate discourse. It begins with a level of lucidity which engages and involves the thought processes of the performer, and then quickly disintegrates into the musicality of repetition and confusion of its phrases and themes. The speech can be separated into three interweaving elements – the discursive elaboration, elements of repetition, and elements of confusion. The discursive elaboration is concentrated in the first half of the speech. The elements of repetition occur throughout, but is built up into a concentration in the latter third of the speech. The elements of confusion also occur throughout, but is concentrated in the middle third of the speech.
Trance Forms

Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering what is more that as a result of the labours left unfinished crowned by the Acacacademy of Anthropopopometry of Essy in Possy of Testew and Cunard it is established beyond all doubt all other doubt than that which clings to the labours of men that as a result of the labours unfinished of Testew and Cunard it is established as hereinafter but not so fast for reasons unknown that as a result of the public works of Puncher and Wattmann it is established beyond all doubt that in view of the labours of Fartov and Belcher left unfinished for reasons unknown of Testew and Cunard left unfinished it is established what many deny that man in Possy of Testew and Cunard ibat man in Essy that man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation wastes and pines wastes and pines and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn winter winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicilline and succedanea in a word I resume and concurrently simultaneously for reasons unknown to shrink and dwindle in spite of the tennis I resume flying gliding golf over nine and eighteen holes tennis of all sorts in a word for reasons unknown in Feckham Peckham Fulham Clapham namely concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown but time will tell to shrink and dwindle I resume Fulham Clapham in a word the dead loss per caput since the death of Bishop Berkeley being to the tune of one inch four ounce per caput approximately by and large more or less to the nearest decimal good measure round figures stark naked in the stockingled feet in Connemara in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave that in the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman it appears what is more much more grave that in the light the light the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman that in the plains in the mountains by the seas by the rivers running water running fire the air is the same and then the earth namely the air and then the earth in the great cold the great dark the air and the earth abode of stones in the great cold alas alas in the year of their Lord six hundred and something the air the earth the sea the earth abode of stones in the great deeps the great cold on sea on land and in the air I resume for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis the facts are there but time will tell I resume alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull to shrink and waste and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard <> final vociferations tennis the stones so calm Cunard . . . unfinished.

Table 5: Excerpt from Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (1954).
In Lucky’s ‘think’ audiences experience a world, a conglomerate of cults in this particular sense, that is consequently confused, shrinking and dwindling. Unfortunately, the English translation loses a great deal of the subtleties that Beckett fashioned into the French version. For example in the English speech, the term ‘quaquaquaqua’ becomes little more than an interjectory suggestion of the sound that ducks make, whereas in the French version the authorial intent of implying the word ‘quaversalis’ is less remote; the words ‘Acacacacademy’ and ‘Anthropopopometry’ contain the words ‘caca’ and ‘popo’ which in French children’s language of the period meant ‘excrement’ and ‘chamberpot’ respectively, as ‘pooh’ and ‘potty’ do in English.32 These references do not survive in the English translation, thus lessening the impact of the original text’s confusion element.

Beckett’s constructed reality can be defined as Existentialist and Modernist. In Godot, Beckett posits the ‘unattainable’ in the myth and ritual created by the performance. Influenced as they are by those forms of thought, the quality and the resonance of the world created is notable through the experience of the performance. In Waiting for Godot, the world of Didi, Gogo, Pozzo and Lucky experienced as a quality of existence – a state of consciousness – coloured and animated by Existentialist and Modernist thinking. The unattainable in Godot equates with the ‘mystical other’ – that which seems to be so close yet out of reach. It is possible to say that Waiting for Godot entails a performance of a cult of Existentialism. However, there are also traces of a cult of Mysticism and Radicalism apparent in the work of Beckett, in Godot and in his other plays. Thus, it is possible to see that there are a number of cults – belief systems – in operation in Beckett’s theatre, as in most social situations and interactions.

In Lucky, audiences see a world created by Beckett, experience the world of Lucky, and see in the speech an experience that could be described as a state divergent from the flimsy sense of normativity in Waiting for Godot – as a trance state. The performance of Lucky in this speech is the performance of a particular state of consciousness. The performer invokes an idea with physiological effects, mental constructions and processes suggesting a world recovering from a long period of trauma and pressure, the two world wars of Beckett’s era. As Pozzo stamps his foot upon Lucky’s hat, he declares “There’s an end to his thinking! (Comme ça il ne

pensera plus!” just before he yells “Up pig!” to the collapsed Lucky. Audiences see that Lucky does not have a very happy life.

Beckett, in the world of *Waiting for Godot*, uses Lucky as his own mouthpiece for his own sets of beliefs and questions on existence – aspects of his own state of consciousness – which he identified with. Didi and Gogo wait for Godot, who never arrives. Godot comes to embody the quality of the ‘unattainable’ – that which is beyond, that which we seek. It is these characters’ spoken objectives that they are there, they cannot leave that place, because they are waiting for Godot. Waiting is itself a state of consciousness. Lucky is interesting in that he is a slave who chooses to be a slave, in a similar sense to the idea of a ‘wage slave’ perhaps. Bertolt Brecht wanted to see Pozzo played as “Von Pozzo, a landed aristocrat” and Lucky as “a policeman or a fool”.35 This is suggestive of what a somewhat different state of consciousness – such as a Marxist one in Brecht – might make of such a play, of such a point of view.

**Grotowski**

Jerzy Grotowski was most explicit in describing his performance work as a set of techniques that employ the principles of “trance” and the ideal of “springing forth” into a state that he described as “translumination”.34 In proposing a technique for the “holy actor” he considered the necessity for an “inductive technique” or a “technique of elimination” that the performer can utilise in order “to refrain from doing” – quite simply, Grotowski believed that “the actor must act in a state of trance” and develop “the ability to concentrate in a particular theatrical way”. Furthermore, in training the performer to engage in an “elusive and indescribable process of self-donation” – the work of “giving oneself” – it is necessary to “develop a system of allusions” and employ “a particular use of suggestion” that invokes a “magical ring” which “stimulates the imagination”.35 This training was intended to lead to performances that would meet the “genuine spiritual needs” of the spectator who chooses to engage in a “confrontation with the performance” as a form of “self-analysis”. In this way, Grotowksi saw his work as offering something to the audience member that is involved in “an endless process of self-development”.36
The work of the theatre was, for Grotowski, to attack the “inherited” myths in the individual – what he called “the collective complexes of society”. Such religious, biological, and national myths were considered to detract from or stifle “our innermost selves”. Grotowski believed that these myths could be attacked by “searching for the things which can hurt us most deeply” in order to achieve “a total feeling of purifying truth” by which it is possible to regard the “representations collectives” in performance. He was interested in “creating a secular sacrum in the theatre” and developing “a secular consciousness in place of a religious one” in order to meet “a psycho-social necessity for society”. For Grotowski, certain figures in the history of theatre can be considered to be “secular saints” and he regarded Stanislavski to be one such figure, as one who had been instrumental in bringing about a period of “awakening and renewal in the theatre”.

In *Towards a Poor Theatre* Grotowski described a central concept in his work with the notion of “*via negativa*” – the way of negation, as “a process of elimination”. In one sense, the *via negativa* represents an oppositional approach to Stanislavski’s assertion of “actor control”. The negation that Grotowski described, in “violating our innermost selves”, serves to dissociate the normative self from the performative embodiment and enactment through “an act of self-sacrifice”. Negation is effectively the creation of uncertainty – the “empty” state of the vessel – which leads to the formulation or internalisation of beliefs which become integral in the process of identification, as well as in the motivation and instruction of the performer. The interactions that most concerned Grotowski were confrontations of ideas, with the implicit assumption of conflict of the self with itself, others and the environment. He called for a “confrontation with myth rather than identification” with it. Thus the mystical and radical ideal is assumed to be in conflict with the actual or the everyday.

The notion of negation is considered to be particularly concerned with the performer’s state of consciousness in relation to the sense of “self” – the problem of how “to be aware that I am playing someone else” and the problem of “how to be oneself”. The solution that Grotowski proposed challenges the performer to “forget” their own “self” and “to be whole... within something” – to be “absorbed” – in

---

38 Ibid.: p. 105.
40 Ibid.: p. 23.
41 Ibid.: p. 90.
performance.\textsuperscript{42} For Grotowski, the “self” and the “body” are far more useful as conceptualisations than the notions of “soul” or “spirit”. Thus he rejects such notions as being “caught up” in the problems of the “sublime” and as “pseudo-mystical” and “sentimental”.\textsuperscript{43} Instead he proposed an ideal performance state wherein “consciousness and instinct are united” in what is considered to be “a serious and solemn act of revelation” – in “tearing off the mask of daily life” the performer engages in a “total act” that reveals something of “the summit of the actor’s organism”.\textsuperscript{44}

Writing about Artaud, Grotowski regarded these acts of revelation – these signs with their respective “psychological or cultural associations” – as having most reached “the essence” of performance when the performer “commits an act of sincerity” in what is seen to be “an extreme, solemn gesture” that is removed of “any obstacle set by custom and behaviour” and as an “act of extremity” of the conscious “organism”.\textsuperscript{45} Grotowski’s performative ideal is found in the performance and notion of “translumination” – in the idea that “we transcend ourselves”.\textsuperscript{46}

Grotowski considered to have achieved this performative ideal in the production of \textit{The Constant Prince} with actor Ryszard Cieslak. For Grotowski, the realisation of “translumination” as “a psycho-physical peak” gave weight to his belief that “the artist is a priest”.\textsuperscript{47} In their approach to the “theme of self-transcendence” Grotowski and Cieslak had effected a performance of a “moment of ecstasy” wherein “conscious control over the body is lost” and the “spirit is exalted” – “the spirit seemed to shine through the flesh”.\textsuperscript{48}

For Grotowski such a performance results from an “integration of all the actor’s psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers”.\textsuperscript{49} It can also be that “the pervasive Romantic theme of the sacrificial act” is central for Grotowski – “suffering” and “salvation” are seen as synonymous processes in this treatment of “the myths of sacrifice”.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.: p. 229.
\textsuperscript{45} Grotowski and Barba \textit{Towards a Poor Theatre}.: pp. 90-93.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.: p. 213.
\textsuperscript{49} Grotowski and Barba \textit{Towards a Poor Theatre}.: p. 16.
\textsuperscript{50} Kumiega.: pp. 140-141.
Grotowski’s work is an example of an Avant Garde tradition that was most clearly founded in the use of physicality, the body of the performer and the way that the body informed the performance. In the experience of Ryzard Cieslak’s performance in *The Constant Prince* as the Prince, was the idea of a performed “translumination”. Grotowski was quite taken by the idea of translumination as a performed state, and Cieslak became the renowned exponent of this talent as the posited model of peak performance.

In the Avant Garde, particular states of consciousness, particular narratives or role structures are suggested in the belief systems that fundamentally drive the performance, the artistic creation. The core of this study is the analysis of those performances. Cieslak’s performance is an example of how a performer utilises what are considered to be “altered” states of consciousness within a particular performance context.

The idea of translumination posited by Grotowski elaborates upon a desire to transcend the boundaries of the self – that is, the self as established by Freud and others through the psychological and social self, the myth of the “individual”. In the performance traditions of the Avant Garde, the techniques are seen in performances such as Cieslak’s as being physically-based coupled with strong imagery techniques – producing a powerful resonance.
This study argues that the techniques that both Cieslak and Grotowski utilised in performance enabled the performer to ‘mysticise’ or ‘radicalise’ their own ideas of physical presence within a performance event. In this way, a transcendent possibility is presented and considered for human experience, a transcendent yearning which in various cultural contexts are experienced as art, theatre, religion, or combinations thereof.

**Elements of Induction**

In Beckett, the induction techniques are found in the text, the script. In Grotowski, induction occurs through the use of physicality and imagery. Songs and music are often used to generate particular states of receptivity and performance. Character associations, word associations, and characterisations are also used to maintain and induce particular states. Inductions facilitate the adoption of personalities or roles, and of particular expectations.

In the theatre of the Avant Garde, the elements of induction of the desired or ideal performance states drew upon historical currents and concerns that had been salient at the times of their emergence; in ways that reflected and responded to those currents and concerns, whilst offering belief systems that accounted for human action and agency in ways that sought to meet perceived needs in the individual and in the social milieu. In their efforts to transgress or transcend the normative ideals of the self and the world, as defined and accepted by an enabled majority of the immediate social and cultural group, the Avant Garde came to identify with the ideals that were deemed “revolutionary” or “rebellious” or “radical” – and in the sense that it sought to portray “other-ness” could also be considered “mystical” – for that era and environment.

Thus such ideals were articulated in group narratisation processes that both informed and framed the performances of the Avant Garde, whose practitioners organised around principles articulated in narratisation processes of smaller artistic elite groups. Thus the cults of the Avant Garde employed notions of the radical and the mystical to define their actions and missions, as well as to coalesce and cohere around. These notions also served as the performative ideals around which the performances of the Avant Garde were organised, and upon which its performers directed their concentration.
The idea of inductions and exits for particular states of consciousness is the key theme explored in this study. Elements of induction are employed by performers of the Avant Garde such as Artaud, Beckett, and Grotowski. The acts of identification engaged in and required by these exponents of the Avant Garde serve as reactions to the normative ideals that dominated their respective environments.

Thus it appears that these reactions have as much to do with the interruption of acts of identification as with their elicitation towards particular directions or notions. Such performances involved a disruption or disturbance of streams of normativity. However the alternatives to such disrupted streams were not always readily apparent, thus the performances could provoke “existential” discomfort or distress in its audiences and performers. Such discomforts were at times seen as the very measure of efficacy and authority of the performances.

The performance of an isolated “self” appear to have been a central concern of these Avant Garde performances; the cults of the Mystical and the Radical both positioned the “self” of the performer and the audience of the performance as separate to or dissociated from the dominant normative ideals of the era and environment. As instruction and as information, the text of Avant Garde performances communicated through poetic language and form, as well as through physicality that resonates as “other-ness” or “originality”. Thus the initiation of the Avant Garde performer and performance is related to the perception of qualities “transcendent” of normativity. These “transcendent” qualities are the states that the performer strives to invoke in performance.

The imaginative and affective involvements that are sought seem to have been largely informed by the discursive streams of Romanticism, Modernism, Existentialism and Nihilism. In the works of the particular exponents of the Avant Garde analysed here, a range of the performative genres by which the cults of the Mystical and Radical have been induced in their respective contexts can be discerned. In the texts and images presented by Beckett, in the physical experiences proposed by Grotowski, and in the visions and suffering communicated by Artaud, the power and appeal of these cults become apparent. This study is concerned with the performer’s sense of self,
insofar as it determines the performed character or role, through which the performed state of consciousness is discussed. The performed state of consciousness describes the experience of the performer through the filter of the character or role. Therefore this study is centrally concerned with the contents and processes prescribed by the character or role, which are in turn embodied and enacted by the performer. The ‘mechanistic’ function of the actor presents issues of authenticity that are inevitably addressed as part of the process of performance. The question of authenticity ranges to the extent to which the performer is said to be ‘genuinely’ experiencing the contents and processes prescribed by the character or role – measured as the level of ‘excellence’ attained by the embodiment and enactment within the sets of expectations inherent in the respective cults of Realism, Mysticism and Radicalism.

In this chapter, the performance tradition of the Avant Garde has been considered in the context of the ways in which it responded to the discursive streams of Psychological Realism and Naturalism by presenting an alternative set of meaning-making processes by which to define and evaluate performativity. The works of Artaud, Beckett and Grotowsi have been examined in order to elaborate on some of the beliefs that appear to drive the performativity that they had each espoused. Although each of these practitioners emerged from a context most certainly dominated by Modernist discursive streams, they each gravitated towards streams that can be characterised as being imbued by ideals of Mysticism and Radicalism. These impulses have been shown to strive for some form of transcendence of the normative ideals espoused in the discursive streams of Realism and Naturalism, framed within an endeavour for some sense of ‘authenticity’. This endeavour was also driven by questions concerning mortality and well-being that function as central themes in the works of these practitioners. Furthermore, it was shown that each of these practitioners espoused a particular perspective on the decay or negation of the “self” – most explicitly demonstrated in Grotowski’s notion of “via negativa’. The work of Artaud has been shown to be most concerned with the themes of mortality and well-being, serving as discursive tracts on the transgressive nature of ailments by positing the “unconscious” as a site of “terror”. The work of Beckett derives from a Modernist and Existentialist stream to portray a consciousness that is somewhat lost and confused in the very efforts of meaning-making – depicting an endeavour for transcendence trapped in the conviction of its impossibility. In this complex of Existentialism, Beckett

---

thus founded his appeal for a Radicalism, coloured by a Mysticism inherent in the positing of an “unattainable” other such as Godot. In the work of Grotowski, the employment of the physicality of the performer has been shown to be central to the performances of Radical and Mystical ideals, thus the importance of a training regime and paradigm led to an extensively developed set of practices and beliefs – most strongly demonstrated in the performative ideal of “translumination” and in developments of an orientation informed by an emerging paradigm of “Human Potentials”. These modes of embodiment and enactment have been shown to have based their appeal on the premise of being an “alternative” to Realist and Naturalist modes. In the following chapter, this sense of being an “alternative” to dominant modes of being is investigated in a further consideration of the “Human Potential” discursive stream embodied by the channeling practitioners to be examined. But before moving onto that investigation, a return to a more conventionally accepted notion of “trance” performance is useful; the practice of Sanghyang Dedari in Bali is analysed in the light of the developed perspective on “trance” offered in this study. The frameworks employed to conceptualise “trance” in its performativity are tested on these examples to develop the understanding of the experience of the performer in trance.
This chapter investigates the notion of “trance” as it has been developed in the disciplines of anthropology and psychology by focusing on two examples of trance performance practices that have been central in the development of the conventional understanding of trance performance. By analysing the practice of trance performance in the Balinese form known as Sanghyang Dedari and in the practice of channeling entities in what has been referred to as the “Human Potential Movement” in the United States, this study investigates the notion of trance as it has been advanced in these various practices by practitioners, adherents and observers.

Sanghyang Dedari and channeled entities are examples of consultative trance practices, improvised and interacted performances driven and motivated by a formulated and conceptualised exemplary centre – an axis of legitimacy and authenticity, a source of authority which claims credibility by performed acts and utterances believed to originate from divine or supernatural sources.

The exemplary centres, of Sanghyang Dedari and channeling entities alike, are formulated and conceptualised as alternative authorities in response to dominant political and social structures. The measures of authenticity and legitimacy that they offer within a shared or common experience function as sanctioned transgressions of normative limits of knowledge as power – as access to the divine that is transcendent of “base” humanity and modernity. These transgressions function as gestures of empowerment – a centre is created in contrast to what are conceptualised as a disempowering dominant centre or locus.

The exemplary centre, as apparent in all cults, provides a locus upon which various forces are concentrated in order to constitute appeals for identification and involvement, physically and mentally as complexes. Therefore, the concepts of “self” applied and employed in the various situations considered are seen as central elements of the processes of enacting and embodying particular states of consciousness by the various performers. In The Sacred Self, anthropologist Thomas
Csordas (1994) studied healing practices in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement and grounded his phenomenological analysis on the principles of embodiment. The approach taken in this chapter is derived from a similar stance. Accordingly, this study will apply the working concept of “self” that Csordas utilises in his study:

Self is neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, characterized by effort and reflexivity... self occurs as a conjunction of prerelative bodily experience, culturally constituted world or milieu, and situational specificity or habitus. Self processes are orientational processes in which aspects of the world are thematized, with the result that the self is objectified, most often as a “person” with a cultural identity or set of identities.

Aside from the concept of “self” as an indeterminate capacity, this study will also be concerned with the symbol structures employed in Sanghyang Dedari and channeling, as evidence of the formulations and notions that frame the state of consciousness of the performer. These symbol structures are seen to represent the social processes undergone by the respective performers, and determine the modes of enactment and embodiment invoked.

The discipline of Performance Studies demands that attention be given to both intended meaning and observed behaviour. As cultural analysis, it is important to focus on “political, economic and stratificatory realities... (as well as) biological and physical necessities” evident in the symbolic actions. In this way, the symbolic action is made expressible and legible – through a theoretical and conceptual structure.

In applying the frameworks of performance theory, this study must consider the self-expressive, collaborative, and representational elements of trance performance; as an acting event and as an enacted event. In addition, this study considers the role of pretense and representation in trance performance; the functionalities of simple and complex actions; and the functionality of identity as a frame of reference and attention that categorises action and experience as belonging or not belonging to particular identity structures, as well as degrees or levels of awareness. In this way, consciousness is attributed to a stable, contextualised identity structure while notions of unconscious and subconscious elements account for the less categorised forms of

---

5 Ibid.: pp. 49-50.
actions and experiences that are not quite attributable, for one reason or another, to the stabilised and contextualised normal identity structure.\footnote{Auslander, Philip (1995). "Just Be Your Self": Logocentrism and Difference in Performance Theory. \textit{Acting (Re)Considered}. P. B. Zarrilli. London and New York, Routledge: pp. 59-67.}

The trance performances investigated in this study must also be regarded in terms of the distinct units of action, or what are seen as units of “restored behaviour”\footnote{Schechner, Richard (1985). \textit{Between Theater and Anthropology}. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.: pp. 35-41.} according to Schechner’s formulations. As the assumptions inherent in these frameworks are embedded and reflected in Stanislavski’s notions of acting, this study undertakes to describe the domain of commonality that is found between conventional trance performance and conventional acting.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{sanghyang_dedari_performers}
\caption{Sanghyang Dedari performers are traditionally two pre-adolescent girls selected and trained to perform in what is considered to be a possession-trance state induced by ritual. \textit{Photo: Tatian Greenleaf}}
\end{figure}

The concepts held by performers and observers to account for agency are central to the consideration of trance performances. These concepts describe the formulated exemplary centres of authenticity and authority complexes which in turn motivate the words and actions of the performer. These centres and complexes are culturally formulated and individually applied. Therefore, in Sanghyang Dedari for example, Balinese notions of personhood and legitimate forces or authorities are enacted and embodied by the performers of trance in the form of supernatural spirits invoked to
exorcise forces that are believed to cause illness and misfortune. From her studies of Balinese trance performances, Jane Belo came to the belief that:

All the varieties of trance behavior are culturally stylized: they bear the imprint of cultural patterning.  

In the first page of Belo’s study *Trance in Bali*, the Balinese culture – the way of being – is posited as a key factor in the performance of trance. The cultural and ideological position from which trance performance is read in Belo’s study is highly representative of the assumptions evoked whenever general discussions of the notion of trance occurs. These assumptions tend to limit the understanding of trance states to expressions of an “unconscious”, “subconscious” or “deeper” self. While these limitations offer a sense of mystery and ineffability to the notion of trance states, they serve to obscure the finer processes at play in the performance of these states. The aim of this current study is to develop the understanding of these finer processes by regarding two examples of the intentional practice of trance performance within their local contexts – *Sanghyang Dedari* in Bali and channeling in the United States.

The examples of channeling and Balinese trance performance will demonstrate the functionality of individual identification and cultural information in the performance of states of consciousness. This study is not as concerned with identities as with the process of identification, the act of identifying with and as an individual and a group. The individual self invokes, embodies and enacts an identity – a self-identity as well as contextualised social identities. The performer enacts and embodies the meaning of the identity invoked. Thus the enactment and embodiment is an act of identification. In these states of consciousness, the systems of determination are comprised of identifications, obstacles and objectives; systems of force result from and propel the acts of individuals and groups.

**Sanghyang Dedari in Bali**

The study of Balinese trance performance is regarded as a record of dialogues between the practitioners of the performance form and the documentors and commentators upon the form – as a drama in itself. This study will take into consideration the performativity of cultural anthropology as well as the theories posited

---

by trance performance practitioners. This study considers theories of trance from the traditional Balinese perspective as well as the anthropological and psychological theories developed to account for trance performance.

Balinese notions of personhood inherently allow for the possibility of multiple identity structures, existent as potentialities for embodiment and enactment. The concept of “kanda mpat” or “four siblings”, 10 for example, are introduced early in the life of a Balinese person’s experience and are reinforced throughout Balinese cultural life. The theories of self and environment adopted by the Balinese trance performer enables the enactment, embodiment and interpretation of the performances in context. The Balinese trance performer does not “dissociate” from an individual biographical self as much as “become” the spirit.

Perceptions of Balinese trance in anthropology are based on psychological concepts inherited from William James, Freud and Jung; whereas the Balinese perceptions of trance are based on spiritual concepts derived from Hindu traditions. What this study is interested in are the concepts and perceptions that allow and enable the trance performance, whilst allowing and enabling the explanation of trance performance in psychological and cultural terms. As Belo argued, each trance state is effectively imbued with cultural norms in which are contained the vocabulary of words and actions appropriate and relevant to each state, in what Csordas described as a “genre of ritual language” and in the manner that ritual and society create or reflect each other as a form of “self-affirmation”. 11

The Balinese theory of personhood is important to understanding the objective of the actor in the performance of trance – to become an expression and embodiment of the notion of the “divine”. The conversations inherent in the discourse of Balinese thought, history and tradition suggesting a particular way of embodying and enacting the divine in the performance of Sanghyang Dedari are examined in this study. The performance of the “goddesses” of Sanghyang Dedari is viewed as a representation of a cultural process, a tradition traceable over a period of a few generations – through the works of Covarrubias (1937), Belo (1960), O’Neill (1978), Suryani and Jensen

---

11 Csordas,: pp. 20-21.
(1993), Bandem and DeBoer (1995) – viewed along with other writings on trance in order to regard its structure as a performance form.

![Image](image-url)

**Figure 8:** Sanghyang Dedari in the 1930s (left) and the 1990s (right).  
(Photo: Gregory Bateson, Belo 1960 and Bali Tribune Multimedia)

The Balinese sense of community and conception of self interact to produce the performance of *Sanghyang Dedari* as a tradition. The performers of *Sanghyang Dedari* are selected and recruited from a community’s pool of pre-adolescent girls of between nine and thirteen years of age. O’Neill documented a selection process for performers that demonstrates the deeply theatrical nature of this tradition. This theatrical nature is most evident in the ways in which the selection process compares with the typical audition process employed in conventional dramatic practice – for example, in the way that the young candidates are asked to perform a critical section of the ceremony, as an auditioning performer might be asked to read or perform a certain section of a script, to determine the candidates’ suitability and capability. It is important to consider the intentions of the respective performance practices. In *Sanghyang Dedari*, the performance is framed as a ceremony of exorcism intended to purify the way of being of a community in order to expel “spirits” that are believed to cause disease, disaster, death and misfortune. These spirits are believed to be embodied and enacted by

---


entities known as “gering” and “leyak” which are in turn believed to be animated and utilised by practitioners of the destructive magical arts. Some of these practitioners are believed to have the ability to transform themselves into leyak, which attack people in the community, and are thus targeted in Sanghyang Dedari performances as objects of evil to be identified and punished.

Traditionally, the Sanghyang Dedari performances are organised by the village temple dedicated to appeasing the spirits of the dead that are awaiting a process of purification by ritual cremation\(^\text{14}\) – the “pura dalem” (literally the “deep” or “inside” temple). The priest, or “pemangku”, of this temple officiates over the Sanghyang Dedari ceremonies and is responsible for the selection and training of Sanghyang Dedari performers. Geertz argued in his studies of Balinese culture that “ceremonialism” is a driving force in politics, thus an expression of power and influence in Balinese societies. The performance of Sanghyang Dedari function as communicative appeals for authority within the village social context. The privilege and status accorded to performers of Sanghyang Dedari provides substantial grounds for the argument of the “self-serving” nature of trance performance noted by Bourguignon.\(^\text{15}\)

The force of authority is based on the expression of spiritual power, or “sakti”, graded as a valuation of the level of “purity”. As Geertz noted, this system of valuation – denoted through a “metaphysical theatre” in Bali – positions a notion of the divine or supernatural as an “exemplary centre” around which social and cultural life are referenced and organised.\(^\text{16}\) The “sacred space” of the temple and the Sanghyang Dedari performance becomes the forum within which dynamics of power and influence are negotiated, and to a certain degree, enacted and embodied. The performances evoke a “mode of perception, representation and actualization” that attains “objective validity” through the frame of trance.\(^\text{17}\)

The notion of human (natural) control, or lack of it, is central to the appeal to divinity in trance performance. The performance is framed as being controlled by some force outside of the agency of the performer; agency is attributed to a force that is not human, that is supernatural and divine. The performer is seen to enact and embody


\(^{17}\) Ibid.: p. 130.
what Csordas describes as a culturally constituted “sacred self”. Thus by negating the “personal” identity of the performer, the “cultural” identity is intensified by being made more fully realised and actualised. This is precisely the same dynamic that operates for the actor in film or theatre, except in cases where the “personality” cult of the “star” takes precedence. The power expressed, in both instances, is believed to “lend capacities of a special kind”. This power is based on the idealisation of trance as performance of the “other”.

In Belo’s study as well as others, the impulse to search for “other-ness” is made understandable through the frameworks of psychology and anthropology. These frameworks have become the basis upon which the notion of “trance” has been constructed. In this way, the notions of the unconscious and subconscious have become central, albeit downplayed, to the conventional understandings of trance performance.

As appeals to the “other” and the “ineffable”, these concepts are not particularly useful for this study. The “deeper” self that Belo and others resorted to will be shown to be the results of these performers’ acts of associations and identifications as interpreted by the enculturated audience, and from group-defined roles that are culturally enacted and embodied. This study regards the indicators of trance in Sanghyang Dedari performance; the functionality of mental imagery and associations embedded in performance texts; as well as the selection and training of the performers of the Sanghyang Dedari roles.

**Indicators**

Tourism-oriented material that promotes Sanghyang Dedari performances use a number of key themes to frame the performances. There will generally be two performers in Sanghyang Dedari. The performers are often described as pre-pubescent or pre-adolescent or “virgin” girls. The performers are said to be in a possession-trance while they perform as mediums for the “heavenly nymphs” or

---

18 Csordas.: p. 4.
20 Belo.: p. 146.
“angels” that descend for the ceremony. The trance is seen to be induced by incense smoke and the chanting of songs.

Table 6: Advertisement for Sanghyang Dedari performances aimed at the tourist market.

Figure 9: The closed eyes of the Sanghyang Dedari performer are indicators of a “trance” state.

Some writings claim that the performers will never have had any formal dance training in their lives. In possession-trance they are said to dance a “dreamy version of the Legong” classical form. Throughout the dance and the ceremony, the performers will have their eyes closed – this is considered to be one of the key indicators of the Sanghyang Dedari trance state. The observations that they dance a classical form generally in unison, whilst appearing to have their eyes closed, further

---


support the belief that the performers are indeed in a trance state and that their movements reflect a supernatural force at work.

The young dancers are said to perform acrobatic feats, such as standing and balancing on the shoulders of young men who carry them in a procession, as well as bending and stretching at difficult angles – these are seen as some other indicators of a trance state.

The performers are also believed to be in trance through demonstrations that are seen to indicate an immunity to pain, such as some Sanghyang Dedari performers who walk on bare feet over hot coals – however this is not always seen as a standard part of the Sanghyang Dedari performance repertoire.

Perhaps the most important indicators of the state of trance are the sections in the performance where the dancers are seen to enter into the trance state and then exit from their trance at the end. These, more than any other indicators, frame the trance state – the belief and expectation that the performers of Sanghyang Dedari experience a possession-trance.

The entry into the state of trance is referred to as “nadi” and the state of trance itself is referred to as “kerawuhan”. In Sanghyang Dedari the instance of nadi is indicated by the performers’ collapsing after a period of induction consisting of inhaling incense and a series of songs by a chorus of women. After this point the performers are considered to be kerawuhan. At the conclusion of the ceremony the performers are seen to be brought out of the trance state by the priest, the pemangku who sprinkles holy water, as well as by particular prayers and songs used in order to bring them back to a “normal” state of consciousness. These indicators are essential to the actualisation and interpretation of a Sanghyang Dedari performance.

**Imagery and Associations**

The Sanghyang Dedari ceremony is generally performed as an extended performance season. As with most rehearsed performances, within a season the ceremonies follow a precise and consistent form. A Sanghyang Dedari season documented by

---

24 Bandem and deBoer.: p. 12.
26 Ibid.: p. 53.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transaction (Stamp 1992)</th>
<th>Transaction (Stamp 1989)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco (Stamp 1986)</td>
<td>San Francisco (Stamp 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco (Stamp 1989)</td>
<td>San Francisco (Stamp 1986)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cending Pengudsan (6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: <strong>Indonesia</strong></th>
<th>Table 2: <strong>Indonesia</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia (Stamp 1992)</td>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia (Stamp 1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia (Stamp 1992)</td>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia (Stamp 1992)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:**

- **Transaction:** The act of exchanging goods or services for money.
- **Cending Pengudsan:** A term used in Indonesian culture that signifies the act of finalizing or concluding a transaction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation: O'Neill (1978)</th>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>Translation: Coburnibus (1937)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FROM</strong></td>
<td><strong>FROM</strong></td>
<td><strong>FROM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spirit Possession and Healing Rites in a Balinese Village (O'Neill 1978)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Island of Bali (Cobornibus 1937)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Translation: Cobornibus (1937)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frangipani flowers arranged With red roses, white marigold Purple teleng, blue water lily Take the sacred water from the great throne.</td>
<td>Sekar jepun ya anggitana Ratna maduri putih Teleng petek teng ang biru Ya ambu-ambil tirha sanggar agung</td>
<td>Ngambil ya ngambil tirha sanggar agung... Sekar djeplan anggitong Ratna maduri, ia putihk Petek teleng biru, iwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sacred water in the coconut pots Water which protects Its power created in heaven Sprinkle it god over your bodies.</td>
<td>Tirha ning sibu mas Tuya toya pemast u Pokaryan saking saking suwarga Ya kets-ketsin ragané</td>
<td>Tirha ning sibu mas Tuya pemast u Pokaryan saking suwarga Siratin ragan i deva, raris ketsin djuru kidange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprinkle it then go home To heaven, to Indra's land, The wind blows, they leave And only the human forms remain.</td>
<td>Wus makeis ya mand uk Mareng i doors kala angon Turuk urang gojaya Ya wali-walaya dadi mawusa</td>
<td>Wus makeis mand uk Mareng meteraloka ... Mareng iheh iheh angon Turuk karawangana, Waluya dadi mawusa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.9: Songs used in Simphong Desari exit process. Again the degree of similarity indicates a well-established tradition.
O’Neill in 1974-1976 and performances documented by Covarrubias in 1937, illustrate the functionality of the songs and other sensory stimuli in generating mental imagery and associations for the performers. The form and content of the ceremonies have maintained a level of consistency that indicates a well-established tradition. In particular, the songs utilised for the induction and exit stages of the ceremony have maintained a remarkable level of consistency for what is supposed to be a predominantly oral tradition.¹

From the songs documented by both O’Neill and Covarrubias (See Table 7), particular images function as key elements in the induction and exit processes. The image of the incense smoke drifting upwards is used to evoke a sense of a “pathway” upon which the celestial nymphs descend to enter the bodies of the performers as they kneel over the incense braziers.² Thus the performers become attentionally absorbed in the imagery through the sensory stimulation provided by the fragrance of the smoking incense and the songs of the choir. For the performers, this absorption in the imagery and the logic it entails, in turn provokes an act of identification with and as the celestial nymphs of the ritual. Similarly, the exit process utilises the imagery of the “gods” – having fulfilled their purpose in the ceremony – implored to “go home... to heaven”; blown by a celestial “wind” they depart and “the human forms remain”.³

From the selection process onwards throughout the entire season, the performers are guided to use a particular sequence of songs and sensory stimuli to become attentionally absorbed into particular trains of thoughts and associations that function as the induction process for the Sanghyang Dedari performance.⁴ The selection of the Sanghyang Dedari performer is based on the candidate’s ability to achieve a level of attentional focus deemed necessary in order to induce and maintain a particular train of thoughts and associations, that is, a particular state of consciousness. The selection and induction process is comprised of four songs repeated by a chorus of women, a brazier of smoking incense over which the performer kneels, acts of purification, blessing with holy water, a set of prayers chanted by the pemangku, and the temple setting – the pura dalem at dusk.⁵ These elements serve as attentional and associational cues that motivate the act of identification that is required

---

² O’Neill.: pp. 8, 156-139.
³ Ibid: p. 25.
⁴ Hartland and Tinkler.: p. 375.
⁵ O’Neill.: pp. 138-139.
for the performance. These attentional and associational cues are framed as the sequence of imagery that leads to the “invitation” and “descent” of the celestial nymphs from the heavens and into the bodies of the performers, and then their eventual departure from the performers’ human forms.

It has been generally accepted that mental imagery serves a significant function in the preparation for action, and that the “primary function of consciousness is to be pro-active and forward looking rather than reactive or retrospective”. In the context of religious healing practices, Csordas noted that the understanding of the notion of imagery extends beyond visualisations to include other sensory modes, to regard a “unified sensorium as the field of imaginative activity” – and that “the inclusion of corporeality in a definition of consciousness” is essential to understanding the function of imagery and association in the performance of the embodied image.

Accordingly, the term “mental imagery” is used in this study to refer not just to visual imagery but to all forms of imaginative activity stimulated by all identifiable sensory experience. The state of consciousness that is enacted and embodied is constructed from and informed by imaginative activity that engages the indeterminate capacities of the sense-oriented body and the self.

The trance states enacted and embodied by Sanghyang Dedari performers must be seen in the context of the acts of identification that those particular performers engage in. These acts of identification shed light on the roles and functions undertaken by the performers, as well as the scores and texts that are actually performed. The acts of identification, that precede the Sanghyang Dedari performers’ embodiments of the celestial nymphs, provide an insight into the styles of identification that are employed in the social and cultural milieu of these performances.

Geertz noted six types of labels by which persons can define themselves in Bali and by which they are identified as unique. A “personal” name, also known as the “child” or “little” name, is bestowed 105 days after birth but then rarely used; it provides the person with “the rudiments of a completely unique cultural identity” whilst remaining a “highly muted” and “intensely private matter” throughout life. A “birth order” name designates a person as a member of a sibling set organised as a cycle, from first to

---

7 Csordas. pp. 79-81.
8 Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays: p. 368.
9 Ibid.: pp. 368-370.
fourth then repeated in a style that suggests “an endless four-stage replication of an imperishable form” and is the most frequently used term of address and reference within a local village context.\textsuperscript{10} A “kinship” term identifies a person within a generational structure and conveys kinship information.\textsuperscript{11} In addition, a “teknonym” designates a person’s procreational and marital status, and becomes another commonly applied label in a local village context; a “status” title conveys information on a person’s place within the Triwangsa Varna social caste system; and a “public” title identifies the “linggah” or “seat” of a person, their occupation and social function within the Balinese social structure. These labels define a person’s biographical identity as well as that person’s relation to a central concern of Balinese culture – their “distance from divinity”, the level of “political and ecclesiastical authority” to which they are eligible.\textsuperscript{12}

Moreover, the Balinese concept of “personality” is seen to comprise of four “spiritual siblings” or “kanda mpaf” that a person is born with and goes through life with. These siblings are associated with particular psychological and physical dispositions; a neglect of ritual obligations related to them or an act of sorcery upon them are seen to result in a loss of well-being or in death.\textsuperscript{13}

These systems of identification serve to construct a world-view that positions the individual self as being predominantly acted upon by social and cultural forces whilst muting the sense of uniqueness and wholly individual choice. Thus agency is conceived of as being a matter of social and cultural, rather than individual, impulse. This emphasises the capacity to accommodate the macrocosmic factors of the divine and the supernatural as primary motivating forces for action. This is a solid base upon which an “ideology of possession” can develop and prosper.\textsuperscript{14} Central to such an ideology is the conceptualisation by which the social and cultural functions of a Sanghyang Dedari performer are defined.

One key element in the acts of identification undertaken by the Sanghyang Dedari performer is the social role as conceptualised in the notion of “tapakan”, which refers to the dancers\textsuperscript{15} whilst literally meaning “support”, and also refers to inanimate

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{10} Ibid.: pp. 370-372.
\bibitem{11} Ibid.: pp. 372-375.
\bibitem{12} Ibid.: pp. 381-388.
\bibitem{14} Connor “Corpse Abuse and Trance in Bali: The Cultural Mediation of Aggression.” : p. 112.
\bibitem{15} Belo.: p. 182.
\end{thebibliography}
objects that represent a deity.\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{tapakan} is therefore conceived of as a “vessel” that acts as a “godly representation”. The conceptualisation of this role emphasises the performance of the culturally-defined identity whilst negating the individually-defined expressions of the person in much the same way that the function of the dramatic “actor” is conceptualised.

The conceptualisation of the possession-trance state itself is often encapsulated in the notions of “\textit{kerawuhan}”, which literally means “the coming” or “the entering” of a spirit or deity\textsuperscript{17} and the notion of “\textit{nadi}”, from “\textit{dadi}” which means “to become”, referring to the state of being in trance. In addition, possession-trance is shaped by the notion of “\textit{engsap}”, which means “to forget”\textsuperscript{18} or “a state of being unaware”;\textsuperscript{19} and the notion of “\textit{inget}”, which means “to remember”\textsuperscript{20} or “acute awareness”.\textsuperscript{21} These notions suggest that the emphasis of the performer’s embodiment and enactment upon the expression of a culturally-defined identity greatly reduces, if not negates altogether, the sense of individual agency that is central to the experience of a “normal” state of consciousness as we know it.\textsuperscript{22} The sense of authority endowed upon the constructs of “divinity” that are believed to be embodied by the possessing deity serves to further and dramatically reduce the performer’s sense of individual agency as the weight of cultural

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{The moment of “\textit{kerawuhan}” of the Sanghyang Dedari performer is seen to mark the beginning of the possession-trance state. \textit{Photo: Gregory Bateson and Robert S. Petersen}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{20} Joseph.
\textsuperscript{21} Lendra.: p. 140.
\textsuperscript{22} Belo.: p. 251.
expectations and performance training exert effect. The sense of being “moved” – referred to by Belo as the “puppet complex”\(^2\) – parallels the sense of “ideo-dynamicism” that has been noted in hypnosis research.\(^3\) These acts of identification reflect particular theories of “self”, as well as a particular cosmology and ideology as theories of environment. The trance state is the embodiment and enactment of these theories, the performance of _Sanghyang Dedari_ is the expression of these particular discourses.

A key problem encountered by this study is that the Balinese theory of self must be regarded through the psychological and anthropological theories of self, resulting in a layering of acts of identification that must be negotiated. This problem is most apparent in the question of susceptibility to trance states – the notion that the state of consciousness required for the performance of trance and the hypnotic process in general is reliant upon the suspension or the under-development of critical faculty. However, rather than use “susceptibility” as a measure of trance capacity, it is more useful to consider the ability to imagine and to believe a mythical world. These abilities will certainly be seen as necessary in order to enact and to embody the trance performances that are the focus of this study.

The processes by which these abilities are developed can be further understood by looking at parallel processes relevant to hypnosis research. The role of hypnotic processes in Balinese trance performance has long been recognised. For example, Belo employs the understandings of such hypnosis practitioners as Milton Erickson to shed light on Balinese trance practice.\(^4\) Studies of hypnosis have found that children make excellent hypnotic subjects,\(^5\) and that the levels of hypnotisability and suggestibility are highest between the age of 7 and 14 years.\(^6\) Thus the selection of pre-adolescent girls as performers in _Sanghyang Dedari_ indicates an appreciation, on the part of the facilitators of the ceremonies, for the tendency to accept instructions without question as an essential quality.

Hypnotic processes are observable in this practice by analysing the attentional, associational, and dissociational strategies employed in the performance of the trance

\(^2\) De Zoete and Spies.: p. 71.; Belo.: pp. 11-13.; Suryani and Jensen.: p. 111.
\(^3\) Gilligan: pp. 18-19, 47.
\(^4\) Belo.: pp. 4-5.
state in *Sanghyang Dedari*. The trance state is a process of attentional absorption,\(^{28}\) the capacity for which is a key factor in the selection of the *Sanghyang Dedari* performer.\(^{29}\)

In an initiation ceremony documented by O’Neill in 1974 at the village of Cemenggoan in the Gianyar region, the *Sanghyang Dedari* performer is selected by putting all candidates through the trance induction process employed in the ceremonies. Only the candidates that exhibited signs of intense attentional absorption in the images invoked by a series of songs, prayers, and incense smoke are selected for further training. These are the candidates that are deemed to exhibit signs of a “state of possession”, the capacity to engage in the experiential template provided by the induction ceremony, as suggested by the imagery and sensory stimulation provided by the elements of this ceremony.\(^{30}\) This capacity is further developed in training, over the following two weeks the performers become familiarised with this part of the ceremony which is performed every night in the *pura dalem* – the death temple of the village. The performers are dressed in the brass bangles and white clothing that they wear for the entire performance season, designating them in the role a *Sanghyang Dedari* performer – a *tapakan*.

Another key element for selection as a *Sanghyang Dedari* performer is that the candidate fits the physical requirements of the role – that they are a pre-pubescent girl between the ages of nine and thirteen years; that they have not begun to menstruate; and that they meet a certain standard of “beauty” deemed necessary to become a representation of a celestial nymph.

In awe of the perceived power of the performance, it is very easy to attribute to the performers the special qualities deemed expressive of the nature of divine deities. Belo noted that in performance, the *tapakan* are “deferred to as gods, who were expected to be somewhat overbearing in their demands and whom it was wise to placate and to please”.\(^{31}\) However, from the selection process it is apparent that they are cast as performers in much the same way that dramatic roles are filled in the theatre and film that we are more familiar with – in accordance with the perceived ability and suitability to play the role.

\(^{28}\) Gilligan.: p. 46.
\(^{29}\) O’Neill.: p. 138.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.: pp. 138-139.
From O’Neill’s case study in Cemenggoan, it is apparent that the impetus to stage a Sanghyang Dedari season is dependent upon the pemangku of the pura dalem – the temple priest – and their ability to persuade village councils of its necessity in order to mobilize the funds, resources and personnel required. The process can therefore be seen as the creation of and appeal to an “exemplary centre” around which the social and cultural life of the village are reorganised and reoriented. This process serves as a form of group attentional absorption that gives rise to the mystique of the trance performance. Therefore the group’s aggregate ability to engage in this attentional absorption greatly influences the quality of the trance performance.

Figure 11: At Sanghyang Dedari performances at Ubud in 2001, for locals and tourists, the performers walk on hot coals as part of the demonstrations of a supernatural possession-trance state.  
Photo: Tatian Greenleaf

This dynamic is effectively reflected in the problems of the “commercial” as opposed to the “authentic” trance performances – the degree of “sacredness” of the ceremony – as well as the problems of the “depth” of trance achieved in performance. These difficulties are most apparent in the sensitivities encountered when performances are reconstructed and recontextualised for the purposes of the tourism market and television documentation. This was precisely the case when Indonesian television station RCTI withdrew an international broadcast featuring a Sanghyang
Dedari performance in 1999, reportedly for fear of offending the Balinese community by framing the “sacred” performance as “entertainment”. Thus, in some regions and villages Sanghyang Dedari performances are staged only for local village audiences and are not open to tourists – these performances are considered to be the most “genuine” ones where performers enter into “real” as opposed to “acted” trance.

Studies of trance channeling and Balinese trance performance that have employed electroencephalographic (EEG) measurements of subjects before, during and after trance states indicate highly significant changes in alpha, beta, and theta brainwave activities related to these states of consciousness. Alpha activity is associated with relaxed wakefulness, routine reactions, creative thought, wandering attention, and free association. Beta activity is associated with fear, rage, anxiety, alert attentiveness, selective attention, concentration, and anticipation. Theta activity is associated with drowsiness, partial awareness, imagery, reverie, and dream-like states.

The Balinese trance EEG study published in the journal Clinical Neurophysiology was also able to indicate differences in brainwave activities between a trance state and trance-like behaviour or an “acted” trance. These studies suggest that there are indeed detectable differences between the subjective experiences of trance states, simulated trance states and “normal” states. Thus the problems of “authenticity” and “depth” of trance states appear to have a firm basis for valuation as physiological phenomena.

These problems can also be regarded from the perspective of the degrees of engagement produced by the performers and audiences of the trance performance. This relates to the levels of investment and enculturation – the cultural proficiency – of the respective participants. In other words, these problems are concerned with both the stakes and the skills involved in the performance.
Trance Channels in the United States

Traditions of trance possession as a consultative practice employing a client and healer or guide or oracle relationship has a long history in the Asia Pacific region. From diagnoses of illnesses and cures to political decision-making, these practices bestowed economic benefits and community-recognised status upon the practitioners, and provided the community with appeals to authority and authenticity that were seen as transcendent of individual human agency – as voices of the gods and ancestral spirits, the divine and the supernatural. Performers of Sanghyang Dedari and trance channeling represent the manifestations of these types of traditions.

In the United States, the trance channels of the New Age are preceded by the traditions and practices of the Spiritualist mediums from the late 19th to the mid 20th centuries, from such proponents as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), Edgar Cayce (1877-1943), Alice Anne Bailey (1880-1949), and Jane Roberts (1929-1984). By the time that board-games publisher Parker Brothers began marketing the Ouija Board in the late 19th century, the belief that “disembodied” entities can communicate to those who wished to do so had already reached wide acceptance and popularity. Upon this ground, Spiritualists in the United States became absorbed in the performances of spirit mediums and spirit guides.

Blavatsky’s founding of and work with the Theosophical Society in 1875 had a highly significant influence upon the practice of mediumship, introducing the notion that the source of the most “enlightened” messages were the “Masters of the Great White Brotherhood” whose intent was to assist humanity in its evolution, reflecting the Buddhist notion of the “boddhisatva” – enlightened beings who delay liberation from material existence in order to help humanity. This theme was developed by other practitioners such as Guy Warren Ballard (1878-1939) and Edna Anne Wheeler Ballard (1886-1971) of the “I Am” Religious Activity, as well as Mark Prophet (1918-1973) and Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939) of the Church Universal and Triumphant who all attributed the source of their communicated messages to “Ascended Masters”.

References:
communications represented forms of higher authority from a non-physical dimension of reality. By the 1930s, the spirit guides were referring to their spirit mediums as “channels”, then in the 1950s, “UFO contactee” groups would use the term “channeling” to describe their communications with extraterrestrial voyagers, thus the term came into its current use.\(^4\) In *Perspectives on the New Age*, Gordon Melton described the practice of channeling as the single most influential element in popularising and defining New Age belief systems.\(^4\)

In the 1960s, the work of Jane Roberts brought a new level of popularity to the practice and performance of channeling. Roberts is most known for having channeled an entity known as Seth, producing three major books – *The Seth Material* (1970), *Seth Speaks* (1972), and *The Nature of Personal Reality* (1974). This body of literature posited a set of notions “on consciousness, reality, and human development”\(^4\) that have been repeated and developed – as the “basis of the cosmology and worldview”\(^4\) – by the subsequent generation of channeling practitioners that are represented by the focus of this study. Seth had become so influential and popular that other practitioners would claim to also channel Seth in the 1970s, leading followers of Roberts to claim that she had been the only one that the entity would communicate through.\(^6\) Seth is conceptualised as an “energy personality essence”,\(^7\) and this belief has allowed others to claim in turn that “no one owns an energy”.\(^8\)

A similar claim of exclusivity has been made by the other entity that is examined in this study, the entity Lazaris as channeled by Jach Pursel. Lazaris was first channeled by Pursel in 1974, and has become one of the most popular and successful entities in the international Human Potential Movement. Pursel went from being a regional insurance supervisor in Florida\(^9\) to become a highly influential figure the New Age personal development industry by conducting consultations, workshops and seminars, publishing books – *The Sacred Journey: You and Your Higher Self* (1987), *Lazaris Interviews* (1988), and *The Sirius Connection* (1996) among others – audio and


\(^{43}\) Melton.: pp. 21-22.

\(^{44}\) Hastings.: p. 74.


\(^{46}\) Brown.: 157-158.


\(^{48}\) Brown.: p. 157.

video recordings of channeling sessions, New Age music recordings, calendars and talismans.\textsuperscript{50}

![Promotional material for marketed publications and products of channeled entities Seth and Lazaris. Sources: Seth Center and Concept Synergy](image)

Figure 12: Promotional material for marketed publications and products of channeled entities Seth and Lazaris. Sources: Seth Center and Concept Synergy

Whereas Sanghyang Dedari enables a community to access heavenly nymphs, channeling in the Human Potential Movement enables various communities to access “highly evolved spiritual beings” or “extraterrestrial beings”.\textsuperscript{51} Some schools of channeling subscribe to the notion that the entity being channeled invariably originates from beyond the individual channel’s own consciousness, as the Spiritualist and mediumist traditions believed before them. As “non-physical” or “spirit” beings, the entities are also regarded in relation to a hierarchy of “levels of development” or evolution. The terms used to describe such entities reflect the cosmology of the individual or group involved – ranging from gods, deities, angels, spiritual figures, advanced masters, extraterrestrials, disincarnate teachers, energies, forces, nature, as well as spirits of deceased humans.\textsuperscript{52}

This reflects survey findings on the extent of popular belief in angels and afterlife. For example, 69% of North Americans believed in the existence of angels according to a 1993\textit{ Time} magazine feature, and 55% of respondents agreed with the

\textsuperscript{50} Concept Synergy products catalogue (2001)


\textsuperscript{52} Hastings.: pp. 158-159.
description of angels as “higher spiritual beings created by God with special powers to act as his agents on earth”.53 Other studies report comparable findings – a 2001 Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey found that 77% of North Americans believed angels exist,54 and a 1993 Gallup poll reported that amongst teenagers the belief in angels has risen from 64% in 1978 to 76% in a 1992 survey.55 In addition, 26% of Britons believed in reincarnation according to a 1993 Gallup poll, and 44% of respondents in a San Francisco survey in 1990 believed in a “spiritual force that is alive in the universe and connects all beings”.56 Thus to a certain extent, a similarity in cosmology is evident between New Age channeling and Sanghyang Dedari performances. These dualistic interpretations of trance phenomena represent significant proportions of the practitioners and audiences of the respective practices.

Another highly significant proportion, particularly in those who identity with the Human Potential Movement, attribute the source of channeling communications as being other “parts” or “aspects” of the consciousness of the channel practitioner. This reflects the strong tendencies in New Age beliefs and practices, and North American culture in general, to attribute the locus of agency and transformation upon the individual self. A 1998 survey conducted by Scripps Howard News Service and the University of Texas to test the acceptance of New Age beliefs found that 78% of Texans questioned agreed with the statement that “we are in charge of our own lives – we can be anything we want to be”, 66% agreed that “all spiritual truth and wisdom

56 Heelas.: pp. 108-111.
comes from within us”, while 28% agreed that “it is possible to communicate with and to learn important spiritual lessons from people who have died”\(^57\)

Because the practice of Sanghyang Dedari and other Balinese trance performances favour the explanation that agency in such performances originate from sources external to the performers, as a contrast, this study of channeling focuses on the explanations that locate the agency of the performances upon aspects of the channel practitioner’s consciousness.

Where Christian myth relies upon the notion of the “original sin”, New Age myth relies upon the notions of “human potential” and “personal growth” guided by the principle of “universal love” and the concept of “evolution” as sovereign authorities.\(^58\) As a product of modernity and post-modernity, the New Age myth is an expression of the cult of the “individual”. The individual self is seen to be the locus of agency, following an era wherein acts of identification encompassed spiritual or social forces that were seen to exercise control over the individual actor. The New Age myth is a descendant of the myth of psychoanalysis with the significant influence of the work of, among others, Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Jacob Levy Moreno (1889 – 1974) in “humanistic psychology”. Therefore, New Age notions developed within a particular set of ethnopsychological assumptions. Moreno made explicit the links between theatre and therapy; while Maslow developed such notions as “higher values” and “peak experiences” as well as contributing to a theory of “self-actualization”, which in the mid 1960s became central in the foundation of the “transpersonal psychology” movement. In turn, transpersonal psychology became an important factor in the development of the notion of the “mystical” experience as a way of actualising greater “human potential”.\(^59\) The practice of channeling in the Human Potential Movement evidently employ and adapt the themes and vocabulary of the New Age and psychoanalysis through its own ritual language, with particular concern for the orientations of the cult of the individual self. Thus both Seth and Lazaris, two of the most successful and influential entities of New Age channeling, speak of the “inner”\(^60\) or “higher”\(^61\) self whilst relying upon notions of “unconscious” and “subconscious” agency for attribution. These notions are further coloured by notions of dimensionality through which the account of


the “other” is invoked. Upon this sense of “otherness”, the authority of the entity is claimed.

The “inner” or “higher” self is posited as the exemplary centre, and the entity presents itself as speaking for it – thus the entity is identified with the “inner” or “higher” self of its audience. Upon this is built the necessary rapport required for the performance of channeling to be effective on its audiences. The entity is an embodiment of a sense of authority that is – one way or another – considered to be “supernatural” or “paranormal”. When the channeled entity appears to act in the interest of the individual performer beyond a particular point, the credibility of the entity is reduced or compromised in the eyes of its audience. The entity must be seen to be “self-less” – and the performer as absolutely altruistic – in order to be valid and authentic. The aura of truth and purity that this produces is the basis of the power and beauty – the communicative and performative appeal – of the channeling performance.

Channels in the Human Potential Movement, particularly Seth and Lazaris are enactments and embodiments of a culture and tradition of a modern and post-modern society in the United States. They are embodied ideology that identify with particular theories of self and nature that frame action and perception as individually determined and experienced. This ideology is described as a form of “Self-spirituality”. Religious scholar Paul Heelas suggests that the “assumptions of Self-spirituality” are fundamental to the New Age myth, and that a basic element of those assumptions is the notion that “everyone is god”. A central theme in the discourses of Seth and Lazaris is the idea that “you can create” or “form your own reality” – “You are a creator translating your expectations into physical form”. This theme is expressive of the “cardinal New Age” value of “freedom” and aspires to a highly “utopian” ideal. As the primary medium of such discourses in these instances is the spoken word which is often mediated as the written word, such practices develop a distinct form of ritual language that serve as “verbal manifestations of the sacred” within an ideology of individualistic “empowerment”. This is reflected in the style of delivery of the discourses, channeled material invariably addresses the reader or listener directly and

62 Heelas.: p. 2.
63 Roberts.: p. xxi.
64 Pursel.: p. 1.
66 Csordas.: p. 22.
personally in the second person – as “you” – with the tone of benign authority.\textsuperscript{67} Both Seth and Lazaris thus perform the role of “empowerer” for their audiences by the use of their ritual language. The “epistemological individualism” upon which the “empowerment” is effected in this context is fuelled by the aspiration for “prosperity” and “abundance”.\textsuperscript{68}

The 2001 Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University survey on belief in angels found that in the demographic breakdown of the respondents, the belief rate was highest in those in the lowest age group category (18 to 24 years – 83%), the lowest household income category (below $25,000 – 83%) and sole parents (82%).\textsuperscript{69} These figures suggest a correlation between a sense of disenfranchisement and a tendency to seek solutions and reassurances in the religious or supernatural realm. A 1998 survey on the purchasing patterns of New Age materials (books, magazines, recordings, and so forth) found that such consumption was significantly higher amongst “the less educated; the disabled; the unemployed or laid off; persons age 18 to 29; and the never married”.\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure14.png}
\caption{Jach Pursel channeling Lazaris. Behind him, on the right, are diagrams on a blackboard that Lazaris draws with eyes closed, seen as evidence of a supernatural process at work. Source: Concept Synergy}
\end{figure}

Seth and Lazaris both demonstrate the extent to which channeling became a successful business enterprise. Their success further enhances the perceived validity and efficacy of “prosperity consciousness” – thus New Age industries themselves

\textsuperscript{68} Heelas.: pp. 30-36.
\textsuperscript{69} Skeptic.
prosper. The books, recordings, seminars and workshops offered by Seth and Lazaris create prosperity out of an international marketplace of New Age products and techniques worth billions of dollars.\textsuperscript{71} The appeal to prosperity, combined with the appeal to the “real self”, are fundamental elements of the ideology of individualism that underlies New Age practices and beliefs.

Out of this context, channeling in the Human Potential Movement occurs as acts of identification. Seth identifies as an “energy personality essence” while Lazaris identifies as a “spark of consciousness”.\textsuperscript{72} They are seen to express themselves through their particular channels following an induction process that is seen to be the point upon which the channel “steps aside” or “vacates the seat” in order to allow the entity to be made manifest. In contrast to the ideology of possession, which holds that the medium is “taken over” by the spirit, the channel practitioner is seen to “blend” their “energy” with that of the entity.\textsuperscript{73} Thus the entity is seen to utilise the psychological and physical structures of the channel to communicate and reveal itself. The notion of “blending” reflects the utopian bias of the New Age ideology of individualism, presenting the entity as a benign force which “cooperates” with the channel in order to assist and enlighten humanity.

The relationship between the entity and the channel, and thus the audience, is constructed as being based upon this rapport. The induction of the trance state of the channel is seen to result from a process of self-hypnosis. The rapport and process frames the performance of channeling as a consultative event that enables the channel, client and audience to access an authority source that is considered “supernatural” or more “highly evolved” than “ordinary” humans. The authority source is thus engaged in an interaction that is played out in a cultural framework of an “intellectual or philosophical conversational mode”.\textsuperscript{74} The type of interaction engaged in can be described in terms of what anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) referred to as a “regulated improvisation”\textsuperscript{75} that is framed by the personal and social context as well as by the vocabulary of the particular ritual language. Thus the entities Seth and

\textsuperscript{70} Mears and Ellison.: p. 308.
\textsuperscript{71} Brown.: p. 7.; Heelas.: p. 114.
\textsuperscript{73} Hughes.: p. 167.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.: p. 164.
Lazaris present themselves as “helpers” – indeed “empowerers” – and as “consummate friends”.76

Given the social and cultural contexts of New Age channeling, the individual induction processes of the performer are analysed to consider the ways in which the myths involved are further constructed and focused as the embodiment and enactment of a channeled entity. An induction process that Pursel reports as using in his invocation of the trance state for channeling Lazaris demonstrates this process:

Over time, Pursel has learned to efficiently enter the particular type of unconscious state that has always led to “Lazaris” appearing. He closes his eyes, takes a few deep breaths, relaxes, and imagines himself descending a ten rung ladder, rung by rung, counting backward. Reaching the bottom, he begins a second round of imagining ten slow motion backward circling somersaults. Usually by around the sixth of these, all becomes dark. It seems like only a moment later, he says, when he opens his eyes and finds himself back in the room, the entire intervening session lost to him.77

In this induction, the imaginative process involved frames the “self” that Pursel normally identifies with as undergoing a “descent” – imagery related to a breathing relaxation activity. The sense of self then undergoes a series of disorientating imaginative manoeuvres – backward somersaults – which brings about the “step aside” state that marks that shift in identification resulting in the channeling of Lazaris. Pursel also reports an absence of memory recall of the Lazaris state, which is seen to be an indication of a “deep” trance state.

The appeal of Lazaris is based on the rapport established on the basis of acts of identification that “blend” the entity with the “higher self” of the audience. Lazaris implicitly identifies with and as that “higher self”. The rapport is built and established upon the perceived relationship with a benign and self-less being that practices “unconditional love” that reaches out and envelops the client or the audience.

A tape entitled The Power and Beauty of Self Acceptance (from the Personal Growth Tapes series) demonstrates a typical pattern of the performance mode in action. In an introductory section of about 650 words, the most frequently occurring words are “you” or “your” (68) followed by the word “we” (39) and “love” (25). Variations of the phrase “we love you” occur 16 times, “you” and “love” occur together 23 times.

76 Pursel Lazaris Explains Lazaris.
77 Klimo.: p. 48 (interviewing Pursel, 28 January 1987).
The phrase “your higher self” occurs 4 times, each occurring next to or within a few words of “we love you” or a variation thereof.

### The Power and Beauty of Self-Acceptance

All right, all right ... Well, well ... yes. It is a pleasure; it is a joy. We say it so many times, and yet each time we truly mean it, as though we have said it for the very first time. It is a pleasure. It is a joy. And it always will be.

It is also fun. Yes. Yes, it is also fun to connect with you whenever that occurs. It is so much fun now to connect with you once again, to be with you and to work with you.

And we love you. As often as you have heard us talk of the pleasure, joy, and fun, it is still harder to hear us talk of loving you. Some feel embarrassed when we say that; some get nervous assuming surely we do not mean them. Others dismiss that love as something we have for all consciousness and for all humankind. Truly, we do love all consciousness and all humankind, and we love you. We love you.

As you read these words right now, you may be feeling a bit embarrassed, nervous, or dismissive when you read that we love you. Nonetheless, we do love you. And you are loved ... your Higher Self loves you.

When we hear us or others speak of that love for you, too often you let the words pass on by. You let them slip right on by without letting them touch you at all — not because you are being rude or anything like that at all ... no. Often it is because you lack self-acceptance, or the self-acceptance that you do have is lanky or lacks luster.

So we want you to stop for a moment. We want you to stop, and we want you to let it in: We love you, and your Higher Self loves you. That’s right. Even now as you are sitting there, reading these words, we mean you. So stop. Breathe deeply. Let it in. You are loved. Accept that: You are loved.

Our commitment to you is forever, forever and a day. Likewise is the commitment of your Higher Self. No matter what you do, they and we will be there. However fast you grow, however many changes you make, they and we will be there. We are walking with you as we love you. We are pointing things out as we walk and love together. We are working to help you understand in a different and deeper, in a more profound and more helpful, way.

They and we are always right beside you, perhaps half a step ahead. No matter how slowly you grow or how often you set down your metaphysics, promising to get back to it when you have more time, and feeling guilty when that time seems to grow and extend, it does not matter. No matter what you do, we love you ... your Higher Self loves you.

No matter what you do, we will both be there, to laugh with you and even to cry with you — to celebrate, certainly so, and to be silent with you. And if you choose to shut us out, well, we will respect that decision as well, because we love you.

Yes, we love you that much, and we love you more. We will respect you, and it will seem as though we are no longer there. But, in fact, we are. And when you reach, we will be there to touch. We love you. As consciousness, of course. As humanity — it goes without saying — yes.

But we also love you. And our commitment is to you, and it is forever ... forever and a day. As long as there is light, and the light is forever, we shall love you. We love you.

Let it in. Let it in. Let the words register. Do not let them pass by. Let them touch you.

---

**Table 8: An adapted transcript of an audiotape of a Lazaris performance.**

*Source: Concept Synergy, www.lazaris.com/publibrary/pubaccept.cfm*

From this, it is evident that the focus of the passage is towards the establishment of a rapport between the speaker and the listener, on the basis of a particular idea of “love”. Furthermore, the phrase “let it in” occurs 4 times, each adjacent to “we love you” variations, and once adjacent to a “breathe deeply” suggestion. These sets of suggestions serve to facilitate a reduction of resistance in the listener, by identifying the speaker – the entity – with a notion of the “higher self” of the listener, and a notion of “unconditional love” – the self-less love of the “we”. In doing so, the basis for accepting Lazaris as a “friend” is set. More than just a friend but also an authority, Lazaris is thus...
also regarded as a voice of the “higher self”. This is the basis upon which the service of
the entity is provided. What is seen to be provided is the insight of a “supernatural” or
“highly evolved” being to help the client or audience understand how they can “create a
reality” more to their “liking”.

Once more, it becomes important to reflect on the notion of “pretense” in the
context of this study. The notion does not present itself as a particularly useful
instrument for the analysis of a complex phenomenon such as those investigated in
this chapter. The notion of pretense holds inherent value judgements in relation to
notions of “truth” and “authenticity” that seem to serve only to obscure the focus of this
study. The analogy of an actor performing Hamlet is perhaps more useful; the actor is
not expected to pretend to be Hamlet, rather the cultural framework enables the
enactment and embodiment of a script and role to be both perceived and experienced
as the actor “being” or “becoming” Hamlet. This is the perspective employed in
analysing Sanghyang Dedari and channeling in the Human Potential Movement. The
performers qualitatively believe in the transformation performed, and invite an audience
to participate in the employment of a culturally sanctioned belief system. Therefore, in
this study the concern is related to the experiences of “truth” and “authenticity” rather
than their expressions as ultimate and objective values.

In channeling, the entity is seen to blend with the channel – to speak through the
channel for whom the task is to “step aside” or to “vacate the seat”. The process by
which the channel does this is effectively a process of “dis-identification” with the
normal “everyday” personality of the channel practitioner, followed by an act of
identification with and as the channeled entity – in other words, an “alignment” with the
“energy” of the entity. The liminal process by which this is achieved is both imagistic
and imaginative. In the liminal state of consciousness of the induction process, the
performer visualises or sensorially experiences the “step aside” and the form or
“energy” of the entity as the body “blends” or “aligns” with it. Channels generally report
strong visual imagery of the entity that speaks through them. In turn, entities speak of
“dimensions” or “levels” of reality, thus invoking a sense of “other-ness” upon which
claims of objectivity and authority are based. The imaginative constructs that make this
experience possible for both performer and their audience are thus culturally derived
and determined, the expectations that lead to such experiences are only possible with

78 Pursel Lazaris Explains Lazaris.

Trance Forms 175 Ronaldo Morelos 2004
substantial understandings of the above terms and concepts – thus such expectations serve as experiential templates. This represents elements of preparation or training that facilitate such experiences and hypnotic processes in general.\textsuperscript{80}

The channeling state is indicated by a number of characteristics that are regarded as “signatures” of the entity, by gestures and greetings that mark the end of the induction phase, and by words and actions that mark the beginning of the exit phase. The entity Lazaris is seen to emerge from Pursel’s induction process to speak in a somewhat “Chaucerian English” accent with eyes that remain closed throughout the channeling session. The first words spoken in the channeling state are signature phrases that indicate the presence of a channeled entity. Thus Lazaris generally begins with the following phrase or variations thereof:

All right. All right. Well. Well. Yes. It is a pleasure to work with you...

Seth generally begins with “Now… good evening” or simply “Now…” and proceeds to speak through Roberts with eyes at times open or half-closed or closed, sometimes smoking a cigarette or drinking beer in the trance channeling state.\textsuperscript{81}

Lazaris finishes a channeling session with the words “With love and peace” before drifting into a state of stillness from which Pursel is seen to emerge and open his eyes. Seth generally finishes a session with “Good evening” or “You may take a break” before also going into stillness from which Roberts emerges.

In between inductions and exits, the entity speaks on themes and with a vocabulary that are recognised as part of the entity’s repertoire. Central to both Seth and Lazaris is the theme encapsulated by the phrase “you create your own reality”. This theme is shared by a great majority of advocates, practitioners, and channeled entities that identify with the Human Potential Movement. Central to this theme is the implicit differentiation between desires and beliefs. This differentiation is the basis of the appeal of the notion of “human potential”. It is understood that to be conscious of one’s beliefs and desires offers the possibility of being able to distinguish between them, and thus exercise the “freedom of choice” that is seen to be the birthright of the human being.

\textsuperscript{79} Pursel \textit{The Sacred Journey}; Suryani.; pp. 110-111.
\textsuperscript{80} Hartland and Tinkler.; pp. 3-17, 374-378.
\textsuperscript{81} Roberts.; pp. xvii, 19, 26.
The belief in freedom of choice is in turn grounded in the belief in the ultimacy of individual agency – in the cult of individualism. Thus by employing notions such as the “unconscious”, “subconscious”, “higher” or “inner” self, this belief system locates the centre of attribution and motivation – the “source” – within the framework of the “individual”. This is the core of the ideology embodied in the channeling practices of the Human Potential Movement. This is also one area of clear contrast between Sanghyang Dedari performance, Spiritualist mediumship, and New Age channeling. This contrast is based on a set of cultural assumptions, necessary for the invocation of the respective states of consciousness and their performances. This contrast represents the fundamental variations in the theories of self and nature – the performative subjectivity and environment – that are respectively employed. In each case, the states of consciousness are ultimately achieved by particular acts of identification and sustained focused embodiment and enactment that engages specific cultural and social information.

The power of Sanghyang Dedari and channeling performances lie in their capacity to invoke in the performative moment a dissociation from normative frameworks of experience and perception, thus creating a liminal or aspirational space within which particular suggestions for transformation are conveyed. The efficacy of these types of performances are measured by their perceived capacity to induce a transformative state – to effect desired changes in the individual or group, depending upon its focus. For example in channeling, as a practice expressive of the cult of individualism, the creation of a liminal or aspirational space frames experience and existence within the sets of problems, opportunities or contradictions that concern the performer or observer as an individual agent within a particular situational context.

In The Nature of Personal Reality, Roberts repeatedly makes comments on the process by which material for the book was developed, separate to the discourses delivered by Seth in her trance state. On several occasions, she noted that she became aware of “doing book work” in her sleep or in a state of relaxation. These comments indicate that the creative process by which the content of the material that comes to be known as the words of Seth involves the mental processes of the personality that is identified as Jane Roberts. The material, though apparently

---

dissociated from the personality of Roberts is evidently produced through a process that intrinsically involves Roberts’ own sets of experiences and beliefs. However, upon delivery the material is repeatedly and consistently attributed to an entity that is identified as Seth. Thus the inherent contradiction in the question of the “source” of the Seth material is implicitly presented. The concepts of “entity” and “blending” by which channel practitioners themselves explain the creative process involved, enable the attribution and production of material to be dissociated and delimited from the channel’s own biographical self as its performer. These concepts provide the cultural framework within which the performance of channeling is constructed and performed.

The attribution of the material to a “higher” authority reflects the nature of the material itself. Imbued with this sense of authority, the power of the material is heightened to the level of truth claims, offering a perspective upon the very nature of the individual self and its environment. The material becomes more than poetry or prose, it becomes ontological explanations. By privileging the individually identified self over the group identity, the material locates itself within a framework that invites response from its audience as individuals, effectively privileging what is seen as “interior” over “exterior” experience. The embodied ideology is firmly grounded in the cult of the individual.

Exorcism and Performance

Both Sanghyang Dedari and New Age channeling appear to function as “exorcistic” processes. Sanghyang Dedari sets out to exorcise demons and practitioners of “evil magic”. New Age channeling sets out to exorcise the individual’s sense of “powerlessness”. In a sense, both practices address the issue of powerlessness or health within their particular cultural contexts and belief systems. Each practice relies on the perception that it is meeting a perceived need. The “need” itself is reconstructed within the framework of the respective practice which is presented as the “solution”. Each practice employs a particular patterning and focus – particular templates for experience – by which it claims authenticity and authority. In his study of Catholic Charismatic healing practices and symbols, Csordas saw the posited relationship of the individual to divinity as “a template for orientation in the world”, and the technique of religious healing as “a template for self processes” – these being

---

83 Ibid.: pp. xxiii, 33, 37, 43, 55, 57, 83.
central elements in “the cultural constitution of a sacred self”. These templates suggest ways in which the self and the environment are experienced – thus in their own ways they define and reinforce their respective realities. Thus by presenting particular notions of “health” or “empowerment” along with particular strategies and actions designed for their achievement, these practices serve to “re-frame” or transform a particular image of experience towards a culturally constituted image of a divine or sacred way of being for the individual or group. In this manner, these practices make their claims for efficacy. The processes by which efficacy and transformation are invoked are commonly applied in the practice of hypnosis. A key component of the various forms of induction utilised in these examples is the function of rhythm and repetition. Theories of hypnosis invariably recognise the principle that suggestions “gain strength through repetition”. However, a stylised use of repetition is required in order for the technique to not become aesthetically offensive.

For example, in Sanghyang Dedari an important element in the induction is the repetition and rhythm changes employed in the Gending no. 1 set. The words of the song suggest the image of smoke rising up to the heavens to provide the pathway by which the celestial nymphs descend to earth, and the source of the smoke are the incense braziers over which the performers kneel awaiting the heavenly beings. The words of the song are repeated in an accelerating rhythm, intensifying the focus on the imagery and the sense of “arrival” and “becoming”. The performers in turn enlarge the swaying movements that accompany the song until a moment of physical collapse – the act of falling backwards is a popular technique of hypnosis induction for children – that marks the embodiment of the spirits. In similar fashion, both Seth and Lazaris use repetition and rhythmical use of key phrases such as “we love you” or “you create your own reality” to establish and reinforce the rapport upon which the power of the myths employed are communicated and given value. Thus the repetitions and rhythms influence the audience of the performance themselves, as a form and a type of a mutual hypnotic contract.

The practices and theories of hypnosis are used in this study, not as an attempt to scientifically justify the trance performances investigated – hypnosis is not regarded

---

84 Csordas: pp. 4, 18.
85 Hartland: p. 34.
88 For example – see O’Neill: p. 174.
as a science. Rather the comparisons are intended as a form of comparative analysis of two related art forms. For example, the act of falling backwards in Sanghyang Dedari induction demonstrates the employment of a corporeal metaphor that has been found across contexts – in this practice, in hypnosis theory and practice, as well as in conventional actor training – to have highly significant efficacy in creating a somewhat dissociative state. The act of falling backwards can perhaps create a disorientation or “neutral space” out of which the performer can act with the motivation and identification that is appropriate for the performance. Thus it appears that the induction state of “stillness” created by channel performers serves a similar function.

Thus in the practices investigated in this chapter, it is evident that hypnotic processes are central to the induction of the particular states of performance that are required in each of these instances. However, it is also important to regard these hypnotic processes in the context of the social and cultural environments in which they function. All the practices investigated respond to particular social conditions, they are presented as solutions to perceived needs or situations of crisis, to some form of affliction. The role that each respective practice plays in cultivating or manufacturing the perceptions of the need or crisis – the demand for the products or services offered – must also be considered. It cannot be ignored that such practices are also performed in the context of economic processes, and the extent to which such processes shape and determine the practices and their perceived effects must certainly be considered a significant aspect of their social and cultural contexts.

In each instance, a particular understanding of the notion of “trance”, or the state of consciousness performed, is applied. These understandings are most important in the level and type of valuation that they endow such practices with. These valuations are to do with the perceptions of authority and credibility that such performances are able to invoke. Therefore, by regarding the practices examined as appeals for empowerment, it is evident that such performances serve a kind of therapeutic purpose – in the sense that Csordas described religious healing on the basis of a “psychotherapy analogy”.

This therapeutic effect operates as aesthetic projections that elicit and manipulate particular belief systems in both performers and audiences. Such trance performance states appear to derive much of their power from the sense of transformation that is invoked.

A Message from Lazaris from Tuesday September 11, 2001

Dear Ones,

We invite you to join us in a journey of healing; we invite you to join us at this time of immeasurable tragedy and pain. There are those who will rush to make sense of this insanity. In time you will search to find the meaning and then craft the significance for yourself of what happened today.

But now it is a time to act. It is a time to heal. There are thousands of people – unnamed people who will most likely remain anonymous to you – who need your love, your compassion, and your magic. There is a nation that needs your strength and resolve – that needs your substance and light – to bolster and restore its soul and spirit. There is a world that waits for those such as you to stand up, step forth, and lift your voices of love and healing. It is a time to act. It is a time to lead.

Terrorism threatens various forms of insanity as it attempts to shake and shatter the very foundations of growth. It tries to steal and crush your dreams and hopes just for the sake of destruction. Its goal is to shackle your truer self; to rob all humans of their gracious and tenacious capacity to love and to care.

Terrorists play upon the fears of the possible, the future, and the unknown as they lurk in their own brand of mystery and cover in the “between energies” of the dark and the light. They emerge and then retreat into their own prisons and poisons and into their own manipulations and addictions as they conjure a field of terror trying to force you and others back into similar constricting harbors from fear and pain.

Terrorists, with their war of terrorism, came today. Their ultimate success or failure is not in their hands; it is in your hands now. Many innocent people are dead. More are in shock, riddled with the pain and horror of this day. A nation and a world are in shock. The grief and grieving has just begun. Do the terrorists with their terror win?

With your love, compassion, and magic, with your strength and resolve, and with your substance and light, you can choose: No, the terrorists do not win.

With your healing, you can restore the sanity and stabilize the foundation of growth. You can restore the dreams and hopes in you and in all whom you touch. You can participate in renewing the soul and spirit of a nation and its people. You can stand up and step forth. This is the dawning of your day. You can lift your one voice – a heroic and magical voice – and be heard.

Yes, you can. Oh, dear one, you are part of the equation. You matter. And those such as the terrorists in your world did not count on those such as you, the mapmaking magicians and dreamer/dream weavers of a new world.

We invite you to come with us upon a journey of healing. Come with your Higher Self and those of your Unseen Friends.

1. The journey begins with feeling the full range of your emotions. Feel your fear and pain; feel your anger and hate; feel the tears of your weeping. Feel them fully and intensely. Then release that energy to your Higher Self. Release that energy to your Soul. Release the fullness and intensity to God/Goddess/All That Is.

2. Allow these mystical alchemists to transmute and transform your emotions from their current formation into the formation of greater love. Allow God/Goddess/All That Is to lift you, transcendent, into the embrace of Their Love and into the heart of your partnership together.

3. Then step forth and stand tall: as a beacon and lantern of that Divine Love and Light. Step forth with your individual images of people, of a nation, and then of the world mending and healing. Step forth with your collective images of a world becoming one – becoming One.

4. Now let us all gather in the solitude of the night. We will build a bonfire – a good fire – together. The branches and logs fueling this mysterious and mystical fire will be your healing images born of love and light. The fire will burn luminous and bright in the magic of the night.

If you choose to participate in this healing journey, work with us each night. Any time after twilight and before the dawn . . . your Higher Self and Soul know when the time will be right.

Dear one, you are not alone . . . never again will you be alone. We are here for you, we love you. Your Unseen Friends are about, and magic is afoot.

And they come . . . the Dreamers, the Ancients, and the Shining Ones. You are the magicians of this current and coming time. Even in this tragic time, this is the dawning of your day.

Thank you for accepting our invitation to act.

With love . . . with love and peace,

Lazaris

(Source: Concept Synergy, www.lazaris.com/publibrary/lazarismessage.cfm)

The sense of transformation that is created and communicated is a central element of this type of therapeutic function. The transformation perceived is thus
potentially a transformation experienced by the individual performer and by the group for which it is performed. One example of this therapeutic and transformative intent of invoked authority is found in the following message issued as a response to a crisis, that Lazaris offered to his audience after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001.

This response addressed the prevailing crisis with acts of identification that appear to serve the most urgent needs of its audience at that time. The language of the message adopts the rhetoric of the dominant political discourse, and strongly suggests the identification of the individual reader with the dominant social group by invoking a dramatic sense of nationhood. The message also identifies that sense of nationhood with the notion of the “Higher Self” and the aspirations for a “new world”. Thus, this message indicates the way in which the invoked authority ultimately relies upon the particularities of the social and cultural milieu from which it is derived, and the systems of valuation and validation that those particularities represent. In short, these performances serve their audiences, and strive to be valued by such audiences – they are embodied ideology. These performances are inseparable from their social and cultural contexts, that is, they cannot exist without them. As performed states of consciousness, they are contingent upon the information flow – the trains of thoughts and associations – from which they are created, and through which they are embodied and enacted by the performers.

In this chapter, two performative traditions that are conventionally recognised as employing “trance” states have been investigated in order to test the frameworks proposed in this study on practices that have been influential in shaping contemporary understandings of trance performance states. Both Sanghyang Dedari and channeling have been shown to function as appeals to authenticity and authority by positing exemplary centres – in the form of divine or supernatural sources – in response to dominant streams and social structures. The concepts of “self” that apply in each context have been considered in order to trace the acts of identification that performers undergo in each particular tradition. Thus the affective and imaginative involvement of the performer have been shown to be contingent upon the forms of identification and the cultural information employed in the performance tradition. In their respective intentions, both traditions have been shown to serve exorcistic functions in endeavouring to expel the “spirits” or “energies” that are held responsible for causing
suffering or stifling potential growth – herein lies the drama of the performance – by invoking divine or supernatural agency. Both traditions have been shown to follow forms and themes that are particular to each context, as repertoire and vocabulary that both defines and facilitates the performative practice. Whilst the theories of “self” that apply to the respective practitioners may differ in some ways, the hypnotic processes that are employed in the respective traditions have been shown to contain significant similarities. Therefore, praxis has been demonstrated to be discernible and systematic though heavily reliant upon both context and training. This study concludes that the embodiment and enactment of the performer inevitably emerges from the social and political milieu, as demonstrated by the letter from Lazaris in response to the events of the 11th of September 2001. In the following chapter, these events serve as a starting point from which to investigate a qualitatively different type of trance state, one that functions within the realm of the ‘real’ world. As a social drama that generates or intensifies a state of conflict, the elements of discourse and actions that constitute these events are analysed to develop the understanding of the ways in which trance states function on individual and group levels of experience.
PART THREE

Social Drama
8. Social Drama and the Performance of Roles in Conflict

It is a frozen moment in time, originally captured on video. The image stamp a moment in time and space – 9:03 AM EST, 11 September 2001 in New York City as United Airlines flight 175 from Boston slams into the south tower of the World Trade Center. A split second after this image, the mindset of a group-defined consciousness will have been altered. The image represents a moment of profound realisation, as most witnesses became aware that what they were seeing was not a tragic accident but a concerted attack. The most probable pilot of this plane, identified as Marwan Yousef Al-Shehhi, will soon join his friend Mohammed Atta in the paradise of the Islamic jihad warrior – or so he would like to believe. This idea is most probably a central element of his belief system, which has enabled him to carry out the act captured in this image. The performance of this act will induce a social drama that will alter the worldview of ‘reality’ held by individuals around the world. A state of war is about to be declared.

The social drama that is referred to here was set in motion by the attacks of the 11th of September 2001 – an event that has come to be known as “9/11” – and this study encompasses the periods 18 months prior to and 12 months following this event.
This section is about the mentalities and conceptualisations that drive a particular act, a particular type of performance, in this case a ‘conflictual trance’ – a state of war. It investigates the ideas, the beliefs and the components of the cult that drive these particular actions and events. It will show how these belief systems lead to such particular acts. The elements of the belief systems that are relevant to that act are analysed. The elements of conflicting belief systems will also be shown to lead to particular types of performance that result from the intersection and interaction of texts – scripts or scores – that are brought into play by the various players to be investigated.

The identification of the ‘holy warrior’ is looked at in the idea of the ‘jihad’ and the types of training and preparation employed. In these are demonstrated the transformation from the ‘normal’ in the normative personality and state, to the conflictual state – the war state. This pivot point, to be demonstrated in the following chapters, is where the role of the performer in the performance is induced. This is demonstrated through the narratives constructed of the key actors in the 9/11 event as they are revealed in North American and British news items from the first days onward, as well as the case studies of U.S. military training in the next chapter. This also demonstrates some of the workings of the unfolding social drama itself as it is mediated, revealed and recorded in cultural memory. The particular worldviews that shape and generate the social drama must also be acknowledged in this study. This is a study grounded in the discipline of Theatre and Performance Studies, thus the focus of the investigation is on the performative nature of the particular acts and the tools utilised by each of the actors in the social drama.

**War and Social Drama – the Event as Initiation and Invocation**

The purpose of this chapter is to apply the conceptual framework of performance analysis as it relates to the performance of states of consciousness to an event that occurs in actuality. The 9/11 event and its consequences have become the focus of this chapter because the power of the performative acts that triggered the state of conflict effectively illustrates the manner in which a state of consciousness could be so dramatically invoked in such a large number of people in such widely varied social and cultural contexts. The overwhelming nature of the performative acts of the 9/11 event has left many, including myself, with the feeling that this event and subsequent
situations demand to be studied and written about in this moment in time – this is part of its compelling nature. As a performative act, few have had such a dramatic effect on so many. Few events could be said to have focused and altered collective consciousness in equal terms. The definitive nature of this event is best reflected in the idea that the world was changed completely one second after the moment captured in the image above.

The intersection of cultures represented in this image and in this event allows for a discussion of issues that are of central concern to this study. One such central concern is the question of attribution of agency and motivation for action. The performance of the acts in question is attributed to a group of 19 men of Arabic and Islamic backgrounds. In targeting the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, their acts operate powerfully on both symbolic and physical levels. Their acts bring to the centre stage of world attention a conflict of ideologies and social systems that has become monumental in scale. Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to analyse the acts of the 9/11 event and its repercussions as a social drama of the kind observed and described by Victor Turner (1974). In particular, this event and its consequences are examined as a state of conflict within the social drama. Turner observed that “conflict seems to bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence”. Therefore this conflictual state is investigated in the context of the state of consciousness which brings it about, as a performance state that results from a trance form that can be described as “paranoiagenic”.

Social scientist and group analyst Elliott Jaques (1976) described organisational structures that “force social interactions into a mould calling for forms of behaviour which arouse suspicion, envy, hostile rivalry, and anxiety” as “paranoiagenic” institutions. In Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred, psychologists Jerrold Post and Robert Robins (1997) wrote about the “warfare personality” of former U.S. president Richard Nixon and the potential “paranoiagenic effect of leadership”. In their view, the warfare personality is manifested in the leader who “strives to lead a fighting bureaucracy”; “who has a great capacity for self-dramatization”, appearing to be “group-centered” while being “self-centered”; who espouses “delusions of enemies and

---

conspiracies” with actions that “approximate reality and conform to immediate political imperatives”; and who focuses “group energies on defeating a demonic enemy” in the knowledge that such “focus gives the group coherence”. The “paranoid dynamic” is seen to be “an innate human tendency”, heightened with conditions of stress which increase individual and group susceptibility to the “paranoid appeal”. This is particularly the case when nations or communities see themselves to be at war, and when they feel the necessity to identify an “enemy”. As an instinct for survival, this tendency can be a healthy attitude in some contexts, particularly where danger is present. However, the paranoid appeal can take on a momentum of its own, becoming a self-perpetuating closed system state of considerable power. This is the sense in which this study employs the notion of the “paranoiagenic trance”, a state of consciousness which is produced by or can produce a paranoid state in an individual or group.

Post and Robins also acknowledged the potential of a group, particularly under conditions of trauma, to “create” a leader that is able to invoke a paranoiagenic effect. This can occur through a process of recruitment or appointment when a group becomes “receptive only to a leader with paranoid tendencies”. This “foundation of discontent” becomes the basis of a process of “role suction”, when in conditions of trauma, stress and anxiety “the group can induce a leader to behave in a paranoid or caretaking manner”. Thus the paranoiagenic trance is invoked through a situation wherein an individual or group considers its well-being or identity to be threatened by an identifiable external force. Therefore in some cases, the paranoiagenic trance is effectively the “normal” state, particularly where the “cultural disposition” is reinforced by “a conspiracy-dominated historical record” – that is, by a paranoiagenic tradition. Such dispositions and traditions serve as the justifications for the paranoiagenic trance and the paranoid state. In order to do so, the justification must be fully satisfactory to the individual or group, and can take various forms by which to motivate action – as in spiritual, moral, political, historical, or professional justifications. In the conflictual state, the actions motivated by such justifications generally take the form of militaristic action, and at times they take the form of what sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer described in

5 Ibid.: p. 85.
6 Ibid.: p. 89.
7 Ibid.: p. 102.
8 Ibid.: p. 54.
9 Witness the 2003 reports of the role of exaggerated intelligence in the justifications for the U.S./U.K. war on Iraq. Reflected in opinion polls on Bush and Blair approval ratings.
Terror in the Mind of God as “performance violence”\textsuperscript{10}. In using that term, he had in mind the “constructed events” that are “theatrical forms of violence” – acts that employ “exaggerated violence” to create “mind-numbing, mesmerizing theater” out of the injury and death of others.

These are acts of violence that are intended to have an impact beyond the immediacy of the physical injuries and deaths resulting from such acts. The intended “secondary impact” arises from the “demonstrative nature” of the acts, as feelings of fear, revulsion and anger are elicited in those who witness such acts. By their communicative and transformative intent, they are effectively both performance events and performative acts.\textsuperscript{11} Such acts can be regarded both in terms of their symbolic messages and their strategic objectives. These acts can also be seen to be directed at two types of targets – the targets of violence and the targets of attention/demands, or its victims and its audiences.\textsuperscript{12} The symbolic messages of such acts are necessarily evident, for their ultimate purpose is to communicate messages that might be a declaration of war, or a proclamation of strength, or an appeal to the emotion of fear. The strategic objectives are not always so evident, as the impact of a message can be both to conceal and reveal the sender’s ultimate intentions. Except in cases where the targets of such acts are particular personalities or leaders selected for assassinations, the targeted victims of acts of performance violence are differentiated only by their presence at a particular location at a particular time. The random nature of target determination is part of the power of the act, conveying the message that its victims can be anyone at anytime. The targeted audiences of such acts are more subject to design, and are seen to be differentiated along various categorisations – friendly or hostile, elite or mass, extremes or moderates. The contemporary audiences of such acts are drawn by an impulse to seek security – either physically by taking steps to increase the feeling of safety, or psychologically by identifying the self and the other in the context of the social drama. This urge for security inherently involves a process of meaning-making that sets the ground for the formation of justifications for action. This process sets the grounds for self-integration, alienation, polarisation, and retaliation. This completes the cycle of the conflictual state, and becomes the basis of a paranoiacigenic trance. This is the dynamic inferred in the phrase – “a spiralling cycle of


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.: pp. 123-124.

\textsuperscript{12} Schmid, Alex Peter, A. J. Jongman, Sociaal-Wetenschappelijk Informatie- en Documentatiecentrum (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen), Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden and Centrum voor Onderzoek van Maatschappelijke
violence”. The cycle of the conflictual state is therefore a product of the intersection and interaction of differentiated and invoked cultures of violence.

This chapter investigates the 9/11 event and its consequences in the framework of the cycle of the conflictual state and, in particular, the dynamics of the paranoiagenic trance and the performance violence that is generated through it are analysed in this particular social drama. To do this it is necessary to investigate the cultures of violence that are invoked, embodied and enacted by the performers in the social drama. This and the two following chapters investigate the cultures and performances of a number of key performers in the drama. By analysing texts that can either be attributed to or appear to have influenced the respective performers in the drama, the cultural traces of the paranoiagenic trance can be observed to elaborate upon its constituency and nature. The roles and performances of three actors – Mohammed Atta, George W. Bush, and a Special Forces soldier – are the focus of this section.

Watching footage of U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training and the Al-Qaeda training camps, one is struck by the similarities. Is it only because American drill instructors may have once trained the troops of Usama bin Laden just as they trained the Northern Alliance soldiers in preparation for the ‘war on terrorism’, or is there a level of

---

commonality inherent in military training as there is in actor training? Might this level of commonality be a pointer to the ways in which a state of consciousness, deemed appropriate for a conflictual state, is induced? This question is a central concern of this study.

In the corporate media news items examined, the Al-Qaeda militants are seen as the ‘enemy', while the U.S. and Northern Alliance soldiers are seen as ‘friends'. In this way the identifications of the self and other create the liminal space, the pivot point in which the performance of the conflictual state occurs – the battle grounds of the war. The identification of the enemy is essential to the induction process of the conflictual state.

This section will not endeavour to present a comprehensive account of the operations and decisions of the actors involved. Historical and cultural influences are selectively considered in order to create a portrait of the mentality of individuals and groups whose participations have been essential to the acts performed. The political narratives followed are used to elaborate on the states of consciousness required as conditions for an effective performance.

In the context of the 9/11 event and its consequences, the focus is on the preparations and performances of the key acts in the case of Atta, and on the 100 days that followed these events in the cases of Bush and the Special Forces soldier, as well as elements of preparation that may be relevant to required states. Texts that are connected to these acts and events are analysed to highlight the belief systems that are necessary for the performance of particular acts, and that appear to constitute the respective cultures of violence. This section is particularly concerned with the series of acts of identification and justification that lead to the formation of the states of consciousness necessary for the performance acts and cultures.

**The Normal State, the Conflictual State and the Theatrical State**

The ‘normal trance’ is the normative state as defined by the dominant cultural sets of the group. The performance of the normative is contingent upon a stabilised identity set which conforms to the dominant cult adhered to by the group majority. The ‘conflictual trance’ is the state of war as defined by the dominant cults’ requirements,
practices and traditions in a mobilised and concerted effort against an identified enemy. The performance of the state of war is contingent upon the internalisation of the dominant cult's values, and the absolute rejection of or dissociation from the values and experiences of the identified ‘enemy’. The ‘theatrical trance’ is the aesthetic state as defined by the dominant cult's practices and traditions in relation to formalised or conventionalised cultural expression. The performance of the aesthetic state is contingent upon the application, internalisation and expression of the dominant cult's conventions regarding the expressions of ideas, of narratives, and of playing.

In general, each of the cults that are intersected and have become involved in the event of war possess an idea of the normative which it strives to embody and enact, as well as enforce upon the identified ‘enemy’. The conflictual and the theatrical states are seen to intersect in the events investigated in this study.

The normative is the consciousness state that we develop, document, enact and embody in the ‘real world’. This is the normative narrative trance of empirically defined experience and existence. We embody and enact texts and roles according to particular social expectations, in our inner world experience of ‘reality consciousness’. Theatrical consciousness develops its own parameters and protocols, which become integrated in a lived narrative experience. In our case, we have a historical linear narrative which defines our experience. This narrative experience is both linear and historical because of the forms of communication and the modes of documentation with which we have constructed our definition of reality. This narrative experience is both individual and collective; the cultural, social and personal experiences that make us who we are and allows us to make sense of our existence and experience. Thus we can speak of a media consciousness, or a national consciousness, or a personal and individual consciousness. In the same way we can talk about a “spiritual consciousness” or a “professional consciousness”. These are all the different ways by which we identify the “self” of subjective experience.

The experience and development of human historical consciousness has come to be organised in a linear and narratised form. Temporal historical consciousness is based on a chronologically organised narrative and the knowledge of that narrative from a particular cultural perspective. The ways in which the narrative is organised are specified by the culture that adopts it. In addition there has also developed an
emotional consciousness that is less linear, out of which beliefs and values – sentiments and dispositions – are constructed to become the “spiritual” or “ethical” states of consciousness – the psychological states that are regarded as normal by a particular culture and the “acceptable” or “desirable” modes of involvement and interaction within that culture.

As physical entities, human beings can also utilise the temporal action state, in which consciousness is enacted and embodied; this is the ‘actual’ state through which belief systems are performed. There are also the forms of collective memory storage and processes, which become the ‘virtual’ consciousness state – the symbolic and representational forms that comprise the cultural memory of a group. There is also the body’s organic state of being, the natural and physical consciousness that is organised and experienced as a sensory state. There are the social and political consciousness states which are relational and environmental states. The aggregate of these states of consciousness comprise the normative experience – the definition of reality – of a particular culture with own sets of texts and roles. The ability to function in these states is the indicator of performance efficacy for an individual or group.

The narrative trance of each player in the crisis that began with the 9/11 event compelled each participant to play various roles and texts with each other in ways that are vividly apocalyptic and paranoiagenic. These participants appear to play a part in an apocalyptic variation of a paranoiagenic trance form, inspired by a cult of apocalypticism – a cult of death. The act of war – as a social drama – is an apocalyptic act, the conflictual state is a state of war. Thus the drama and the trance are effectively very closely related and inseparable.

The Paranoid Mentality – Belief and Symbolisation

The paranoiagenic trance can be distinguished from the paranoid state in that once the consciousness state is established as a closed system, the paranoid mentality will often be construed as a “normal” state by the individual or group that is experiencing it. In a theory of group dynamics based on a study of the institution of bureaucracy, social scientist Elliot Jaques considered the condition of “normality” to be satisfied by the presence of certain characteristics essential to social interaction. These characteristics included “an awareness of self and of the self of others; the ability to communicate – with words, gesture, expression – and to comprehend the
communication of others; capacity to communicate with another in paying attention to the same subject; and the capacity for social and economic exchange relationships”.\textsuperscript{13}

The paranoiagenic trance is a liminal state that is charged with potential in the form of emotions, whereas the paranoid state takes on the quality of rational lucidity that is seemingly unaffected by emotion and dominated by intellectual processes. Therefore, in the paranoid state conventional social interaction is possible, whereas the paranoiagenic trance involves being absorbed in the experience of the self to the point of incapacity for social participation other than the sharing of common emotions with others. The anxiety, confusion, humiliation and indignation experiences, insofar as they are dominant in consciousness, more aptly belong to the paranoiagenic trance category of experiences rather than the paranoid state itself. In the context of group experiences, the paranoiagenic trance is evident in the initial emotive responses to stressful situations, and the paranoid state is evident in the group behaviour or movement that are some of the premeditated and planned collective responses to stress and trauma that are attributed to human agency.

The perception of threat – be it real or imagined – and the sense of humiliation, are essential elements in the induction of the paranoiagenic trance and in the sustainment of the paranoid state. Therefore, the paranoiagenic trance and the paranoid state are inherent appeals for security and dignity. Commenting on the highly political nature of paranoia, grounded as it is in power relationships, Post and Robins observed that “underlying feelings of inadequacy, depletion and vulnerability may translate into the sensation of powerlessness, an intolerable feeling that must be defended against”.\textsuperscript{14}

This intolerable feeling of powerlessness, subjectively experienced as shame and humiliation, provides the basis of justifications for action for the militant fundamentalist, who uses the “unquestionable” authority of the sacred text as the interpretive logic for acts of the violence against the identified “enemy”. For the militant fundamentalist, that “enemy” is the main cause of the experienced inadequacy and wrongdoing. Although the paranoid mentality is evident in forms of religious thinking that attributes “evil” to a

\textsuperscript{13} Elliott.: p. 6.
\textsuperscript{14} Post and Robins.: p. 17.
non-corporeal entity, this mentality becomes far more destructive when the attribution of “evil” shifts to living human beings as individuals or groups.\textsuperscript{15}

Therefore, as a conceptual framework, the limitations of “paranoia” need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the concept is grounded in the cultural context of “rationalism” and is, more often than not, concerned with the psychological and pathological aspects of phenomena identified as “paranoia”. Secondly, the phenomenon of paranoia is considered to have seven fundamental characteristics – projection, hostility, suspicion, centrality, delusions, loss of autonomy, and grandiosity.\textsuperscript{16} Thirdly, the paranoid worldviews that are of concern to this study are related to centuries-old cultural traditions and bodies of knowledge that are often referred to as the “conspiratorial” view of history.\textsuperscript{17}

This study employs a concept inspired by the traditions of psychology and psychoanalysis to examine group-defined views of social and political history that have been interpreted and used by certain individuals to perform key acts in the events of the social drama investigated in this study. The concept of paranoia is subject to the limitations imposed upon it as a pathological condition by the traditions of psychology and psychoanalysis. However, in some of the cases examined, the paranoid state can take on a normative quality, particularly when the stress and trauma experienced by a group are so great that anything less than concurrence to the paranoid appeal will lead to a questioning of loyalties and adaptive capacities. The paranoid state will therefore be regarded in this study as a state of consciousness that is induced to produce a type of performance in an individual or a group.

Hostility, suspiciousness, and the sense of persecution reduces the world of the paranoid into communities of “good and evil”, as in the “City of Faith” and “City of War” opposition of the militant Islamic fundamentalist. Therefore, when cultures of violence intersect and interact on the basis of each identifying the other as “evil”, this becomes the foundation of a functional closed system state of conflict. The identification of the enemy as a living human individual or group is an essential element to this closed system state.

\textsuperscript{15} For example – Swanson, David W., Philip J. Bonhert and Jackson A. Smith (1970). \textit{The Paranoid}. Boston, Little, Brown and Co.: p. 431.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.: pp. 8-10. Also Farrell 1996, pp. 42-43.
\textsuperscript{17} On Lyndon LaRouche, see – Post and Robins.: pp. 21-23.
Equally essential is the identification of the victim, as a process of “victimisation” or identification with the victim, as a necessary element of the formation of justifications for action. The assumption and attribution of roles in the paranoiagenic trance therefore requires a concept of the self that can identify as being subject to threat, as an individual and as a part of a community, and then form the concept of the hostile “other” that becomes the “enemy”. Group paranoia can therefore be harnessed and focused by leadership subject to such tendencies and expectations.

The formation of a “coalition” or a “network” or a “cell” that is prepared to direct its collective energy against an enemy is a further powerful validation of the “righteousness” of the group’s belief systems. In this way, the sense of individual and group cohesion that results from differentiation with the enemy becomes a major attraction and benefit of the paranoid state. Thus the enemy becomes essential to the sense of personal and communal identity in the paranoid state. These benefits and attractions, in heightened forms, become the basis for the ecstatic nature of the paranoiagenic trance.

The repetition of these benefits and attractions serve to reinforce such states. In this way, the texts utilised in its induction processes most commonly exercise its power through the repeated readings and recitations of key proclamations and concepts. In these ways, the proclamations and concepts attain a level of socialisation as they become dominant beliefs. Texts and images become the foundations of fundamentalism in this manner, as repetition reinforces each foundation beyond questionability. Paranoiagenic traditions, sustained and perpetuated by repeated texts or images of conspiracies both real and imagined, are the foundations of the conflictual state. Fundamentalism is the practice that instils the paranoiagenic tradition.

The concepts of jihad in particular, and war in general, have been validated and reinforced throughout various histories by way of repetition and recollection, as they become central elements of cultural traditions. Thus the conflict between the fedayeen and secular modernity, as embodied and enacted in the 9/11 event and its consequences, serves as the intersection of at least two distinct traditions that support and perpetuate each of their own cultures of violence. The highly “communicable” and “self-sustaining” nature of paranoia as an “intellectual dynamic” has long been

18 Ibid.
recognised. Each tradition is able to lay claim to the status of “true believers” in both God and Civilization, as much as each is prone to streams of apocalyptic discourses that provide the grounds for a paranoiac effect to occur.

Thus the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon building came to symbolise the “Great Satan” for the militant Islamic fundamentalist community, as Usama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda came to symbolise the “evil-doers” for the rhetoric of the “war against terrorism”. Thus the Taliban regime “executed” televisions and music cassettes, for in doing so they executed the influence of global media on the Afghan population, because modernism and secularism of the West were seen to be the enemies of Divine Law – a threat to that belief system.

**Identity and Roles – Characterisation and Culture**

The state of consciousness entered into by the performer of the act is induced by a set of practices and traditions conveying certain narratives and symbols. The state of consciousness is induced by such practices and traditions that embody and encompass the fundamental tenets of the performer. The phenomena created then achieve cultural resonance, physical repercussions, and emotional involvement of performers and audiences. The cult – the dominant belief system – that guides the actors of the performance induce their adherents into various states in order to thrive upon the organic reality of human energy, expression and existence. The cult becomes the fundamental tenets upon which the performer bases their action.

The performers of the 9/11 event and its consequences, share a common quality in that they are each driven by a set of belief systems that each in their own roles within the social drama, attempt to enact and embody through certain narratives, texts or roles. The protagonists investigated in this study have in common the quality that they are induced to act and perform in certain ways that serve a group-defined consciousness and a set of expectations that direct their act.

The “doer” of the acts – the final attribution for the motivation of performance – varies according to the cultural context, but in any case, the performed acts are attributed to

---


the authority of the “will of God”, or the doctrines and directives of a command structure, or the predetermined plan of the group. In no instance is the motivation attributed to the individual performer, to the “will” or “self-identity” of the actor – the act is sanctioned by a group-defined will or convention. The individual is seen to perform a role in the service of a group-defined purpose that is specified by cultural context.

The individual performance is facilitated by cultural structures and materials, as a role within a group effort. These structures and materials function in the same way that props and sets are utilised by the actor on stage, as instruments to induce and maintain the necessary states for performance. The performers in each case work towards particular goals and objectives, as they embody and enact specified texts and actions. In each case, the sense of “self” is suspended in favour of the requirements of the role and the performance, in processes defined by culturally specified conventions.

**Information and Isolation – the Media Factor and Cultural Memory**

Drama is as central an element of the military tradition as much as the military culture and the conflictual state are central elements to the dramatic tradition – it is effectively a “chicken or egg” relationship. In commenting on “the capacity of well-run propaganda systems to drive people to irrational, murderous and suicidal behaviour”, Noam Chomsky (2001) notes the heightened power of the “marching orders” or the call to arms for “a noble war”. In this sense, the terms “drama” and “trance” are synonymous. The ways in which information has been mediated and disseminated in relation to the 9/11 event demonstrate the power of the reproduced text and image to mobilise and motivate human actions on a group level.

In the first 96 hours following the attacks in New York and Washington, television broadcasting throughout the “developed” world were predominantly or totally dedicated to the “breaking story”. “Expert” analyses and opinions provided mostly by members of the United States intelligence community provided the primary “meaning-making” function for the attacks. Images of the planes crashing into the twin towers, images of the smouldering and collapsing towers, then images of the smoking rubble of “ground zero” provoked powerful emotional reactions in those who viewed them. Television

---

studio forums struggled with issues of threats and responsibilities, as well as questions of appropriate individual and collective responses to these events. The blanket coverage took on the quality of “media hysteria” fed by the compelling images from that previous Tuesday morning. The compulsive obsession of this media hysteria phase, heightened by the repetition of key images and meaning-making analyses, generated a powerful group attitude and mentality that would bear fruit of actions in the months to come.

In a similar fashion, the worldviews of the militant Islamic fundamentalist was developed and disseminated through the use of reproduced texts and images over a period of time. Among these were the images of the first Palestinian intifada that started to come out of the West Bank in December 1987. Then came the images of U.S. troops establishing a base in Saudi Arabia and leading a coalition of nations against Iraq in Kuwait during the Gulf War of 1991. These images became the justifications upon which Usama bin Laden issued two fatwahs, declarations of war, against the United States in August 1996 and February 1998. In these published declarations, bin Laden used repeated references to Qur’anic text and references to the “crimes and sins” that were “a clear declaration of war on God” to justify a jihad against “the Zionist-Crusader alliance”.23

These declarations were directed to young Muslims whom he called upon to wage “jihad in the cause of Allah” and to fight those who threaten their religion and faith.24 Bin Laden’s fatwahs do not constitute an effective appeal by themselves. Throughout the late 1980s, the “message of the Islamic revolution” was propagated through sermons and lectures on audio tape cassettes, radio programmes, books and newspapers funded by the Islamic Republic of Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini.25 By the mid 1990s, Usama bin Laden had started to distribute video tapes “calling on Muslims worldwide to commit their sons and their money” to “fight in the cause of God”.26 These videos utilised images of violence against Muslim women and children from the Palestinian intifada.

The basis of knowledge upon which the fundamentalist acts is the sacred text of each respective cult. The adherent of the cult acquires this knowledge through a process of uncritical memorisation. The literal nature of the sacred text is a basic assumption. Thus knowledge and authority in such belief systems are a matter of the ability to recall and interpret the sacred text and apply it to the particular context for which authorisation is required.

Usama bin Laden is reported to have said of Atta’s “martyrdom operation” – these “young men... said in deeds, in New York and Washington, speeches that overshadowed all other speeches made everywhere else in the world... speeches... understood by both Arabs and non-Arabs”.27 The use of these texts and images in each case, produces a highly charged system of values that have powerful paranoiagenic effects. The states of consciousness that these texts and images are able to induce have inherent systems of justifications and authorisations – the motivation and will – for action. In each case they serve the function of identifying the enemy as a central element of the paranoiagenic trance.

In analysing the processes by which the paranoiagenic trance and the conflictual state are induced, it is important to consider some of the processes by which such states of consciousness are disrupted. Although containment, displacement and destruction are effective strategies for prevailing over an “enemy”, it is important to consider some of the processes by which persuasion is employed in order to interrupt or alter a paranoiagenic trance within particular audience groups. As an element of the “psychological operations” of the “war against terrorism”, texts and images are used to induce particular

states in both friendly and hostile audiences. Humanitarian aid, pamphlets, radio transmissions, and loudspeaker messages were extensively used in Afghanistan to announce “friendly” intentions to civilian populations and to deliver “surrender” appeals to hostile forces. Such operations were intended to serve the objective of “perception management” in order to achieve “battlefield dominance” for the U.S. and coalition forces “by modifying and manipulating attitudes and behavior of selected audiences.”

In these ways, the messages conveyed were intended to disrupt the paranoiagenic trance and to reverse the paranoid state by altering audience perceptions, and issuing alternative authoritative directives (See Figure 17). In this case, the identification of the enemy is altered and the intensity of the conflictual state is somewhat reduced if the message is uncritically accepted by its intended audience.

In this chapter, the performance of one event in actuality – in the ‘real’ world – and its repercussions have been investigated in order to develop the understanding of a type of trance state that demonstrates the extent to which normativity is dramatically interrupted. In considering the induction of a conflictual trance, acts performed by individuals have been shown to generate a powerful resonance amongst a widespread audience. This resonance has been described as a paranoiagenic effect – a state that is both produced by and can produce a paranoid condition. The infectious nature of this type of social drama has been shown to be most demonstrative of the dynamics by which a trance induction can occur. The affective and imaginative involvement created by the 9/11 event and its media coverage provided a vivid demonstration of how effective such an induction can be. The state of consciousness brought about has been shown to operate as a closed system state that can generate and intensify conflict. The notion and identification of the ‘enemy’ has been shown to be a central and essential element in this process. The notion of normativity itself has been shown to become a site of contestation as conflicting groups strive to restore or impose particular definitions of “normality” upon one another, whilst the conflictual state itself attains normativity as it intensifies. The liminality of the paranoiagenic state has been shown to allow for the formation of a perception of threat, by which acts of conflict are deemed necessary or inevitable – the identification of ‘evil’ as a justification for transformative action. This liminality has also been shown to allow for acts of identification to occur, by which the various performers in the social drama define their acts – the roles that they

---

play. The flow of information has been shown to generate the sets of associations that produce the performances demanded by such roles and by the drama. The power of such a flow has been shown to be contingent upon the cultural processes by which that information is communicated and received as authorisation, thus converted into motivation. Such motivation has also been shown to be liable to being either maintained or interrupted. The connection between the notions and performativity of “drama” and “trance” has been demonstrated most vividly in this investigation of the 9/11 event. In the next chapter, key performers in this social drama are examined in order to consider the elements that have contributed to their respective performances. The experiences and influences of each are considered in the context of the processes and elements of induction that have applied in each of their circumstances. The social and cultural elements that constitute the state of consciousness that is embodied and enacted by each performer are investigated in order to develop the understanding of the principles of induction proposed in this study.
9. The Performance that Changed the World

Conceptions of Death – the Role of Religion and Imagination

The performer in the conflictual state requires a conceptualisation of mortality that would enable the individual to over-ride the normal apprehensions and boundaries of behaviour, that serve to motivate self-preservation in that individual. The performer’s beliefs regarding death must not interfere with the requirements of optimum performance in the conflictual state. The performers must believe that certain rewards will follow the death that may result from their performance in the social drama. The jihad warrior is invited to believe in the “paradise of the martyrs” just as a soldier in the Marines is invited to believe, at the very least, in the “brotherhood of the corps” that will celebrate the heroic deed that might lead to death. This would enable the suspension of the belief in self-preservation.

What these various cults have in common is the belief that the performance of certain actions and behaviours lead to the destruction of identified agents of “evil” which enable the establishment of some greater “good”, and that the destruction of the elements of “evil” hold greater value than the protection or preservation of the individual adherent.

Mohammed Atta prepared and signed a will in April 1996,\(^1\) at a time that he was believed to have begun the undertaking of a period of militant training. As part of the preparation of a “volunteer for martyrdom” the trainee prepares a will, either on paper, video or audio cassette.\(^2\) Atta’s will was published by the German magazine Der Spiegel (Oct 2001) and found in a misplaced suitcase that Atta had before boarding his flight. This document, gives an indication of the conception of death that this “volunteer for martyrdom” had held.


The Last Will and Testament of Mohammed Atta

In the name of God all mighty – This is what I want to happen after my death, I am Mohamed the son of Mohamed Elmir awad Elsayed: I believe that prophet Mohamed is God’s messenger and time will come no doubt about that and God will resurrect people who are in their graves. I wanted my family and everyone who reads this will to fear the Almighty God and don’t get deceived by what is in life and to fear God and to follow God and his prophets if they are real believers. In my memory, I want them to do what Ibrahim (a prophet) told his son to, to die as a good Muslim. When I die, I want the people who will inherit my possessions to do the following: The people who will prepare my body should be good Muslims because this will remind me of God and his forgiveness. The people who are preparing my body should close my eyes and pray that I will go to heaven and to get me new clothes, not the ones I died in. I don’t want anyone to weep and cry or to rip their clothes or slap their faces because this is an ignorant thing to do. I don’t want anyone to visit me who didn’t get along with me while I was alive or to kiss me or say good bye when I die. I don’t want a pregnant woman or a person who is not clean to come and say good bye to me because I don’t approve it. I don’t want women to come to my house to apologize for my death. I am not responsible for people who will sacrifice animals in front of my lying body because this is against Islam. Those who will sit beside my body must remember Allah, God, and pray for me to be with the angels. The people who will clean my body should be good Muslims and I do not want a lot of people to wash my body unless it is necessary. The person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won’t touch my genitals. I want the clothes I wear to consist of three white pieces of cloth, not to be made of silk or expensive material. I don’t want any women to go to my grave at all during my funeral or on any occasion thereafter. During my funeral I want everyone to be quiet because God mentioned that he likes being quiet on occasions when you recite the Koran, during the funeral, and when you are crawling. You must speed my funeral procession and I would like many people there to pray for me. When you bury me the people with whom I will be buried should be good Muslims. I want to face East toward Mecca. I should be laying on my right side. You should throw the dust on my body three times while saying from the dust, we created you dust and to dust you will return. From the dust a new person will be created. After that everyone should mention God’s name and that I died as a Muslim which is God’s religion. Everyone who attends my funeral should ask that I will be forgiven for what I have done in the past (not this action). The people who will attend my funeral should sit at my grave for an hour so that I will enjoy their company and slaughter animals and give the meat to the needy. The custom has been to memorialize the dead every forty days or once a year but I do not want this because it is not an Islamic custom. I don’t want people to take time to write things on paper to be kept in their pockets as superstition. Time should be taken to pray to God instead. All the money I left must be divided according to the Muslim religion as almighty God has asked us to do. A third of my money should be spent on the poor and the needy. I want my books to go to any one of the Muslim mosques. I wanted the people who look at my will to be one of the heads of the Sunna religion. Whoever it is, I want that person to be from where I grew up or any person I used to follow in prayer. People will be held responsible for not following the Muslim religion. I wanted the people who I left behind to hear God and not to be deceived by what life has to offer and to pray more to God and to be good believers. Whoever neglects this will or does not follow the religion, that person will be held responsible in the end. This was written on April 11, 1996, the Islamic calendar of zoelqada is 1416.

Table 10: Translation of Atta’s last will and testament.

In the 800 words of Atta’s last will and testament, the most frequently occurring nouns and adjectives are “people” and “persons” (20), “God” (15), “good” (7), “Muslim” (8), “body” (8), “religion” and “funeral” (5 each). Taken as an indication of the themes that concerned Atta at the time that he wrote his will, it is apparent that he was concerned with the attitudes which others – “people” and “persons” – would have had of him as they regarded his life. It is apparent that he was concerned with the ways in which his body would be regarded and treated in death, there are 7 occurrences of the phrase “my body” and 2 of the phrase “my genitals” which all specify the ways in which he wished his body to be handled after his death. Thus he was apparently concerned with the integrity of his physical image, his life story, and of how others would perceive it. The extent of his concern about his religious integrity is also evident, the phrase “good Muslim” occurs 4 times, as he upheld the value of living and dying as a “good believer”. In addition, it is apparent that Atta held a strong aversion to the company of
women. The 3 occurrences of the words “women” or “woman” were all to do with his wish that none be present at his funeral, grave, or home. This can be related to his wish that his genitals be treated with particular care when his body was to be prepared for burial – “the person who will wash my body near my genitals must wear gloves on his hands so he won’t touch my genitals”. He apparently preferred to be thought of as one beyond earthly desires, as he asked others “not to be deceived by what life has to offer” and to “pray for me to be with the angels”. He indicated a belief in a life after death – “time will come no doubt about that, and God will resurrect people who are in their graves”. He asked those who attended his funeral to “throw the dust on my body three times while saying – from the dust, we created you dust and to dust you will return, from the dust a new person will be created”.

Juergensmeyer noted that “martyrdom is regarded not only as a testimony to the degree of one’s commitment, but also as a performance of a religious act, specifically an act of self-sacrifice”.³ Usama bin Laden reflects this belief when he proclaimed in his first fatwah against the United States – “we reject to submit to humiliation… our youths believe in paradise after death… death is truth and ultimate destiny, and life will end anyway… these youths know that if one is not to be killed one will die anyway, and the most honourable death is to killed in the way of Allah… let me die dignified in wars, honourable death is better than my current life… death is better than life in humiliation”⁴.

In examining the notion of martyrdom, it is important to analyse a piece of text that apparently indicates the types of preparations that Mohammed Atta and Marwan Yousef Al-Shehhi underwent in readiness for the 9/11 event. Copies of a four-page handwritten document were found by investigators at three different locations – in Atta’s suitcase, in a car rented by his collaborator Nawaf Al-Hazmi who boarded American Airlines flight 77 which crashed into the Pentagon, and in the crash scene of United Airlines flight 93 in Pennsylvania.⁵ It is assumed that this document was distributed amongst the 19 men who participated in the operation; it is likely this text was a tool for the induction of a state of consciousness that was considered essential for the performance of the acts to come. Given the title of the document – “The Last

⁵ Ronaldo Morelos 2004
Night” – it is possible to assume that it was intended to be read or reviewed just prior to the 9/11 event, therefore it can considered to be a text of utmost significance to the various members of the operation as they knowingly and carefully prepared for an act of martyrdom.

Figure 18: The first page of the four-page “The Last Night” document found in Mohammed Atta’s suitcase and two other locations.
(Source: FBI National Press Office)

Mohammed Atta – the Ringleader

The role and performance of Mohammed Atta are regarded in the context of his life experiences within the culture of militant Islamic fundamentalism. It is not possible to know for certain whether Atta firmly believed in the promised “gardens” and “women of paradise” that are said to await the jihad warrior, and how much this belief might have been a factor in his motivation to perform his actions. However, it is evident from his actions and the manner in which they were planned and executed, that Atta was intensely and carefully committed to a particular course of action. Although he makes no mention of his intention to attain martyrdom in the will he wrote in 1996, it is apparent that he saw his own death as a demonstrative social event. This demonstrated commitment can be understood by analysing the cultural and political contexts of his life experience. Texts and events that appear to have had an influence in his development and on the acts that he would eventually perform are examined to take account of key concepts and themes that appear to constitute the state of consciousness that he would enact and embody up until the acts he performed in the 9/11 event. This state of consciousness is viewed as a component and a product of a series of plans and actions developed within a militant Islamic fundamentalist cult.

The belief systems that appear to constitute the culture of militant Islamic fundamentalism can be traced back to the military exploits of the prophet Muhammed in the 7th century, when he set up a stronghold in the town of Medina as he waged sporadic warfare with and eventually conquered the city of Mecca. Since that time the Muslim world has been divided into the “City of Faith” and the “City of War”. The central tenet of struggle – “jihad” – is often interpreted as “holy war” that must be waged by the believer as an individual duty. Advocates of “jihad against the City of War” promote Islam as a “revolutionary ideology” that calls upon Muslims to wage “holy war” as a religious duty.

In the 20th century this tradition underwent a revival in Egypt as a combination of secularization, modernization, and administrative corruption fuelled a tradition of

6 Juergensmeyer.; pp. 80-81.
discontent amongst Muslim ideologues who experienced these phenomena as a threat to their religion and their sense of dignity. These impulses coalesced around a formation of activists that became known as the Muslim Brotherhood. By the middle of the 20th century an influential Muslim political writer, Sayyed Qutb, had identified the United States and Israel as the primary enemies of the Muslim religion, the “agents of satan” that exerted their influence through support and control of modern secular governments and the global economy. The “agents of satan” came to be seen as the cause of a whole range of oppression and suffering inflicted upon the Muslim community worldwide. Along with a small number of other key writers, Qutb’s influence spread through the Egyptian Muslim educational and religious systems, promoting the notion of an “ultimate war” between religion and infidelity. It was these sets of influences that Atta would have encountered as he began his studies in architecture at the University of Cairo in 1985. These influences would have been further heightened by the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada in December 1987, and the television images that were broadcast worldwide, particularly by Arabic media in Egypt.

IDENTIFICATION

In the wake of their actions, Atta and Al-Shehhi had been cast in the role of “terrorist ringleaders” in North American and British corporate media reports. In their own views, they had most likely identified themselves in the role of “jihad martyrs”. Although media reports referred to them as “terrorists” performing a “suicide mission”, evidence shows that they had seen themselves as “volunteers for martyrdom” – as suicide is forbidden in the tenets of Islam. They would probably have thought of their actions as precise and decisive steps that lead to “sacred explosions”. They would have been proudly performing their parts as members of the “arsenal of believers”. They would have been driven by the desire to inflict damage upon their identified “enemy” – the “infidels” – as much as by the “divine” nature of their acts of faith. In the four-page document found in their possession, they are reminded to “pray for yourself and all of your brothers that they may be victorious and hit their targets… ask God to grant you martyrdom facing the enemy”. In this sense, their death does not result from their own actions, but from the “will of God” that their mission be a success – “if God gives you victory, no one can defeat you”.

8 Taheri.: pp. 44-58.
Stay awake and pray through the night, and be persistent in asking God to give you victory, control and conquest, and that He may make your task easier and protect us. ...Be happy, optimistic and calm because you are engaged in an action that God loves and will be satisfied with. It will be the day, God willing, when you will be with your heavenly brides in Heaven. ...For God is with his faithful servants, He will protect them and make their tasks easier, give them success and control, provide them with victory, and everything.\textsuperscript{11}

In “The Last Night” the operatives were instructed to review two chapters in the Qur’an, \textit{Al-Tawba} and \textit{Al-Anfal}, in order to prepare and to reinforce their mentality for the tasks that were to come. These chapters contain passages that are particularly relevant to the identification of their roles as members of the operation and as “true believers”, as well as to the identification of their enemy and justifications for their planned acts.

\textbf{\textit{Al-Anfal}, 8.30} When those who disbelieved devised plans against you that they might confine you or slay you or drive you away; and they devised plans... Allah too had arranged a plan; and Allah is the best of planners. 8.60 Prepare against them what force you can ... to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know but Allah knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in Allah’s way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly. 8.65 O Prophet! urge the believers to war; if there are twenty patient ones of you they shall overcome two hundred, and if there are a hundred of you they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who do not understand.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Table 11:} Excerpts from the Qur’an referred to in “The Last Night” document.
\end{center}

\section*{INvolvement}

Their involvement as “holy warriors” – as “\textit{mujahid}” – in this “martyrdom operation” would have evoked a complex set of emotions. They would have had to have managed the fears that almost certainly would have been a key element of the experience. Fears relating to their own deaths and to the possibility of the failure of their mission would have needed to have been addressed. It is likely that in their favour they would have been experiencing a latent ecstasy relating to the anticipation of a successful operation, and that this would have been a sustaining and driving force for them as they performed their roles. Their embodied and enacted roles were sustained by their involvement with their operational plan and their sacred texts.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
At Tawba, 9.5 So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush... 9.14 Fight them, Allah will punish them by your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them and heal the hearts of a believing people. 9.110 The building which they have built will ever continue to be a source of disquiet in their hearts, except that their hearts get cut into pieces; and Allah is Knowing, Wise. 9.123 O you who believe! fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardiness; and know that Allah is with those who guard against evil.

Table 12: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.

The passages from the Qur’an that these mujahid were referred to, contained reinforcements of the notion of their role as instruments of God. There are also reminders of the importance of adherence to a well-made plan that is part of a larger strategy, and that would provide them with suitable rewards for the commitment and sacrifices that they had undertaken. If any of the operatives in Atta’s group had followed prescribed acts, on the night of the 10th of September they would have had little sleep and they would have been involved in the narratives of passages from Al-Tawba and Al-Anfal.

Al Anfal, 8.12 When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them. 8.50 ... when the angels will cause to die those who disbelieve, smiting their faces and their backs, and saying: Taste the punishment of burning. 8.55 Surely the vilest of animals in Allah’s sight are those who disbelieve, then they would not believe.

Table 13: Excerpts from the Qu’ran referred to in “The Last Night” document.

ISOLATION

Both Atta and Al-Shehhi, by necessity, had isolated their existence and experience, from the broader environment in which they lived and circulated, in preparation for their actions. What they achieved was a form of ‘ideological isolation’ that enabled them to blend into the physical environments of their target cultures whilst maintaining the sense of purpose necessary in order to achieve their objectives – it is the isolation of the soldier operating behind enemy lines. In their isolation, their sense of purpose was maintained by their contacts and interactions with each other and their fellow conspirators. This isolation served to position the broader environment as the world of the “other” – the “aghyar”.12

12 Taheri.: pp. 27-29.
The hypocritical men and the hypocritical women are all alike; they enjoin evil and forbid good and withhold their hands; they have forsaken Allah, so He has forsaken them; surely the hypocrites are the transgressors. 9.68 Allah has promised the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women and the unbelievers the fire of hell to abide therein; it is enough for them; and Allah has cursed them and they shall have lasting punishment. 9.73 O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them; and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination.

Table 14: Excerpts from the Qur’an referred to in “The Last Night” document.

The members of this operation had to develop a set of conceptualisations that would enable them to vigorously follow a course of action that would lead to their own deaths. These conceptualisations would comprise a form of mentality that would effectively isolate the operatives from the mindset which is the dominant paradigm of the world outside of the cult of martyrdom to which they adhered – that is, they are isolated from the mindset that places the value of self-preservation at a level congruent with the impulse to avoid physical harm. Evident in this, is a mindset that isolates their individual and group efforts from the dominant belief in the inappropriateness of actively working towards one’s own physical obliteration. This is effected by substituting the sense of the ‘wrong-ness’ of suicidal behaviour with a belief in the ‘salvation’ available through a noble – authorised – act of ‘self’ sacrifice. This cult of martyrdom isolated itself from the imperative of self-preservation by locating its goal upon the notion of “the hereafter”. Thus the chapters of the Qur’an that the operatives were advised to review contained passages that reinforced the cult of martyrdom by providing the promise of something more desirable than “this world’s life”.

Table 15: Excerpts from the Qur’an referred to in “The Last Night” document.

INSTRUCTION

The elements of experience that had informed and instructed Atta must be charted from his years at the University of Cairo up until the last moments before he had effectively fulfilled his martyrdom ‘mission’. Although there are gaps in available evidence, it is apparent from the cultural and political environments in which he had lived as well as from related texts, the backgrounds upon which his demonstrated decisions and actions were based.
When he was nine years old, a group called *Al-Takfir wal-Hegira* was inspired by a brand of fundamentalism known as “Qutbism” – inspired by the writings of Sayyed Qutb – to perform its first act of political violence with the kidnapping and murder of a prominent Egyptian doctor of theology and former minister of religious endowments. By the time Atta finished school and entered the University of Cairo in 1985, other adherents of Qutbism had staged numerous acts of political violence including bloody riots, a revolt by police cadets, and the assassination of President Anwar Sadat. *Al-Takfir* became a secret organisation with strong support amongst university students. While Atta studied for a degree in architecture, the Muslim Brotherhood exercised considerable influence upon the student body through organisations such as the Engineers Syndicate that was based in his faculty. At this time in Egypt, Islamic fundamentalism was seen as “the only credible alternative to the existing socio-political system in the country”. While Atta was in his second year at the university, the first Palestinian intifada erupted. This was the environment of religiously inspired militancy and escalating political conflict in which Atta spent his youth. Although it is not yet possible to establish Atta’s direct participation in any of these movements or organisations, it is evident that his own belief system concurs with the sentiments and dispositions that these currents represented. In addition, the level of commitment that Atta held for these sentiments and dispositions are vividly demonstrated in the acts that this study investigates.

As Atta completed his degree in Cairo and as he commenced post-graduate studies in urban planning at the Technical University of Harburg in Hamburg in 1992, Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt mounted a violent campaign to take hold of government only to be quashed through widespread imprisonments and torture. During Atta’s first year in Hamburg, a growing number of violent attacks upon, and killing of, European tourists in Egypt took place as part of a militant fundamentalist campaign; and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York made headlines around the world. Around the time that Egyptian fundamentalist leader Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman was being tried and sentenced to life imprisonment for the World Trade Center bombing, Atta disappeared for about six months, telling an employer that he was making a “pilgrimage to Mecca” and returning to Cairo – but doubts have been raised.

---

15 *Taheri.*: p. 186.
on his story of the pilgrimage. This was the first of two periods of extended absence from Hamburg that could indicate the periods of intensive training that Atta would have had to have undertaken in order to have been financed, equipped and entrusted on a mission as a mujahid or “volunteer for martyrdom”.

In the 1980s, the Islamic Republic of Iran recruited young Muslim students from Germany and other parts of Europe as well as the U.S. to receive military and propaganda training offered as inexpensive “guided tours” that were known as “pilgrimages of revolution”. When Atta returned from his “pilgrimage” in 1996, he was seen back in Hamburg with the distinctive beard often worn by committed fundamentalists. At this time, he would also write and sign his will before witnesses at the mosque. It was also around this time that Usama bin Laden had declared “jihad” on the United States and set up training camps in Afghanistan. After losing his job in Hamburg a few months later, Atta would disappear again, this time for a period of fifteen months – from around July 1997 until October 1998 – he would tell his university supervisor that he was taking leave from his studies for “family reasons”. Usama bin Laden is reported to have described Atta as “Mohammed from the Egyptian family”, referring to the Al-Qaeda Egyptian group. The training of militant Islamic fundamentalists appears to have been organised on the principle of a basic training that provides a militaristic foundation followed by recruitment into advanced training for more specialist skills. This second period of absence from Hamburg could indicate a further stage in Atta’s mujahid training.

This period in 1997 and 1998 saw a significant intensification of militant fundamentalist violence. In Egypt, two separate massacres occurred targeting European tourists in Cairo and Luxor. In Afghanistan, Bin Laden had issued a “fatwah” on U.S. civilians. In Africa, the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed in August 1998. Two weeks later, the United States launched retaliatory cruise missile attacks on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan that were believed to have been linked to Bin Laden and the two embassy bombings. Given Atta’s performance of the

16 Hooper.
17 Taheri.: pp. 113-114.
20 Bin Laden ‘Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places’ – August 23, 1996.
21 Hooper.; Jackson.
22 U.S. Department of Defense, Michael and Wahba.
acts of the 9/11 event, it is clear that his knowledge and perception of these preceding events had a profound impact upon the formation of his mentality. What these events demonstrate are the elements that drove the formative process of his ultimate state of consciousness – the information and instruction that propelled Atta’s induction into his eventual performance mentality. A short time later, Atta would return to Hamburg where he was first sighted with his co-conspirators, and where he would form a Muslim prayer group at the beginning of 1999, based at the apartment that he shared with Al-Shehhi and others, in what has become known as the “Hamburg cell”. It was at this time that the planning for their expedition to the United States would have had to have begun in earnest, as Atta finished and submitted his Masters thesis in Urban Planning.

In late 1999, he along with Al-Shehhi and another co-conspirator, Ziad Jarrah, reported to German officials that their passports had been stolen, investigators believe that this had been part of a plan to clear their passport of a trip to Afghanistan where it is believed they attended a training camp and key meetings – indicating the initial steps of a plan brought into action. The planning and preparations continued until the financing for the operation began, and deployed with Atta’s first arrival in the United States in June 2000.

Although there is limited knowledge of the methodology of the training camps that Atta most probably would have attended, what is known of previous fundamentalist military training traditions such as those that prospered in and were exported by Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini, indicates that such training would have comprised of high levels of religious indoctrination combined with physical, tactical and technical weapons training. Later training camps in Afghanistan utilised similar formats for training and were inspired by U.S. military training techniques; in addition more specific training was provided to selected trainees, focusing on “specialist skills” such as the hijacking of civilian aircraft, in training camps in Iran during the 1980s and in Afghanistan during the 1990s.

28 Talenti Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism. pp. 103-104.
The most clear example of the instructions and information that Atta would have worked with is the four-page document recovered by the FBI from three separate locations, including Atta’s misdirected luggage, after the four planes had crashed. What the letter represents is the level of religious and logistical instructions that each of the 19 operatives worked with prior to, and until, that day. The document offers an insight into the state of consciousness that was invoked and maintained for each member of the operation. The technical and logistical plans for the operation serves as the script of the eventual performance, drafted and refined in the course of its preparation. The letter is evidently a final reminder and exhortation, a tool for focusing the resolve as well as ensuring the mental and material preparedness of each performer in the operation.

Remind the soul/self to listen and obey on that night. You will face decisive situations which will require listening and obeying 100 percent. So tame your soul/self, purify it, convince it, make it understand, and incite it to action. God has said: “Obey God and His Messenger, and do not fight amongst yourselves or else you will lose your heart and fail. Be patient, for God is with the patient and those who persevere.” ...Purify your soul/heart of all imperfections. Completely forget that thing called “this world/this life”. The time for amusement is over and the time of truth is upon us. How much time have we wasted in our lives? Should we not make advantage of these last hours to offer actions that make us closer to God and actions of obedience?

Table 16: Excerpts from “The Last Night” document.

The first part of “The Last Night”, begins with a reminder for each operative to shave, shower and apply cologne. Of the 15 items in this section, there are 13 items that deal with the mental states of each of the performers, while 2 items deal with the material requirements of clothing, weapons and external appearance. The first item instructs the operative to make “a pledge to die” and renew their “intentions”. At least 6 subsequent items are concerned with inducing a state of preparedness for death, through a combination of ritual preparations such as the performance of cleansing and the blessing of one’s own body, as well as mental preparations such as the instruction to “purify your soul” and the remembrance of particular supplications or prayers. The “purification of the soul” consists of the induction of a state of “100 percent obedience” to their “divine orders” and acceptance of the inevitability of death, as they are reminded to renounce “this world” or “this life”. The other items serve to induce a state of preparedness for “the battle” to come. The operative is reminded to review the details of their plan – the script – and to re-affirm the absolute inseparability of “God” and “victory”. The most frequently occurring noun in the document is the word “God”, not including the numerous occurrences of the words “Almighty”, “Lord”, and the
designative pronouns “He”, “Him” and “His”. In addition, the frequent occurrences of the words “Prophet”, “Muhammad” and “Qur'an” are indicative of the highly religious nature of this document.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You have to perform in your heart the highest invocations. No one should notice that you are making the supplication, “There is no God but God.” If you say it 1,000 times no one should be able to tell whether you are quiet or invoking God. Among the miracles is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “Whoever says, ‘There is no God but God,’ with all his heart, will enter heaven.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 17: Excerpt from “The Last Night” document.

The second part of the document is concerned with the mental state of the operative during their trip to the airport. To ensure that no doubts or fears interfere with their performance, the operative is instructed to hold and occupy their attention upon a series of supplications during their final journey to the airport. The supplications are intended to reassure the operative of the ‘righteousness’ of their prescribed tasks and roles, to maintain the resolve of each operative, and to enable the operative to maintain a “happy, optimistic and calm” façade to prevent any arousal of suspicion amongst airline and security staff. The third and final part of the document is concerned with the operative’s mental state as they board the aircraft, as well as at the decisive moments of confrontation as they seize control of the aircraft, and their final moments as they approach their designated targets. They are instructed to “remember that this is a battle for the sake of God” and to “strike like champions who do not want to go back to this world” as the confrontations with airline personnel and passengers begin. As their plane approaches their target – as “the moment of truth approaches” – they are exhorted to “wholeheartedly welcome death for the sake of God”. Finally, they are reminded to end their life “while praying” or make their last words: “There is no God but God, Muhammad is His messenger”. They are given the promise that “Afterwards, we will all meet in the highest Heaven, God willing”.

The instructions contained in the document serve to induce a state of consciousness that is greatly dissociated from the normative states of those around them, as well as from the powerful emotional engagements that such a performance would likely invoke if there were no such equally powerful points of focus brought into play.

30 See Appendix B.
Elements of the instruction document are readily seen as hypnotic processes that would induce such a state of consciousness – such as the section that recommends that the operative recite “1000 times” the supplication “There is no God but God” as this ensures that they will go “to heaven”. The form of the document uses repetitions of key phrases to heighten attentive involvement in certain concepts and notions. In this sense, the document is clearly seen to be inductive of a particular mental state developed over previous periods of training and life experience.

INITIATION

Attam’s initiation into the performance state that eventually led to the final act of his life appears to have occurred when he was recruited into and trained with the fundamentalist militant organisation that would give him the opportunity to become a “martyr” for his adopted cause. This could have occurred during his early years at the University of Cairo with the Engineers Syndicate of the Muslim Brotherhood, during his “pilgrimage” and visit to Cairo in 1995, and during his 15-month absence from Hamburg for “family reasons” between the middle of 1997 and late 1998. It has been reported that, after his last round of training in 1999, Attam met with bin Laden in Afghanistan – a gesture reserved for exceptional cadre. This suggests an initiation into a sanctioned leadership role befitting Attam’s mission. Other instances of initiation would have been in the form of preparation, training for, or performance of acts of violence in the name of militant fundamentalism.

INVOCATION

The invocation of Attam’s performance state occurred with the activation and the commencement of funding of the “martyrdom operation” that would result in the 9/11 event. The flow of financial support necessary for the performance of the operation, as well as the directive to begin the planning and preparation were both essential elements that Attam required in order to start the series of actions that would lead to his part in the events of that day. In the weeks leading up to that day, there was a further invocation of the ‘final plan’ – invoked by such acts as the purchasing of the flight tickets; the arrivals of all the members of the teams for each flight; the passing of the

---

point of time beyond which the postponement of the final plan became impossible – the ‘point-of-no-return’; and the performance of the various acts and states prescribed in the four-page letter. The acts of that day, in themselves, were an invocation of a desired further state – a heightened conflictual state.

IMAGINATION

Judged by his actions, Atta’s mindset is evidently consistent with the mentality apparent in the Al-Takfir wal-Hegira (Anathema and Withdrawal) movement that emerged in Egypt in the late 1970s out of the local brand of fundamentalism elaborated by Sayyed Qutb. The Qutbist movement fostered many others like Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman, who was convicted for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and was the leader of Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyah, the group responsible for the attacks and killings of foreign tourists in Egypt between 1992 and 1997. The Takfiri mentality is widely believed to have inspired much of the violence perpetrated by militant Islamic fundamentalists in the international arena. This cult of militant fundamentalism promotes an ideology that strives to “negate the existence of common ground with others”.

It is an ideology inspired and contextualised, in Atta’s case, by such events as the rise of “secularism” in Egypt with Anwar Sadat; by the military successes of Israel against neighbouring Arab states; by the first Palestinian intifada; and by the actions of the US-led coalition against Iraq over Kuwait.

In the Takfiri mentality, the “aghyar” is positioned as the “other” which must be eliminated in order to maintain the validity of the cult. This has become most apparent in the choice of targets of the operation that Atta had conducted. The World Trade Center towers in New York City, as well as the American Airlines and United Airlines flights, were chosen because of their symbolic representations of globalisation and modernity. The United States, Christianity and capitalism have come to represent the elements that threaten the very existence of the cult’s brand of fundamentalism – as it is seen as contradictory to the principal meaning-making process of its adherents. In Atta’s imagination, these elements become synonymous with the notions of “Satan” and the enemy, as the antithesis of “divinity”. Elements of cultural memory – traditions
and narratives – served to make sense of the actions that Atta and his colleagues would feel compelled to undertake.

The traditions and narratives of the “fedayeen” (“those who sacrifice their lives”) would serve as a precedent and a template for action. This history would recall the group-defined experience of the medieval Crusades, when fedayeen would infiltrate the Christian camps, disguising themselves as merchants and travellers, to wreak pain and havoc with poisoned daggers. With little chance of their own escape, their missions would often result in their own deaths, and the tightly-knit fedayeen communities would come to position the attitude that “death is to despised” as one of its highest values. This attitude towards death is further reflected or developed in the traditions and narratives of the “entehari” (suicide) and the “esteshhad” (martyrdom) cults of contemporary militant fundamentalist activists. Atta, as he would have hoped and anticipated, now finds pride of place amongst the “arsenal of believers” who have strapped on packs of explosives to their bodies, or driven car bombs, or emptied magazines of automatic rifles into crowds of “aghyar” and “infidels”.

The performances of these various acts are carried out for the impacts upon, what are perceived as polarised, audience communities in the conflictual state – the communities with which the performers identify and the communities of the performers’ identified enemy. By the violence of these acts and by the attitude towards death that is made apparent by the act, these performances are intended to “strike fear at the heart” of the enemy and to “raise the courage” of sympathisers and allies. In this way, these performances are intended “to please God” in the imagination of the adherent.

Each one of you should prepare to carry out his role in a way that would satisfy God. Clench your teeth, as your righteous precessors did, God rest their souls, before engaging in battle.35

If the 9/11 event is seen in relation to other acts of performance violence in other parts of the world that are attributed to the militant fundamentalist cult of jihad, it is possible to compare the belief systems that are apparent in each instance – particularly where the training and preparation may be linked to a particular network. On the 12th of October 2002, three bombs were detonated on the island of Bali designed to cause a large number of deaths amongst tourists in the nightclubs of Kuta. Members of the group that carried out the attacks were soon arrested. Connections between this group

35 Taheri: p. 41.
and the Southeast Asian militant fundamentalist network *Jemaah Islamiyah* quickly became apparent. From the interviews of suspects that followed, the chief police investigator in Bali, General I Made Pastika, suggested three “levels of motivation” that were apparent in the operatives interviewed. The first view saw such acts as “a short cut to heaven”. Another view was motivated by a hatred of Americans (and its allies) and a desire “to kill as many Americans as possible” – although most of the tourists killed in Bali were Australians and Britons – “because they think that these American people are oppressing the Muslims in Iraq, in Palestine, in Afghanistan, and all these places”. Still another view was motivated by a desire “to establish… a Muslim country” (a caliphate) in the region. These motivations can thus be seen as “intellectual justification” that emerges from an “absolutist ideology” of “us versus them" transmitted through processes of enculturation and indoctrination. The processes by which these motivations are shaped and developed can thus be seen to be key instruments of the militant fundamentalist cult of jihad. Such instruments can also be seen in terms of the elements of the belief systems that constitute the motivational complex of the performer, and the processes by which that complex becomes a closed system.

The German magazine *Der Spiegel* reported on one psychological profile of the operatives that executed the 9/11 event which concluded that their preparation process consisted of twelve steps. *Step one* – the development of an extreme religious and political belief system. *Step two* – the hardening of the view of the West as the enemy. *Step three* – becoming convinced that a state of war existed. *Step four* – learning to see suicide, which is prohibited by the Qur’an, as an acceptable, even desirable, form of military strategy. *Step five* – the development of the belief that Holy War against the unbelievers is an honourable deed, one predetermined by Allah. *Step six* – the development of the idea that the murderers are chosen people. *Step seven* – the development of the idea that mass killing represents the only effective action against an overpowering enemy. *Step eight* – the development of the idea of individual gain, the certainty that they would enter paradise. *Step nine* – the development of the idea of communal gain, that the heroic act would hit the enemy where it hurt; more effective symbolism could not be achieved. *Step ten* – the dehumanisation of the victims, none were worthy of compassion; they were mere appendages of the enemy – “collateral damage”. *Step eleven* – the formation of the cell, the sub-group; group pressure grew,

---

36 See Appendix B.
37 Byrne, Jennifer (2003). *Interview with General I Made Pastika. ABC Foreign Correspondent, Denpasar.*
with it group control, group solidarity. *Step twelve* – the repetition of everything already learned.\(^{39}\)

As the narrative of the life of Mohammed Atta ends, so the story of the first major conflict of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the “war on terrorism”, begins. On the 11\textsuperscript{th} of September, U.S. President George W. Bush delivered three televised addresses in response to the attacks of that morning.\(^{40}\)

---

**George W. Bush – the President**

The head of state of a large industrially developed nation – a global “superpower” – such as the United States represents a constituency that is comprised of a wide range of roles and interests. Elected into office largely through the support of the “Evangelical Christian” and the Religious Right sections of the Republican Party, George W. Bush appears to represent a highly conservative community within U.S. politics. Many of his key advisors are prominent and respected personalities within the Christian Evangelist and Christian Reconstructionist communities. As much of the texts that are analysed in this study derive from speeches that come not only from Bush the person, but more from the Bush administration, it must be acknowledged that these texts emerged from intensive processes of consultation and consideration. The key influences in the production of these texts included the administration’s chief speechwriter Michael Gerson (a Christian Evangelist), Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, press secretary Ari Fleischer and counselor Karen Hughes. Thus this study is concerned not only with the person in the role of President, but with the key influences upon the texts that were pronounced by that person. In this sense, this study is concerned with the religious, military and corporate community that controlled the White House and the Presidency at the time of this crisis.

The state of consciousness enacted and embodied by George W. Bush, in the performance of his role as President of the United States, enabled and required him to

---


act out a leadership function, as well as provide a coherent verbalisation of the meaning-making process which the U.S. majority and (what would become) the “coalition” group consciousness was undergoing. The meaning-making process served to provide that group consciousness with a narrative frame within which the 9/11 event could be contextualised, and within which a directive for future action could be determined and communicated. Bush identified with his role of President within a particular narrative frame, and the directives he issued in that capacity enabled the embodiment and enactment of a group-defined consciousness state. The narrative frame invoked was influenced by apocalyptic themes coloured by a ‘revivalist’ – Phoenix-type – overtone. The theme of ‘justice’ is also critical to this narrative.

In his leadership role, Bush had the task of inducing his audience at home into a state of ‘dealing with’ the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. In preparing his televised address for the evening of the 11th of September, Bush realised that his “mission is reassurance” – “I wanted to calm nerves”41. Group attention was directed away from chaotic hysteria to “a quiet unyielding anger”42 – a calm resolve out of a state of shock. Each subsequent address and statement had its particular audience, as well as a general audience. The State of the Union speeches addressed his fellow politicians and legislators, as well as the general public in the United States and internationally. The speeches to the United Nations particularly addressed the gathering of representations of other nation states. Each address was intended to induce particular attitude and action states in its various audiences, as well as to signal the intentions of the Bush administration.

IDENTIFICATION

In the same year that Mohammed Atta was born in Egypt, George W. Bush joined the Texas Air National Guard as a pilot. Bush would subsequently undergo a series of self-identifications that would lead him to cross paths with Atta, who would pilot American Airlines flight 11 on one historic Tuesday morning. Bush had identified himself as the 43rd President of the United States since the end the previous year. Twelve years before that, he had identified as the son of the 41st President of the

---

41 See Appendix C.
United States. Immediately before he had identified as the Republican Presidential candidate, his experience and role as the Governor of Texas prepared him for the office of the national executive.

At about 9:05 a.m. on Tuesday the 11th of September, news would reach him that would lead him to identify a particular ‘situation’ – a state of war in which he would play a central role. Less than half an hour later, he would identify on national television “an apparent terrorist attack” as well as “a national tragedy”. It would be some hours yet before he would feel able to identify the ‘enemy’. Twelve hours later, as he met with members of his National Security Council, he would identify and speak of “a great opportunity” emerging out of the smouldering ruins of the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings. In the days to come, he would refer to the “evil-doers” who had committed this “new kind of evil” as investigators and a group consciousness began to identify those responsible. He began to identify “the great cause” upon which he would lead his country into action. He would emphasise the strength of identifications felt between the victims of the attack, the American public, his administration and himself as he spoke of “fellow citizens” and “our way of life”. Within a few days of the attack, he and his administration would broaden this identification to include a number of government leaders in the international arena to build a “collective will” to be mobilised in “a different kind of conflict against a different kind of enemy”. This series of identifications were framed within a further identification and broad validation contained in an often repeated phrase – “God bless America”. These identifications were the

---

46 Bush Address to the Nation.
48 Bush Radio address.
basis upon which Bush and each particular performer in the unfolding drama became involved.

IN INVOLVEMENT

When the report of a second aircraft crashing into the second World Trade Center tower reached Bush as he sat in front of 16 schoolchildren at an elementary school in Sarasota, he became involved in a state of war – he later recalled thinking, “I made up my mind at that moment that we were going to war”.49 Within thirty minutes, he would proclaim before television cameras that this act “will not stand”; and within three hours he had declared to media reporters that “we will show the world that we will pass this test”.50

Over the next 48 hours, he became involved in three critical tasks. As the Commander-in-Chief of his nation, he would need to ascertain and attribute responsibility for the attacks. In this capacity, he would also begin to formulate a response directed at those deemed to be responsible.

As the President of his nation, he was required to address the American public, to make sense of the events, to indicate what steps were to be made to prevent further danger and to invoke justice upon those held responsible. Within six hours of the attack, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, George J. Tenet would tell Bush that they could be “virtually certain” that responsibility can be attributed to Usama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network. At that time, Bush would decide to deliver a short televised address to the nation later that evening, he would instruct staff to begin work on a speech. He would tell his communications adviser that “our mission is reassurance”, and he later recalled that “I wanted to calm nerves” with that evening’s address.51.

In the first twelve hours of this crisis – this social drama – Bush’s involvement would go from managing a ‘threat alert’ to ‘building a coalition’. By holding press conferences, issuing presidential statements, and delivering an address to the nation, Bush would influence the involvement of the American and international public in the

49 Balz and Woodward.
50 Bush Address to the Nation.
51 Balz and Woodward.
events that were unfolding. He would influence the involvement of the members of his administration by bringing together a ‘war cabinet’.

Bush would manage the involvement of the United States and its allies in a “war on terror” with use of phrases like “despicable acts” and “barbarism” to describe those he believed to be responsible for the attacks. He would use phrases such as “good will prevail” and “a noble cause” to describe the actions of the United States and its allies, who were reminded that “our freedom is threatened.” He would invoke the words of the NATO Charter to say that “an attack on one is an attack on all”. His own involvement in the drama was influenced by his daily intelligence briefings, as well as by his avowed commitment to the promotion of the principles of “compassionate conservatism”, of voluntarism, and the pursuit of the “great good”. This involvement was driven by his stated commitment that the “war on terror” was the “focus of the administration”.

ISOLATION

Within the ‘office’ of the role of President, Bush is substantially limited in the amounts and levels of interaction that he can have outside of the protocols and plans that are determined by presidential staff and traditions. In the same way, anyone who might wish to interact with Bush as President would be subject to the stringent requirements and restrictions of his office. These measures serve to isolate Bush from any influences that may unnecessarily distract him from the performance of the core tasks of his role. The isolation created is physical, the White House is both a place of work and a fortress; Secret Service officers control the physical environment around the President to ensure the presence and continuity of a functional chief executive officer for the nation.

52 Bush Address to the Nation.
53 Bush President: Today We Mourned, Tomorrow We Work.
Generally, the ‘American people’ only have mediated access to the President and his administration. The “public” and the “average man” for whom the released statements of the President are constructed would only expect to make physical contact with their head-of-state as a privilege or a transgression. This was even more the case, as the events of September 11 unfolded. With the requirements of ‘continuity of government’, Bush was subject to heightened levels of presidential security measures as the threats to his person surfaced and were assessed in the course of that day. The type of isolation that is of concern in this instance is a physical form of isolation inherent in the role and office of the President, that is employed for protective purposes.

As reports came through of further events and possible threats, emergency contingency plans were implemented by Secret Service officers as protective measures. In this instance, Bush was physically transferred from the elementary school in Sarasota and isolated within the confines of his presidential aircraft, Air Force One. The plane and its small party of core staff left Florida and proceeded to hop from one Air Force base to another, first to Louisiana then to Nebraska before returning to Washington, in order to keep the presidential party out of harm.

Throughout this time however, Bush was able to maintain contact by telephone and teleconference technology with his Vice President, Secretary of Defense, National Security team, Cabinet, wife and father. Therefore the isolation that was created for him enabled Bush to continue to perform his presidential duties at a time of crisis, and to be reassured that his immediately family were themselves safe from harm thereby ensuring that this concern did not become a source of distraction for him.

Bush returned to the White House and would not leave over the next two days, as the crisis became “the primary focus of this administration”\(^{60}\); his schedule was revised to enable him to “spend the maximum amount of time”\(^{61}\) on this concern. Meetings with his National Security Council became the forum for determining the strategy and response of the U.S. government. The isolation of a weekend at Camp David provided his National Security team with sufficient focus to consider their options and prepare initial plans within four days of the attack.

---


Security clearances and intelligence briefings all serve to produce an isolated environment wherein ‘secret’ and ‘classified’ information are distributed to its intended audiences. This isolation serves to limit the circulation of such information in order to maximise the possible advantages and to minimise the possible harm to agents and informants. Within the isolation of the role of President, Bush has access to constantly updated intelligence information that enables him to maintain a state of awareness appropriate to the tasks that he must perform.

In these cases, Bush experiences an isolation with a base of support designed to increase focus and strength. In a conflictual state, the enforced isolation of an adversary from its own base of support can greatly reduce its focus and strength. As Bush worked to create the “international coalition” in the “war against terrorism”, he would share some of the intelligence information to which he had access with heads of states whom he would judge to be or would cultivate as ‘friends’. In rallying together “all nations that love freedom”, 62

Bush would implement a strategy to “starve the terrorists”63 by calling on heads of nations of the world to be either “with us or against us”.64 In this way Bush and his administration would strive to isolate the identified ‘enemy’, the Al-Qaeda network and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, from open international support in preparation for the planned U.S. counter-attacks. In the conflictual state, there is a critical difference between isolation with and without a base of support – in the way that the focus of the performer upon their objective is either increased or decreased.

INSTRUCTION

When isolation is created with the intention of increasing or decreasing focus, it produces a state in which information and instructions are communicated, emphasised or modified. The following examples reveal the instructions and information that influencing Bush and his state, and that was used by Bush to elicit and invoke states in others. In analysing the flow of information and the status of instructions that formed the state of consciousness that Bush possessed, embodied and enacted on the

---

62 Balz and Woodward ‘We Will Rally the World’.
64 Balz and Woodward ‘We Will Rally the World’.
morning of the 11th of September between 8:45 and 9:30 a.m., it is possible to chart a profound and dramatic shift. When reports of the first plane crash into the north tower of the World Trade Center reached Bush en route to a “soft event” at an elementary school, his mentality and worldview led him to interpret that event as an ‘accident’. “This is pilot error” he recalled thinking later, it must have been “a heart attack” – “it’s unbelievable that somebody would do this”. Minutes later, his mentality and worldview was modified, in the isolation created by his Chief of Staff whispering into his ear “A second plane hit the second tower. America is under attack”. 65 (See Figure 19) The ‘soft event’ was turned into the ‘historical moment’ by this piece of information.

The dictates of his role, as President, would have demanded the consideration of a range of instructions. For another few minutes, Bush sat, listened to and interacted with the group of schoolchildren in front of him – betraying just a hint of distraction – until a school official ended the session, and provided him with a gracious exit. Over the next fifteen minutes, Bush would speak with his Vice President, the Governor of New York, and the Director of the FBI as he began to issue his own instructions.

As he delivered his first public statement of the crisis, he would show a trace of anxiety and was slightly rushed as he spoke to console and to assure that retribution would come. Bush informed the public that he had “ordered that the full resources of the Federal Government go to help the victims and their families, and to conduct a full-scale investigation, to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act”. These two courses of action – to comfort and to retaliate – were the “focus” of his instructions in the weeks to come as Bush led his administration, his allies and the public. From the initial impact of the first news and images that marked the beginning of this social drama, the U.S. public were led through a series of states from the initial shock of realisation. To begin with, they experienced the “threat alert status” and the “emergency contingency plans” that were implemented on the first day. The state of their democratic system would alter as “bipartisan Congressional support” provided their President with extra-ordinary executive powers. 66

Bush would offer instructions to the U.S. public through presidential statements; in the first televised address to the nation on the evening of the attack, he would suggest that the appropriate response to the present situation was a “quiet, unyielding
anger” as he prepared his “fellow citizens” for the coming “war against terrorism”.67 The U.S. public was assured that “we will win”,68 and that their “patience… resolve… strength”69 would be required. It was critical that any disruption to their “way of life” be minimised therefore Bush would instruct his primary audience to “open for business”,70 to “live your lives… be calm and resolute”,71 and that these acts were the best way to “defy and defeat the terrorists”.72 Each of these instructions serve to redefine – to alter – the group state in the direction of a paranoiagenic trance in preparation for a conflictual state. From a “caretaking” mode of leadership, Bush would direct a shift to encompass a more hostile attitude towards the identified enemy.

As White House staff rushed to draft the second presidential statement of 9/11, press secretary Ari Fleischer consulted with counselor Karen Hughes on its stance. From a draft, Fleischer read out the phrase “this morning we were the victims of...” and drew an immediate response from Hughes who said “we are not the victims of anything... we may have been the targets, we may have been attacked, but we are not victims”.73 When Bush finally delivered that statement, the “we” that had been attacked would have become inextricably linked and made synonymous with a treasured value. Bush began with the line: “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended”.74

In order to prevent a sense of ‘helplessness’ – a “victim” complex – from setting into their group consciousness, Bush would instruct his public to “continue praying”,75 to “support the victims” and to “uphold the values of America”.76 It was critical that the group consciousness of the U.S. public not be allowed to remain in a terrorised or shocked state. Therefore Bush would suggest to his public that “our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution”, and that “we will meet violence with patient justice – assured of the rightness of our cause”.77 In this way, the group-defined mentality that

66 Balz and Woodward 'We Will Rally the World'.
67 Bush Address to the Nation.
68 Bush Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 10:53 A.M. EDT 12 September 2001.
69 Bush Radio address.
70 Bush Address to the Nation.
73 Balz and Woodward ‘America’s Chaotic Road to War’.
75 Consistently in statements between 11-20 September 2001.
77 Ibid.
had been witness to the attack was informed of the “the truth about terror”78 – as something that must be fought rather than feared. To fight this “terrorism", Bush would call for a “spirit of cooperation”79 in the “national character” to be shown in the “war against terrorism” and by volunteering for the newly formed U.S.A. Freedom Corps.80

In these various ways, U.S. citizens and allies are instructed to embody and enact particular roles and scripts in order to play a part in this “new kind of war”.81 Bush would inform his audience that this war would be fought with “every resource at our command -- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war”82.

Diplomatic action began with a “coalition-building”83 process, as Bush and his administration mustered international support, and worked to deprive the targeted enemy of its support. Nations that joined the U.S.-led coalition were given an “assignment” and results were duly expected; their leaders would learn that “if you are to be on our team, then we want performance”.84 There was “no neutral ground”.85 Bush would declare: “I want justice”.86 The U.S. government would issue “demands” on the Taliban regime.87 In these instances the instructions were communicated from one government to another; typical of conflictual states, compliance would identify allies and non-compliance would identify enemies. Each of these instructions are designed to elicit particular perception and action states from its audiences of individuals, institutions, or leadership groups.

Financial action was taken to freeze financial assets that can be linked to the targeted enemy88 and the U.S. public is called upon to demonstrate their “continued participation and confidence in the American economy”.89

78 Bush President Bush Speaks to United Nations.
80 Ibid.
81 Bush Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 10:53 A.M. EDT 12 September 2001.
83 Bush Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 10:53 A.M. EDT 12 September 2001.
84 Bush President Directs Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan.
85 Bush Presidential Address to The Nation, 1:00 P.M. EDT 7 October 2001.
88 Bush President Freezes Terrorists’ Assets.
Intelligence action taken was designed to obtain relevant and necessary information regarding the targeted enemy and its support base; action would also be taken to put in place agents of influence and action who would act on behalf of the U.S. and its interests. Intelligence action would also be directed at moulding public opinion – “public diplomacy” – and at sending particular messages to the targeted enemy and its supporters. The role that Bush would play in this particular action is evident in the public statements he issued from the first days of the crisis. Less than four hours after Atta crashed the first plane, Bush would declare that “the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts”. Bush used the term “hunt down” in each of the first two statements of the crisis – invoking the perceived dominance of the hunter over the hunted. That evening he would issue the statement that would come to be known as the “Bush Doctrine” – “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them”. The following morning he would pronounce words intended for both a U.S. public hungry for revenge and an international network that would be held responsible for the attacks.

This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, then runs for cover. But it won’t be able to run for cover forever. This is an enemy that tries to hide. But it won’t be able to hide forever. This is an enemy that thinks its harbors are safe. But they won’t be safe forever. This enemy attacked not just our people, but all freedom loving people everywhere in the world. The United States of America will use all our resources to conquer this enemy. We will rally the world. We will be patient, we will be focused, and we will be steadfast in our determination. This battle will take time and resolve. But make no mistake about it: we will win.

**Table 18:** Excerpt from “Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 12 September 2001”

In these statements, Bush posits the conquest of the enemy as a certainty – a key tactic in persuading his audience that confidence in his administration was warranted. The functions of intelligence actions were particularly emphasised as Bush referred to the enemy as “a frame of mind”.

Military action was considered by Bush within minutes of the second plane crash. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Bush recalled that when his Chief of Staff first informed him of that second strike, his conclusion was immediate – “we were going to war”. By the afternoon of the first day, he would have instructed his Defense

---

90 Bush Barksdale Air Force Base.
91 Bush Address to the Nation.
92 Bush Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team at The Cabinet Room, 10:53 A.M. EDT 12 September 2001.
93 Balz and Woodward ‘We Will Rally the World’.
94 Balz and Woodward ‘America’s Chaotic Road to War’.
Secretary to begin preparations for a military response. By the evening he would have told the U.S. public that “our military is powerful, and it’s prepared”6. Five days later, he had decided on the initial plans and would tell his U.S. audience that he had “faith in our military. And we have got a job to do… We will rid the world of the evil-doers. We will call together freedom loving people to fight terrorism”. The next day he would emphasise his call to action by saying that “a mobilization is a strong symbol of this nation’s resolve”. Then again three days later, he would stress urgency of action – “Our Nation has been put on notice: We are not immune from attack. We will take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans”. As the first bombs and missiles of the U.S.-led military campaign fell on Afghan soil, Bush would issue the publicly-voiced rallying call of the Commander-in-Chief.

To all the men and women in our military, every sailor, every soldier, every airman, every coastguardsman, every Marine. I say this: Your mission is defined; your objectives are clear; your goal is just. You have my full confidence, and you will have every tool you need to carry out your duty.

Table 19: Excerpt from “Address to the Nation, 7 October 2001”.

Bush would also prepare the U.S. public for the costs of the military action by calling for “patience in all the sacrifices that may come”, and by continually reminding his audience that “there will be sacrifice”.

Statements such as these, as well as the subsequent identification of an “axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world”, are all designed to induce particular states or shifts in the mentality of its various audiences. These statements are carefully crafted by Bush with the aid of his advisers and a team of speech-writers. In some cases, Bush would spend substantial amounts of time redrafting and rehearsing the statements and speeches. Each of these statements and speeches are clearly intended to influence the states of its various audiences in different ways. As words that come from the leader of a powerful nation, the text is intended and taken as expressions of great authority – as instructions and information which influence the actions or perceptions of the individual or group listeners.

---

6 Ibid.
7 Bush Address to the Nation.
8 Bush Guard and Reserves “Define Spirit of America”.
9 Bush Presidential Address to The Nation, 1:00P.M. EDT 7 October 2001.
11 Bush The President’s State of the Union Address, 9:15 P.M. EST 29 January 2002.
INITIATION

When Bush was declared the winner of the 2000 U.S. presidential elections and when he took the oath of office of the President at his inauguration, he was initiated into the role of the 43rd President of the United States of America. When he delivered his inaugural address in January 2001, he would initiate the U.S. public into the role of his constituency as he outlined his programme and his guiding principles. If the planes crashing into the World Trade Center towers initiated this social drama, then the three televised speeches that Bush delivered on that day initiated him and the U.S. public into their response and involvement in this “international crisis”. The policies that he would formulate and the addresses that he would deliver to the nation initiated the U.S. government and public into the various phases of the “war against terrorism”.

The uses of the electronic media in these initiations allow for an intensity and immediacy of experience for a mass audience, that gives these moments and processes a powerfully heightened quality fitting of transformative events. In the reproduction and isolation of key moments of the televised speeches, and in the selective use of text in news reports, the U.S. public were presented with an authoritative meaning-making context – “Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist attacks” – and directives for appropriate action – “we stand together to win the war against terrorism”. 104

INVOCATION

In the 969 words that Bush delivered over the three publicly televised broadcasts in the first 12 hours of the crisis, the most frequently occurring nouns were “America” or “Americans” (17), “world” (10), “acts” (8), “attack” (7), “terrorism” or “terrorist” (7), “nation” or “national” (7), “freedom”, “government”, “people”, “security” and “victims” (5 each). The word “evil” was first invoked during the evening address, occurring 4 times in the 594-word speech. The Bush Administration was concerned with the invocation of a set of identifications which posited the notion of “American” or “national” interests and values – aligned with the interests and values of the “world” – as being threatened by
an “evil” force. In his address to the nation on the night of the 11th of September, Bush invoked a “war against terrorism” and linked this statement to a Biblical passage from Psalm 23: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me”.105

The “international crisis” that was invoked earlier that day would cause Bush to invoke a “time for action”. The narrative of heroic acts on United Airlines flight 93 resonated with the reported final words of passenger Todd Beamer – overheard by a telephone operator to declare “let’s roll!” as he reportedly rallied fellow passengers to attack their hijackers – that would provide a key motif for the call to action106 as Bush echoes them, one month into the military campaign, “My fellow Americans, let’s roll.”107

Such words and imagery would provide the invocation of war with the necessary and appropriate levels of emotional involvement for such an invocation to be effective. A series of speeches and statements publicly delivered by Bush between the 11th and the 20th of September constitutes the main body of this invocation.

A televised address to the nation on the 7th of October served as an invocation of the visible military actions of the “war against terrorism”. The promise by Bush of “humanitarian aid” to the “people of Afghanistan”108 serves as the invocation of the international “public diplomacy” strategy as part of the psychological operations of the military actions. A speech by Bush at the General Assembly of the United Nations – where he spoke of the crisis as “a defining moment” for the U.N. and “a chance to write the story of our times” – served as an invocation of the U.N.’s role in “rebuilding” the government of Afghanistan.109 This role was first publicly discussed on the 19th of October between U.S. and U.N. officials, and passed as a Resolution by the U.N. Security Council on the 14th of November. In each of these cases, the symbolic acts invoked evidently invite and shape audience expectations that resonate beyond the immediate words or actions.

104 Bush Address to the Nation.
105 Ibid.
IMAGINATION

From the words expressed by Bush it is apparent that his mentality and worldview is heavily influenced by an ‘evangelical Christian’ perspective, with substantial concessions to a religious pluralism probably driven by the requirements of late 20th century political expediency. Reverend Billy Graham is a Christian Evangelist who has had a continuing relationship with most U.S. presidents since Dwight Eisenhower, and particularly since Richard Nixon. Bush was influenced by Graham to “commit {his} heart to Jesus Christ” in 1985.

When he was Governor of Texas, Bush convinced religious conservatives that he could produce a set of priorities wholly acceptable to them. When he campaigned for the presidency, he convinced the ‘religious right’ that he was the right man to be their candidate, enough for them to provide substantial contributions to his campaign fund. He recruited the leader of the Christian Coalition, Ralph Reed, and appointed him as a key advisor. Marvin Olasky – the foremost advocate of “compassionate conservatism”, the concept that would dominate his policies as President – was also a staunch advocate of “Christian Reconstructionism”. Many of his aides and advisers share these worldviews. In particular, the worldview of Christian Reconstructionism is highly infused by “apocalypticism” and “post-millennialism”. Added to this, Bush would state during the presidential campaign his belief that “the path of least resistance is always downhill”, as an indication of his commitment to the implicit struggle between ‘good and evil’.

This commitment becomes most apparent after the 9/11 event, in his calls for a struggle on behalf of “civilization”. In his address to a joint session of Congress and the U.S. public on the 20th of September, he positioned himself as a speaker for the ‘civilized’ world. “This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom”. At an APEC conference one month later, he was explicit on the antithetical nature of his enemies in relation to civility. “By their actions, they have divorced themselves from the elements

that define civilizations themselves”. One month after the bombs started to fall on Afghanistan, he told the U.S. public and its allies that “we wage a war to save civilization, itself”. At the United Nations, he warned the gathering of states that “civilization itself, the civilization we share, is threatened”.

Bush invoked memories of the Second World War at the U.N. Assembly, recalling the trauma of its carnage to say that the “evil has returned”. The word “evil” had been invoked on the first day of the crisis, as Bush described the acts viewed by millions on television – “our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature”. This “evil” was seen to be directed against the core value of “freedom”; less than four hours after the first plane crash, Bush declared that “freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward”.

As Bush and his administration, as well as the U.S. and international public, struggled to make sense and meaning out of the events of that morning he invoked the power of “faith” in his evening address to the nation – “I ask for your prayers”. Bush clearly realised the dangers of turning the crisis into a religious war, therefore he drew upon a pluralist perspective on religion and faith. “For those who try to pit religion against religion, our great nation will stand up and reject that kind of thought. We won’t allow that to creep into the consciousness of the world. We’re going to lead the world to fight for freedom, and we’ll have Muslim and Jew and Christian side-by-side with us.”

Bush would invoke a note of ‘optimism’ in dealing with the crisis – “through the tears of sadness I see an opportunity… to do generations a favor, by coming together and whipping terrorism”. For Bush, this crisis was an “opportunity” to renegotiate U.S. foreign relations, to align a vast majority of nation-based powers against a small collection of activist networks and a few rogue nations. “In this moment of opportunity, a common danger is erasing old rivalries”. He would also position the

113 McMillan, Alex Frew (2001). Bush: Terrorists Attacked World and Free Trade, CNN Shanghai. 2001:
114 Bush President Discusses War on Terrorism, 8:03 P.M. EST 8 November 2001.
115 Bush President Bush Speaks to United Nations.
116 Ibid.
117 Bush Address to the Nation.
118 Bush Barksdale Air Force Base.
119 Bush Address to the Nation.
122 Balz and Woodward America’s Chaotic Road to War.
crisis as an opportunity to “overcome evil with greater good”.\textsuperscript{124} He would suggest that the crisis had put the U.S. public in touch with “our better selves… We began to think less of the goods we can accumulate and more about the good we can do”.\textsuperscript{125} For Bush, this “opportunity” would allow the U.S. to “lead the world to victory”\textsuperscript{126} – to a period of renewal. “As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world”.\textsuperscript{127} Thus the crisis was positioned as a period of adversity that had revealed the “the true character of this great land”.\textsuperscript{128}

There is a belief in an inevitability and a cyclic nature to the periods of adversity and the periods of renewal, as Bush declares that “freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war”.\textsuperscript{129} Evident in this mentality and worldview are the elements of “apocalypticism” and “post-millennialism” that pervades the social and cultural environment from which Bush had emerged.

Underlying all this, is the principle of ‘revenge’ and ‘retribution' that has driven the U.S. response to the attacks of the 9/11 event. When Bush suggests that “the victims of September 11\textsuperscript{th} were innocent, and this nation will never forget them”,\textsuperscript{130} he describes a preoccupation of the imagination that compels and drives the search for justice – the principle of “an eye for an eye”. Many of the missiles and bombs that subsequently rained down on Afghanistan were “dedicated” to victims of 9/11, particularly members of the Police Department and Fire Department of New York. This sentiment was dramatically played out in the first visit that Bush made to “ground zero” in New York as he addressed a gathering of rescue workers. When a voice in the crowd called out “can’t hear you!” as Bush spoke to his audience with a small megaphone, he called back after a pause – “I can hear you (loud cheers), I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you, ... (loud cheers) and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!” (loud cheers) Amidst chants of “U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.” Bush was able to portray a symbolic rising from the ashes of what was

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{126} Bush Remarks by the President in Telephone Conversation with New York Mayor Giuliani and New York Governor Pataki, 11:00 A.M. EDT 13 September 2001. \\
\textsuperscript{128} Bush President Bush’s Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001. \\
\textsuperscript{129} Bush, George W. (2001). President Rallies Troops at Travis Air Force Base in California, 1:30 P.M. PDT 17 October 2001. \\
\textsuperscript{130} California, Office of the White House.
\end{flushleft}
the World Trade Center, conscious all the while that the performance would be seen by a global audience – “the rest of the world” – on television news.\textsuperscript{131}

**The Rally Effect**

Because of the life and death nature of war, this type of theatre is so gripping. Thus on the 11\textsuperscript{th} of September, multinational media operations were thrown into a trance of “hysteria” coverage. In many countries, coverage was frozen on CNN, ABC, NBC, and Fox News coverages of the unfolding aftermath – four days of uninterrupted news, with no commercial breaks. Audiences were clearly gripped. In U.S. public opinion polls, around 98\% of respondents reported that they were following the news about the attacks closely.\textsuperscript{132} In what has been described as “near universal public engagement in the crisis”, around 90\% of survey respondents cited the television coverage as their main source of news for the unfolding events; the American public was literally addicted to news, around 63\% admitted that they could not stop watching the coverage – largely on CNN, ABC or NBC. As they watched, they felt sad (92\%) and frightened (77\%) while a majority (51\%) did not find that they felt tired as a result of watching the coverage.\textsuperscript{133}

In that instance, the paranoiagenic trance was at its most powerful. A global consciousness was, in effect, awakened to the reality of a war. Incident response, emergency, and security plans sprang into operation around the globe, as a group mind became activated in a worldwide theatre. The paranoiagenic state was furthermore apparent in the phenomenon described by public opinion poll analysts as the “rally effect”,\textsuperscript{134} as well as in the indications of trauma-related symptoms of stress.\textsuperscript{135} After one week, the president of ABC News issued a directive that footage of jetliners slamming into the twin towers not be shown unless its use was “critical to the integrity


of the piece”.136 Subsequent psychiatric studies have confirmed that “intensive exposure to the news coverage of such an intense disaster situation is associated with psychopathology”.137

The response of the Bush Administration belies a particular type of paranoiagenic trance in the aftermath. It is possible to analyse Bush’s public televised addresses and recollections to observe the process at work. In the acts and texts that he performed on that day – the initial 24 hours – the enactment and embodiment of a particular character in role at stress are observable. In that paranoiagenic trance that he shared with others, he was able to invoke or endorse a “superpower state” apparatus to perform particular operational plans in order to respond. In his words and actions, Bush identified the enemy and reassured his constituency group that the forces of “order” were still in control.138

Bush’s job approval rating was around 51% on the 10th of September 2001 (between then and the previous February it had fluctuated between 51% and 62%), by the 13th of September it was somewhere between 86% and 91% according to various surveys,139 where it would hover until the end of the year. The Gallup Organization began measuring presidency approval ratings when Franklin D. Roosevelt was at the White House (1933-1945), and the levels of approval that Bush rated at this time were the highest that they had ever recorded.140 Approval ratings for Congress went from 42% on the 10th of September to 84% within a matter of a few weeks,141 as it demonstrated its unity behind the Bush Administration. With similar leaps registered in the weeks following the attacks, the sentiment of the American public towards its government reached a level of trust and confidence that had not been attained since 1968, again according to Gallup Poll measures.142

Another indicator worthy of note are the responses to questions that gauge the level of approval for the way that “the American people” or “the country in general” were “dealing with” or “handling the war on terrorism”, these ratings were consistently higher than the approval ratings recorded for Bush and were only lower than the ratings

138 Bush Booker Elementary School; Barksdale Air Force Base; Address to the Nation.
141 Ibid.
recorded for “the people of New York City” and the U.S. armed forces. These ratings serve as measures of the group-level “self” approval, satisfaction and sense of “integrity” that the America public experienced at that period – that is, the level of belief and commitment to the group-defined “self”. These elements are central to the phenomenon described as the “rally effect” – the groundswell in support of a leader in times of crisis, here seen in opinion polls that gauge the level of approval for the performance of a presidency.

By the end of the day of the attacks, around 75% of Americans saw them as an act of war against them, and about 82% held some level of worry that they or a member of their family will become a victim of an act of terrorism. Furthermore, around 87% expressed concern that there will be more “major terrorist attacks” to come – over the next twelve months this indicator would fluctuate between 52% and 85% considering further attacks to be either somewhat or very likely.

This level of concern is closely related to a sense of the inevitability of further attacks, one survey indicated a belief that even if public warnings had been issued before the attacks based on available intelligence reports, the attacks themselves could not have been prevented – 67% of respondents agreed with that view. A huge majority, around 84%, believed that the Bush Administration were either accurately describing or understating “the level of threat the country faces”. Another survey indicated a belief that an attack involving a nuclear device was largely a matter of time – 57% of those asked considered it would take between six months and ten years for such an attack to eventuate, only 22% believed that it would never occur. In August 2002, 61% of respondents considered “the ability of terrorists to launch another major attack” to be either the same or greater than it was the previous year, only 34% believed that it had been reduced.
Within two days of the attacks, up to 94% of Americans reported that they would support military actions against the groups or nations responsible. Around 64% of the public believed that attacks of such seriousness “would never happen” in their country. The emotions that they reported feeling most strongly were anger (37%), sadness (24%), disbelief (21%), vulnerability (11%), and fear (6%) in response. In another survey, 71% of respondents reported that they had felt depressed, 49% had difficulty concentrating, and 33% reported having trouble sleeping; while a vast majority (69%) reported that they were praying more as a result of the crisis. Six months later, around 80% of survey respondents would agree that what occurred on that day was “the most tragic news event” in their lifetime.

On the day of the attacks, around 74% of the public agreed that “things will change forever”, and in one survey 49% of respondents agreed that “Americans will permanently change the way they live”. However by the following day, only 35% would say that they or their family will change the way they live as a result. Within three days, 57% of respondents agreed that “the United States should return to business as usual” while only 37% agreed that the nation was “ready” to return to “business as usual”; after twelve days however the sentiment became more definite, 85% felt that it “should” be and 67% felt it was “ready” to be “business as usual”. Less than one year later, when asked if “their lives have changed permanently” only 18% said “yes”, 82% said “no”. Furthermore, when asked to consider whether “America has changed for the better, changed for the worse, or not really changed”, 50% said it was “for the better” and 28% said it had “not really changed”, only 15% agreed it was “for the worse”. Therefore, in spite of the immediate emotional impact and in response to the notion that the crisis would have a profound transformative effect on the nation, a firm determination is evident to return to “business as usual” and to comply with the vision that Bush had offered of the crisis as “a great opportunity”.

---

161 Saad.
The process observable in the rally effect serves to account for a phenomenon of central concern to this section of the study – the ways in which individuals can consider enactments of deeds that can result in their physical destruction to be acceptable or desirable courses of action. Evident in this phenomenon, is the way in which a paranoiac trance can cause dramatic transformation or suspension of attitudes relating to mortality, that is justified by a heightened sense of community and purpose. Such acts of identification are made possible by a strong rapport with leaders, who can persuasively posit ideals worthy of self-sacrifice, and issue the marching orders or call to arms in this “noble war”. This is perhaps best illustrated in the embodiment and enactment of the “warrior” role, to which the conflictual state is most overtly and spectacularly – as a spectacle of carnage – expressible. In a BBC-TV Panorama documentary\(^\text{164}\) on the military action in Afghanistan, Sergeant Paul Dominguez of the U.S. 101\(^\text{st}\) Airborne Division declared in an interview:

I don't personally want to see anybody get hurt or killed, but if our freedom is not free, we have to fight for it and I'm willing to give my life if that's what it took, and I'm sure these guys behind me are willing to give their lives, that's why we're here.

In this chapter, the performances of two key performers in the 9/11 event have been investigated in the context of the elements of induction by which the states of consciousness that drove the relevant enactments and embodiments were produced for these particular performers. The beliefs from which their respective enactments and embodiments emerged have been shown to be evident in various texts and actions, by which particular modes of meaning-making become apparent. In particular, the processes by which these performers defined their “extended” self through group-sanctioned acts of identification have been shown to be central to the determination of the various acts and words that they delivered and by which they were influenced.

To begin with, the beliefs that Atta held with regard to mortality has been shown to be conducive to the formation of a level and type of commitment that would enable the performances that he had undertaken as a “volunteer for martyrdom”. These beliefs were shown to have been shaped by acts of identification that defined the “enemy” that he would target, and the roles that he would play as part of a concerted effort. Along with his collaborators, Atta has been shown to have been both intensively involved in and isolated from particular social and cultural milieux. The flow of information and instruction by which his actions were motivated and directed have been shown to have

emerged from discursive streams he had encountered in the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia – encapsulated in a cult of militant Islamic fundamentalism activating paranoiagenic qualities. Atta experienced initiation into varying levels of such cults through processes of recruitment and training. Such experiences invoked in him the drive towards “martyrdom” that led him to his final act. The affective and imaginative concerns that were dominant for Atta have been shown to have derived from the idealisations and justifications that drive the militant fundamentalist cults – with which he had identified – and the “martyrdom” cults which had offered a sense of “empowerment” against a formidable and profoundly despised “enemy”. Taken together, these elements comprised the complex of motivation that enabled Atta to embody and enact his performance of “martyrdom”.

The beliefs that motivated and guided Bush have been shown to be largely determined by the capacities and responsibilities of the group-sanctioned role which he occupied at the beginning of this crisis, as marked by the 9/11 event. However, his motivation has also been considered to have been derived from the magnitude and circumstances of the crisis itself, as well as from his previously held world-views and established modes of meaning-making which were made apparent in his responses to the unfolding events. Furthermore, key influences from within the intellectual, religious, military and corporate community which was in control of the administration at that time were also shown to have shaped and driven the performances of Bush as president. As executive authority, Bush was shown to have engaged in a series of acts of identification, as he defined the situation, then identified the “enemy” and the “opportunity” in the first public statements that followed. Intensive involvement in the tasks and requirements of public office was shown to have been the focus of his attention. The isolation of his attentional frame was shown to have been brought about by a physical isolation made necessary by security measures activated by the crisis, and a mental isolation brought about by the focusing of his attention to addressing the crisis. The flow of information that is produced in such a setting has been shown to function as instruction; as the unfolding events create conditions that produce profound effects upon belief systems through associations that are compellingly suggested by the drama. In the case of Bush and a significant proportion of his audience, these effects and associations have been shown to influence the religious and historical contextualisations produced by the meaning-making frameworks that process the stimuli from the event. The processes generated by trauma have been shown to invoke
particular themes and narratives, that induce particular types of affective and imaginative involvements that have been characterised as paranoiagenic. The 9/11 event itself has been shown to serve as an initiation that compelled subjective experiences in which particular explanations and definitions – “filters” – are applied to sensorial stimuli and memory that are processed as intelligence and conscious experience. These affective and imaginative involvements have been shown to be framed by imperatives of “justice” and retribution infused with apocalyptic resonance. Through his performances in his group-sanctioned role, Bush has been shown to provide a focus by which the similar subjective experiences of his “fellow Americans” and all those who identified with the victims of the attack were framed and harnessed in an appeal characterised by the “rally-around-the-flag” effect by which an international coalition was mobilised and justified in the “war on terror”.

In the following chapter, a central element of the instrumentality of the “war on terror” is analysed in the context of performativity. The training, preparation and mobilisation of “professional” soldiers – U.S. Marines and Army Special Forces – are analysed in order to demonstrate the processes by which texts and actions are employed to produce particular performances applicable in this type of conflictual state. The processes by which the states of consciousness embodied and enacted by such performers are produced will provide further insight into the methods by which very particular performances can be generated by induction.
10. The Role of a Soldier: Induction and Conflict

In exploring the notion of trance as a performative practice, it is essential to also analyse the notion of states of consciousness in performance. In this chapter, the investigation focuses on the processes by which a performance state is induced in preparation for a state of conflict. An “induction” is an act which symbolises the adoption and internalisation of particular beliefs and values, as well as particular constituents of an environment’s “inner world” – the non-material, abstract and conceptual dimensions of experience. Inductions are processes by which states of consciousness are invoked – platforms from which social-psychological processes are entered into. Through the human languages, one's identity and beliefs are redefined or reframed – transformed permanently or temporarily – through these various social-psychological processes.

The problem that is considered by this chapter is the question of the essential elements of “induction procedures” – what beliefs and techniques contribute to the effective invocation of particular states of consciousness. This is considered by analysing the induction procedures from a military context, in search of elements which are fundamental in the processes of achieving particular states of consciousness. The following induction procedures demonstrate these various processes in their various contexts.

Fraternal Induction and the Marine Corps

Some induction procedures can take weeks to implement. Many rites of passage and preparations for initiation into many trance practice cults involve the withdrawal and isolation of the inductee from their “normal” social environment for a period of time. During such periods, potential inductees receive training and indoctrination in the skills, traditions and standards of the group which they aspire to join. These extended induction procedures serve to prepare the aspirant for an initial important transformation. Therefore they can also be considered to be initiation procedures – processes which inductees are expected to undergo only once in their lifetimes. However, inductions are not simply initiations in that the elements of training and indoctrination are not integral to initiation procedures. Extended induction procedures can also be distinguished from inductions utilised in the course of an already
established practice, as in procedures used to activate or invoke particular states of consciousness by trance performance practitioners. Extended induction procedures lay the foundations for subsequent invocations of states and processes first encountered and experienced in the course of such procedures.

One classic form of an extended induction procedure is found in the military tradition of fraternal inductions, in the form of Basic Training for soldiers. The first part of this chapter is an analysis the Basic Training utilised by the United States Marine Corps from the 1940s to 1990s. Marines are expected to perform tasks that would most probably not consider to be “normal” behaviour before they had become soldiers. The performance of such tasks requires a “mind-set” that is distinctly different from the “normal” civilian modes of perceptions and values. Basic Training creates a way of perceiving and valuing which is dissociated from the civilian modes which the recruits would have been familiar with. The dissociation enables the recruit to invoke and utilise the states of consciousness that allow the performance of the tasks that are expected of the Marine.

Induction into the role of the Marine serves to invoke variants of the “hunter” and “warrior” type of embodiment and enactment. The resonance of such types relate to traditions that have become fundamental to the social and cultural developments inherited by our current era, and to particular templates for interaction and communication in the context of what are considered to be adversarial and conflictual situations. Thus the “warrior” type is considered to be endowed with “primal” or “archetypal” properties that incorporate the social and cultural strategies for making sense of and managing the application of group-sanctioned performative violence. In this sense, the vocation of the “warrior” can be considered to be an art-form, and most certainly an important social and cultural tradition with its own systems of narratisation and historicisation – its own rituals and mythology which have been a source or inspiration for many other artistic and performance traditions.

Film-maker Gwynne Dyer, in a television documentary on the U.S. Marines’ Basic Training at Parris Island in South Carolina, observed that a soldier’s job is “ultimately about killing and dying – and that doesn’t come naturally to any human being”. Therefore Basic Training is about “changing people, so that they can do things that they wouldn’t have dreamt of otherwise”; and so “if you want to change people quickly
and radically” then you “isolate them {and} apply enormous physical and mental pressure”. Recruits are always delivered to Parris Island at around 2 o’clock in the morning, as they are immediately jolted out of the routine that they had left behind, and into the Basic Training schedule. As they arrive their heads are shaved, and they are issued with uniforms. The recruit is “stripped of all evidence of civilian identity ...everything that makes him look and feel like an individual”.¹ Victor Krulak, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant-general, wrote that “for the young man who aspires to become a member of the Marine fraternity, initiation starts with a reduction of all to a common denominator”. They are “stripped naked in a group for a physical examination, they are bathed together... civilian clothes and jewellery removed, all dressed exactly the same”. As they are processed they are made to feel that “from this moment, none is different from any other” – they undergo an “egoectomy, they start from an initial zero and they are rebuilt from there”.²

What follows over the next 11 weeks is designed to “motivate” the recruits to the point where they are proud to wear the label of “killing machine”. Half of their total instruction time is taken up with weapons training (they give their rifle a name), 23% on garrison duties, 21% on field subjects, and 5% on physical training.³ When they rise at 5 o’clock every morning for the next 70 days they will, in unison, declare themselves to be “highly motivated, truly dedicated, rompin’, stompin’ blood-thirsty, kill-crazy, United States Marine Corps recruits, sir!”⁴ As they trot in a tight pack formation, their Drill Instructors lead them in singing call-and-response cadence counts or “jody calls” – chants to set and maintain their movement as one unit – that affirm their devotion to the U.S. Marine Corps, and their disdain for anything and anyone that might compromise or challenge their espoused values. A typical jody call frames life and death issues that the Marine might encounter in uplifting terms:

Hey, hey, Captain Jack / Meet me by the railroad track / With your rifle in your hand / I want to be a killing man.⁵

The Drill Instructors harass the recruits each time they fall short of the ability to embody the ideal Marine. Drill Instructors also serve as the models for the recruits to

---

⁴ Dyer and Cowan.
emulate, but their primary task is to drive the recruits ferociously and “to stimulate the essential Marine sense of patriotism, discipline, loyalty and brotherhood – recruit training has to be hard and high tempo”. The recruits are subjected to various physical and psychological demands in “a structured environment with high but precisely calculated levels of stress”.

Stanley Kubrick’s film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) dramatised this process; in the first scene, some of the recruits receive their “war names” that replace their previous personal identities, and are made to display their “war face”. These manipulations of elements of identity and sense of self are instrumental in the process of “building” a Marine. In writing about the film, Alexander Walker observed that Kubrick’s “grunts” are “dismantled mentally and emotionally, then reassembled as killing machines”.

![Figure 20: U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training exercises.](source: Michael J. Supples)

In writing about the Marine Corps, Cameron noted that Basic Training works on the premise that for the recruits “to be of any use on the ...battlefields, every man had to internalize an identity distinct from what he knew as a civilian”. Each recruit is issued an institutional “imprint” that is unique and distinct – one which the Marine Corps imposes upon “their initiates as a rite of separation from civilian social experience”. It is

---

6 Krulak: p. 165.
7 Dyer and Cowan.
the Drill Instructors who facilitate this separation – like priests of a sacred cult. Cameron adds that “the creation and inculcation of this identity seemed to depend on an intuitive understanding and acceptance of a remote and abstract ideal” embodied by the term “Marine”.  

I love working for Uncle Sam! / Lets me know just who I am! / One, two, three, four! United States Marine Corps! / One, two, three, four! I love the Marine Corps! / My Corps! / Your Corps! / Our Corps! / Marine Corps!  

For the recruit, the embodying of the Marine requires some fundamental psychological adjustments. Some of these adjustments require that the recruits dissociate their new Marine identity from their previous civilian persona – particularly where some moral and behavioural values are concerned. To effect these adjustments, the induction process must be thorough and intense. As Krulak recalls, recruits are “immersed in an environment wherein they are able to perceive, understand, and finally accept as dogma the essential Marine Corps virtues”. These adjustments are brought about through the manipulation of emotions.

Indoctrination takes the form of discursive lectures given by Drill Instructors and Senior Officers. The subjects of the lectures vary and communicate multiple strands of messages, each utilising appeals to various emotions. A former Commandant observed that “recruit training consists in preparing and conditioning mentally, physically and emotionally a group of young and naturally well-disposed youths to meet the experience of violence and bloodshed which is war”. An Officer communicates a central Marine ethic with battlefield examples evoking feelings of fear, loyalty and courage. A lecture on loyalty would remind the recruits of their pledge of allegiance to the government of the United States and “even more importantly, the United States Marine Corps – a brotherhood, an elite unit” to which they will belong if they follow the “blueprints” provided for them “to build a Marine”. This blueprint is in the physical and psychological stress that the recruits undergo.

---

9 Cameron.: p. 63.
11 Krulak.: p. 159.
13 Dyer and Cowan.
The difficulties that the recruits face are intended to develop a sense of commitment, as Krulak recalled, “to a leader and to a small brotherhood where the ties that bind are mutual respect and confidence, shared privation, shared hazard, shared triumph, a willingness to obey, and determination to follow”. Cameron noted that Basic Training is a “hierarchical and coercive system {that} allowed few alternatives but acceptance; out of patriotism and the desire to serve”. However, the Marine inductee also experiences the benefits of compliance; Krulak observed that “the recruits’ development leans heavily on paternalism ...(both) institutional and individual”. For example, generally during Basic Training 30% of Marine recruits are provided with optical eyeglasses and 80% are provided with dental treatment; these benefits serve “to balance the hard reality that recruits’ lives are pivoted on stress”. The cycle of Basic Training is completed with a “rite of passage”, a “culminating event” that is currently referred to as the “Crucible” – a 54-hour exercise in which the recruits are challenged to prove themselves to be physically and psychologically “tough” enough to become a Marine – at the end of which the Drill Instructors shake the recruit’s hand, address the recruit by the label “Marine” for the first time, and present the newly proven Marine with the U.S. Marine Corps insignia.

Gerald Averell recognised that for the inducted Marine “the Corps is his religion, his reason for being... involvement is total... {and he} believes implicitly that he must live up to those epics of physical and moral courage established by those who preceded him”. In this sense, the Marine is clearly inducted into a military fraternal “cult”. Basic Training also imbues the recruit with sets of programmed automatisms – in

---

15 Cameron.: p.59.
Dyer’s documentary, Drill Instructors described the inductee as “a captive audience” to be “motivated” with programmed responses that will sit “in the back of your head {so that} you react automatically” in anticipated situations. “We brainwash them a little bit”.19

A key component of the “brainwashing” and the “motivating” of the inductee is the adjustment of moral standards. Kubrick highlights this theme in his film wherein the Senior Drill Instructor tells his recruits that “your rifle is only a tool... it is a hard heart that kills.” 20 This adjustment addresses what Dyer refers to as “the normal human belief... that killing another person is an awesome act with huge consequences”, therefore the recruit must come to believe that “the enemy is not fully human... {and} it’s alright to kill him”.21 Cameron speculated that this effectively creates “twin personalities {that are} fostered and brought into uneasy coexistence” in the inductee as a result of Basic Training, “granting license to kill”.22 Drill Instructors underscore the importance of the recruit’s ability to accommodate “two completely different sets of morals... you couldn’t survive in a combat situation with the same sets of morals that you have in everyday life”. They see their role as the imbuing of the Marine recruit with “the motivation it takes to actually look down the sights of your rifle and pull the trigger to kill a guy”.23

Dyer believed that Basic Training, as a “method for training young men into soldiers – people who kill other people”, is “essentially the same all over the world, and it always has been, because young men everywhere are pretty much alike”.24 It can be said that the process of Basic Training invokes a form of the “hunter” experiential template, a sense and an image with a powerful resonance that transcends many physical and cultural boundaries. The process employs “direct physical {ways} of learning”, which produce strong psychological overtones, such as “physical training” and “formation marching”. These are intended to instil fundamental beliefs in the recruit – that “if you can overcome your fear you’ll be perfectly safe”; “that orders have to be obeyed automatically and instantly; and that you’re no longer an individual but part of a group”. The beliefs that the predominantly youthful recruits come into Basic Training

19 Dyer and Cowan.
21 Dyer and Cowan.
22 Cameron.: p. 52.
23 Dyer and Cowan.
24 Ibid.
with are made to resonate in the process, in particular “all the ideas about heroism and military glory... like buttons waiting to be pressed”.

The intensified natural selection brought about by violent conflict has developed the tradition of Basic Training in a particular way; as Dyer pointed out, although the soldier practises “a trade that almost anybody can learn”, it is “always those who survive and succeed {who} pass the military ethic on to the next generation”. This tendency belies the nature of Basic Training as a mimetic process. Walker wrote, of an image from Kubrick’s film, that the Marine recruits “in their pure-white skivvies, T-Shirts, and boxer shorts, ...resemble a pallid pack of identical shop window dummies” as they are stripped and ready to be “dressed”; the products of Basic Training “possess {the} otherworldly aspect of replication”. Cameron observed that the recruits come to emulate “the bearing and spotless appearance of the ideal Marine” – the Senior Drill Instructor – and in this way are led through the process of “redefining moral and behavioral standards”. This “process of institutionalized procreation” is achieved chiefly through the “manipulation of gender roles... fostering the emotional separation of {the recruits} from civilian society”. It invokes “a strong corporate identity with its own rules and values” which generate “highly polarized boundaries” that reduce “outsiders” into “potential objects for violent overthrow”.

Cameron focused on “the manipulation and fabrication of gender roles” as central to the process of creating a “deeply instilled” identity that becomes a foundation of the recruit’s Marine persona. Throughout Basic Training any expressions of weakness, any failures to attain the Marine ideal, and any dose of humiliation issued is addressed “in female terms”. “In the atmosphere of the camps maternalistic or nurturing traits generally associated with women were inverted and became threatening, and individuals prided themselves on the extent to which they could remain untouched by such influences”. The profound and fundamental changes brought about by such conditioning serve to dissociate any feminine characteristics that the recruits might identify with. They are made “hard” by invalidating any tendency or internalisation of any influence that might be “soft”. The effected dissociation is applicable as an emotive appeal, Basic Training utilises “misogyny as a means of learning a process of

______________________________
objectification that could then be transferred to {the} battlefields”. To the extent that this conditioning influences the recruit’s view of the “enemy”, it becomes useful as “a template for subsequent attitudes and behaviors”. However much the military establishment might be prepared to recognise the offensive nature of such conditioning – particularly since the U.S. armed forces had become fervent in its efforts to recruit women into its ranks – by, for example, discouraging the use of “sexually oriented jody calls” such techniques as elements of a culture do not necessarily disappear as its efficacy is recognised. The perceived necessity to produce “hard” Marines is deeply ingrained in the tradition.

I don’t want no teenage queen. / I just want my M 14. / If I die in a combat zone. / Box me up and ship me home. / Pin my medals upon my chest. / Tell my mom I’ve done my best.

Figure 22: U.S. Marine Corps Basic Training parade. Photo: Michael J. Supples (Source: American Forces Press Service)

The intended dissociation is achieved through the association of the undesired characteristics – in this case femininity – with the targets of violence; and the association of the tendency to desire with the instruments of violence. Drill Instructors invoke images of the “dangerous femininity” alongside images of battle and the enemy. Kubrick also chose to tackle this theme in his film – his Senior Drill Instructor bonds the recruits “physically, mentally and morally to the artillery rifle as if it were a substitute for their shrunken, drooping penises” – as he illustrated the way that “the killer instinct and the sexual urge can be combined”. The cultivation of a sense a dangerous “other” is

[^32]: Kubrick, Herr and Hasford.
[^33]: Walker.: pp. 319 and 323.
seen as a necessary component of Basic Training. In Kubrick’s film, the recruits move as one to the cadence of a jody call that asserts:

I don’t know but I’ve been told / Eskimo pussy is mighty cold.34

Basic Training induces a particular way of perceiving and experiencing human existence. It trains recruits to function in very specific states of consciousness. These states involve the dissociation of certain aspects of the recruit’s civilian persona from the Marine that they come to embody. The physical and psychological stress that the recruits experience in Basic Training serve to dismantle the civilian identity and then to construct the Marine identity. The unrelenting indoctrination serves to bring about and reinforce the alterations in consciousness that are required of the recruits, the lectures and instructions function as parahypnotic suggestions that become foundations for the Marine persona. A persona that is invoked and recognised at the completion of Basic Training by such rites as the “Crucible” exercise. Hypnotic states are brought about by use of elements such as isolation, repetition, rhythm, disorientation, physical effort, and immobility – as well as aesthetic elements such as uniformity, songs, chants, and the semantic power of the language of the Marines.

Trance states can be said to occur and to be utilised in various aspects of the Basic Training experience, such as formation drills using cadence counts and field exercises designed to create the “killing machine”. In the sense that the alterations in consciousness experienced by the recruits are necessarily prolonged and require periodic intensification, these are sustained states of consciousness with strong normative pressures.

The product of the induction process is the “closed system” state expressed and experienced as the Marine identity. The Marine’s ultimate performance requires extraordinary physical and psychological effort. The “normal” civilian identity cannot be relied upon to function to expectations and therefore must be suspended in order for the necessary embodiment of the Marine “spirit” to be effected through the process of induction. The embodiment of such a spirit is evident in the performance of service and duty of U.S. soldiers in the aftermath of the 9/11 event.

34 Kubrick.
Special Operations Forces – the Deployment

On the 17th of September 2001, President Bush signed a “top secret” presidential intelligence order – a Memorandum of Notification – authorising the Central Intelligence Agency to implement a plan to bring about the downfall of the Taliban regime, as well as to locate and destroy the Al-Qaeda network and its leadership, in response to the 9/11 attacks. The CIA was funded and authorised to immediately send around “a half-dozen” eight-man paramilitary teams into Afghanistan to link up with tribal opposition force leaders and then to develop their military and political capabilities; they would soon be joined by U.S. Special Forces units who would work with each warlord and their troops. The twelve-man Special Forces teams would train and work with local militia forces, liaise with local leaders, arrange for military supplies or humanitarian aid, gather intelligence, and direct U.S. air strikes upon identified ground targets.35

The nature of the U.S. response to the crisis appears to have been guided by the “doctrines” of the U.S. military community in its operations. In “Joint Vision 2020” (2000) the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlined a set of principles and policies intended to guide the current generation of its military forces in the conduct of operations.36 One central principle was “interoperability” – “the ability of systems, units and forces” to work together – particularly as it applied to a “multinational operation” such as the one invoked in Afghanistan. The principle of interoperability was also most relevant for the U.S. response as an “interagency operation” – intended to ensure “cohesive interagency action” between various “elements of the Department of Defense and engaged U.S. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private voluntary organizations, and regional and international organizations for the purpose of accomplishing an objective”. In addition, the concept of “precision engagement” – the ability “to locate, surveil, discern and track objectives or targets; select, organize, and

use the correct systems; generate desired effects; assess results; and reengage with decisive speed” – was applied as a dominant principle.\textsuperscript{37}

The U.S. response was also largely guided by its political and military doctrines that deal with “low intensity conflict”. This is particularly evident in the manner in which the entire campaign was conducted, from the initial responses of the Bush administration to the deployment of Special Forces units. This is evident in the adopted “imperatives” of the campaign as demonstrated in the political rhetoric and in the conduct of military operations – “political dominance, legitimacy, unity of effort, perseverance, and adaptability”. Political dominance was achieved through the process of forming an international “coalition” and the exercise of the United Nations’ support. This assisted in establishing the “illegitimacy” of the Taliban regime – which easily became known as a pariah state – and the legitimacy of the replacement government that the U.S. campaign would deliver. The campaign became known as “Operation Enduring Freedom”. The unity of effort was apparent in the interagency operation that was mounted, and the international coalition that was mobilised. Adaptability was greatly evident in the speed with which the campaign achieved its objective of removing the Taliban regime and installing a “friendly” government. The call for perseverance was constantly reiterated in the Bush administration’s rhetoric – “our response must be sweeping, sustained and effective... you will be asked for your patience, for the conflict will not be short”.\textsuperscript{38} The U.S. campaign was fully consistent with the “operational categories” of low intensity conflict. The operational categories of “combatting terrorism”, “support for insurgency and counterinsurgency” and “peacetime contingency operations” provided the frame within which the U.S. response was planned and executed. These imperatives and operational categories are central tenets of the doctrine of “low intensity conflict”.\textsuperscript{39}

As principles for action, these doctrines are intended to enable “adaptive and concurrent planning, coordination of widely dispersed units; gathering of timely feedback on the status, location, and activities of subordinate units; and anticipation of the course of events leading to mission accomplishment”.\textsuperscript{40} Therefore these doctrines appear to describe central elements in the states of consciousness embodied and

\textsuperscript{37} ibid.: pp. 15-23.
\textsuperscript{40} U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.: p. 20.
enacted, as individuals and as groups, by the military force that is sent to Afghanistan by the Bush administration.

Given the nature of this conflict, and the extra-judicial nature of the response undertaken by the Bush administration to the attacks six days earlier, the CIA and Special Forces operations were presented as the ideal vehicles for delivering that U.S. response. The Special Operations Command of the U.S. Army regards its missions as the ones which “may be undertaken independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible”. Therefore the CIA and Special Forces were deployed at this early stage in the crisis – into a “special operations war” – because of their ‘extra-ordinary’ capabilities. These capabilities result from the levels of training and preparation that these operatives have experienced. By analysing the selection and training of a U.S. Special Forces soldier, the types of states that are necessary and that are induced in order to perform these extra-ordinary capabilities become apparent.

![The Special Forces Creed](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Special Forces Creed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am an American Special Forces soldier. A professional! I will do all that my nation requires of me. I am a volunteer, knowing well the hazards of my profession. I serve with the memory of those who have gone before me: Roger’s Rangers, Francis Marion, Mosby’s Rangers, the first Special Service Forces and Ranger Battalions of World War II, The Airborne Ranger Companies of Korea. I pledge to uphold the honor and integrity of all I am – in all I do. I am a professional soldier. I will teach and fight wherever my nation requires. I will strive always, to excel in every art and artifice of war. I know that I will be called upon to perform tasks in isolation, far from familiar faces and voices, with the help and guidance of my God. I will keep my mind and body clean, alert and strong, for this is my debt to those who depend upon me. I will not fail those with whom I serve. I will not bring shame upon myself or the forces. I will maintain myself, my arms, and my equipment in an immaculate state as befits a Special Forces soldier. I will never surrender though I be the last. If I am taken, I pray that I may have the strength to spit upon my enemy. My goal is to succeed in any mission and live to succeed again. I am a member of my nation’s chosen soldiery. God grant that I may not be found wanting, that I will not fail this sacred trust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: U.S. Special Forces recruits memorise and repeat this creed in training.

IDENTIFICATION

The process of identification is a key component of the tasks of building “rapport” with allies, and of building “trust, loyalty, and cohesiveness” within the

---

A strong level of identification is developed within the operational team to serve as touch-stones in the highly stressful situations encountered in combat operations – emphasising the notions that “it’s all about the man next to you” and the dictum of “leave no man behind”. The level of rapport established with local allies is a measure of efficacy and a primary focus of the Special Forces soldier on the ground in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Special Forces soldier would primarily identify as a “volunteer” and as an “American”. Recruited from the ranks of active duty male soldiers, he would take particular pride in identifying himself as “a professional soldier” entitled to wear the “Green Beret” of the U.S. Army Airborne Special Forces. As a member of an Operational Detachment “Alpha” (ODA) team, he would identify as an “instructor” – an “adviser” – and as a “warrior-diplomat”. The “A” teams that would have been among the first units to be deployed in Afghanistan would have identified themselves as members of the 5th Special Forces Group, as the specialists on Southwest Asia and Africa. This section examines the reported experiences of one member of this unit – Captain Jason Amerine of the 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group – to further regard the experience and performance of a U.S. Special Forces soldier.

INvolvement

In general, the basic involvement of a Special Forces soldier is his “military occupational specialty” or MOS. For Amerine, it was as team commander of Special Forces ODA 574 code-named “Texas-One-Two” which landed in Afghanistan one night some time between the middle of October and early November 2001. In his team of eleven men there were at least two sergeants involved in each of the specialist areas of operations – intelligence, weapons, engineer, medical, and communications.

---

45 Sentiments dramatically invoked in timely fashion by the main Special Operations Delta team officer character (played by Eric Bana) in the film “Black Hawk Down” which was released in early 2002, on the heels of “Operation Enduring Freedom”.
46 The U.S. Department of Defense was actively and centrally involved in the making of this film.
From their recruitment onwards, each soldier is required to maintain a “high state of physical fitness”. This level of fitness is necessary for each recruit to pass a 24-day Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) Course, which in turn enables them to participate in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) for around 2 years. The SFQC training involves language courses and regional studies, before the soldier becomes eligible for assignment with a Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha team.

As a member of a Special Forces unit, they vow “to excel in every art and artifice of war”. They are required to develop themselves as “area-oriented, language-qualified, and culture sensitive” specialists. Whether in peace or war, they are involved in “intensive preparation” to ensure they are always ready to be employed in the service of “military, political, economic or psychological objectives” of the U.S. government at short notice.

These soldiers are required to be constantly prepared to perform “their primary missions of unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, direct action (DA), special reconnaissance, and counterterrorism”; as well as “collateral activities” such as “coalition operations, personnel recovery” and “humanitarian assistance”. They are instrumental in the “interagency” missions of Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs. The Special Forces soldier is at various times required to “teach and fight”. Their individual involvement requires of them to keep themselves impeccably prepared to be an instrument of the nation state they ultimately serve – “I will keep my mind and body clean, alert and strong.”

Amerine would have been involved, upon deployment, in developing the logistical plan and an “anthropological background” profile of the people that his unit would be working with, particularly Hamid Karzai who became the interim leader of the post-Taliban government of Afghanistan. Karzai would have been identified by the intelligence advance team and planners as a key candidate for an Afghan government
formed at the end of the conflict; Amerine’s unit would have been assigned the task of protecting Karzai, and developing his military and political capabilities and profile within Afghanistan. Amerine was involved in his mission, which included building rapport with local allies, organising, training, supplying and supporting Karzai’s militia force, providing intelligence reports, providing security and advise to Karzai, organising deliveries of humanitarian aid to local populations, and directing U.S. air strikes on identified enemy targets.

Therefore, it is evident that the involvement of a Special Forces soldier focuses on the maintenance of a state of intense “fitness” in a broad sense, as well as on the performance of the mission that is assigned to them.

**ISOLATION**

In describing the mobilisation and deployment process, Colonel John Mulholland, the Special Forces Commander for the Afghanistan operation, commented that:

Isolation is a classic Special Forces technique for mission preparation, where the detachment is completely isolated from the outside world, put into a planning environment, and given all their mission planning data. They conduct all their mission planning and rehearsals prior to infiltration to their area of operations. That is done by design, so that there are no distracters ... they do a brief back to the commander ...to convince me that they are prepared to execute their mission, and upon approval of that, they are moved into a staging area for infiltration.\(^5^7\)

Given the nature of Special Forces operations and traditions, isolation is an inherent part of these soldiers’ culture. From the creed of the “Green Berets”, the Special Forces soldier understands that “I will be called upon to perform tasks in isolation, far from familiar faces and voices”.\(^5^8\)

In practice, the performances of “unconventional warfare” and “special reconnaissance” requires these soldiers to avoid unnecessary contacts with local populations in their areas of responsibility, as well as contacts with families and friends for extended periods during their missions. Operational deployment in an “A” team more than likely requires these soldiers and their units to “operate in remote areas”.\(^5^9\)

---

\(^5^7\) Anderson and Barker.

\(^5^8\) See Special Forces Creed.

\(^5^9\) U.S. Department of the Army.: p. 47
Amerine and his unit were assigned to a “low-visibility employment in a denied area”\(^6\) in the mountains and valleys of central Afghanistan. Working “behind enemy lines” during conflict, in a highly “sensitive” and classified mission, they were required to maintain the “secrecy” of their presence in their area from all except those that they directly worked with in their mission. In their case, they experienced the isolation as a highly cohesive unit, as part of a group rather than an individual experience.

**INSTRUCTION**

The Special Forces soldier undergoes a training regime that focuses on both the experience and state of the individual recruit as well as on that experience and state as part of a group. The 24 days of the SFAS process is intended “to assess each soldier’s capabilities by testing his physical, emotional, and mental stamina”.\(^6\) The SFAS was regarded by many within the Green Beret community as “the definitive selection method” for the Special Forces.\(^6\)

In the first three days, the soldier undergoes intensive physical and psychological testing; in the next nineteen days, the soldier is put through a series of “land-navigation exercises” to determine their suitability for Special Forces training; and the final two days involves the selection interviews and process. The suitability of the soldier is “measured in terms of key attributes” regarded as essential for special operations training. These attributes include “cognitive ability, physical fitness, initiative, moral courage, dependability, maturity, perseverance, judgment, decision-making, team-player ability, persuasiveness and communication”.\(^6\)

Those selected go on to training in the Qualification Course. The SFQC puts the soldier through the phases of “Individual Skills, MOS Qualification, and Collective Training”.\(^6\) The 40 days of the Individual Skills phase trains the soldier in the “common skills” of cross-country land navigation and small unit tactics. The MOS Qualification phase trains the soldier in their primary area of specialisation, and is between 26 to 59 weeks in duration. Their “specialty” might be as a Detachment Commander, a Weapons Sergeant, an Engineer Sergeant, a Medical Sergeant, or a Communications

---

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^6\) U.S. Army Recruiting Command.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^6\) U.S. Army Recruiting Command.
Sergeant. The 38 days of the Collective Training phase trains the soldier in “direct action isolation, air operations, unconventional warfare” and “isolation training”.65 This phase ends with a “culminating event” – a 19-day unconventional warfare problem-solving field exercise called “Operation Robin Sage” in which the soldiers work as operational units to train a “mock guerrilla force”.66 Many of the Special Forces soldiers deployed in the Afghanistan campaign “attributed their success” to the “realistic” training provided by the Robin Sage exercise.67 Following this phase, soldiers undergo Language Training for a period of between 18 to 24 weeks. Then they undergo a 19-day “survival, evasion, resistance and escape” (SERE) course. The purpose of the SERE course is “to teach personnel how to survive if they become separated from their unit; to evade a hostile force and make their way back to friendly forces; …to avoid capture”; and in case they are captured, “to resist the enemy’s attempts at exploitation, to escape from captivity and to return home with honor”.68

The total selection and training time for a Special Forces soldier is between 62 to 100 weeks. This training is conducted by the U.S. Army’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. The soldier is expected to develop a specialised “regional orientation” – cultural, geographical, demographical and political knowledge – through additional studies.69 The Special Forces soldier is expected to fully appreciate and internalise the doctrines and values elaborated in the “Special Forces Creed” as well as the “Special Operations Forces Truths and Imperatives”.70

The Special Forces soldier is expected to develop and maintain their ability to supervise and train others, primarily by performing “instructor duty” and “observer/controller duty” assignments, as well as by “MOS cross training” to develop their knowledge of specialty areas other than their own.71 One important component of the U.S. military training methodology is the production of a “mission essential task list” (METL) by which commanders and instructors set training priorities and allocate resources.72 The METL would have been a central paradigm in the training of Afghan
anti-Taliban forces, such as those that may have been conducted by Amerine and his unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Operations Imperatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the operational environment; recognize political implications; facilitate interagency activities; engage the threat discriminately; consider long term effects; ensure legitimacy and credibility of special operations; anticipate and control psychological effects; apply capabilities indirectly; develop multiple options; ensure long term sustainment; provide sufficient intelligence; balance security and synchronization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Operations Forces Truths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humans are more important than Hardware. Quality is better than Quantity. Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced. Competent Special operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Key principles of the U.S. Special Forces.

The Special Forces soldier is also expected to possess a thorough understanding and appreciation of Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations missions. Civil Affairs involves the U.S. military’s work with “civil authorities and civilian populations” which, in the case of the work performed by Amerine and his unit in Afghanistan, consisted of humanitarian assistance and the restoration of a civilian government infrastructure to replace the Taliban regime – the work of “nation-building”. Psychological Operations involves the dissemination of information “to promote specific emotions, attitudes, or behaviors” and “to convince enemy, neutral, and friendly nations and forces to take action favorable to the United States and its allies”. For Amerine and his unit, this involved the delivery of humanitarian aid to local populations and all other actions designed to gain “support for U.S. operations” and reduce “the morale and efficiency of enemy forces”. This was achieved by the influence of their various forms of support for Karzai’s military and political efforts, which led to the surrender or defection of enemy forces, and to the rally of support from neutral and friendly forces.

The performance of the Special Forces soldier is reliant upon many layers of instruction and information, contained and provided in the process of their training and enculturation in the U.S. military as well as in Special Forces doctrines and traditions.

INITIATION

The levels of initiation into the experience of the Special Forces soldier begins with the SFAS process, in which successful recruits experience initiation into the
Qualification Course as a candidate. At the end of the SFQC, the candidate undergoes a significant “stress event” that serves as another initiation in its own right. This is the “stress inoculation” process known as the SERE – survival, evasion, resistance and escape – course.

A study conducted on the stress responses of participants in the SERE course found highly significant changes in levels in four of the body’s stress-related hormones and chemical transmitters. The study indicated that the quality of performance in the SERE course was directly related to the amounts of adrenaline and neuropeptide-Y that the body is able to produce. The study found that Special Forces soldiers produced substantially higher levels of these chemical transmitters than participants who were not Special Forces soldiers; showing that stress inoculation was in greater evidence in the Special Forces soldiers. The study also analysed the levels of dissociation experienced by participants in the SERE course, and found that dissociation levels were directly related to the amount of neuropeptide-Y that the body produced. It directly related higher dissociation levels with greater levels of anxiety and lower levels of performance. Again, Special Forces soldiers demonstrated greater resistance to dissociative symptoms than other participants. These findings indicate that Special Forces soldiers possess high levels of stress tolerance.  

This demonstrates the way that Special Forces soldiers perform a particular state of consciousness. This state of consciousness is invoked in a stress event such as the SERE course or the operation in the field. In this sense, the SERE course also serves as an initiation into this particular performance state.

For the U.S. Army, the art of “stress control” is a fundamental component of the training of its recruits. The ways in which a soldier deals with the “physical stressors” – environmental and physiological conditions – and the “mental stressors” – demands on the cognitive and emotional systems – that they are likely to encounter in a conflictual situation determine the likelihood of their successful performance of a combat mission. The soldier’s response to a given conflict situation is seen as either “positive combat stress behavior” – behaviour conducive to group cohesion as well as increased alertness, strength, endurance, and tolerance to discomfort – or “dysfunctional combat stress behavior” – criminal acts, “misconduct stress behaviors”, and “battle fatigue”.

Thus the training process of the soldier is intended to develop the potential to engage in “positive combat stress behavior”, develop the sense of “mission-oriented motivation”, and “progressively increase stress tolerance” in preparation for deployment. The development of “stress control” serves as the initiation of the cadre into a performative norm for the liminal states of conflict – for the “theater of operation”.

A further level of initiation therefore occurs when the soldier has become a member of a Special Forces Group and is then deployed into an operational situation for the first time. Although the Special Forces Qualification Course graduation ceremony can also be seen as an initiation event, it is perhaps more of a formality and a culmination of an initiation experience than a further initiation into a greater level of involvement, such as that invoked by an actual field deployment.

INVOCATION

The invocation of the Special Forces soldier ultimately occurs when the order for deployment is issued. The U.S. Army Special Operations Command states that the “mission of the Special Forces Groups is to plan, prepare for, and when directed, deploy”. The planning and preparation is a constant process that is interrupted by the order to deploy into an operation. In the case of Amerine and his unit, it is highly likely that a form of invocation occurred when news of the 9/11 event reached them while they were on assignment in Central Asia. The emotional impact of such news would have been mixed with the knowledge that their unit would very likely be redeployed, within a short period of time, as part of the U.S. response to these events. In this sense, their reactions were a precursor to the invocation that would soon identify their mission.

Amerine and his unit were evacuated out of Afghanistan on the 5th of December after a “blue-on-blue” incident – when a “misguided” U.S. “smart bomb” killed three members of his unit and dozens of their Afghan allies in a battle outside Kandahar. Amerine was injured in the explosion along with the remainder of “A” team Texas-One-Two, as well as members of another U.S. team that had recently arrived and dozens

76 U.S. Army Special Operations Command SOF Forces Primer:
more of the Afghan troops working with them including Karzai. Less than six weeks later, Amerine was awarded a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart along with other members of his detachment. In this ceremony, Amerine and his colleagues were invoked into the status of “national heroes” as they took their place in the history and mythology of the U.S. military and the Special Forces.

Figure 24: A war hero is invoked. Special Forces ODA574 Texas12 with Hamid Karzai shortly before the “blue-on-blue” smart bomb incident on December 5 (left), then on January 15 Amerine received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. (Sources: From Moore 2003 and CNN)

IMAGINATION

The history and mythology of the U.S. military tradition is a fundamental element of the belief system that motivates and guides the Special Forces soldier. In the Basic Training that each U.S. soldier receives with any particular branch of military service, education in the history of that branch or unit was a central component of that training. The “heroes” and deeds of each particular branch or unit were continuously celebrated and recalled in images, anecdotes and literature to inculcate and emphasise the values that each soldier is expected to internalise – to embody and enact. The Special Forces soldier repeatedly makes an oath to “serve with the memory of those who have gone before me”.

The mythology of the Special Forces “Green Beret” is widely proliferated in such products of the U.S. cultural industry as Barry Sadler’s popular music recording of The Ballad of the Green Berets that topped the U.S. charts in 1966; John Wayne’s 1968 film portrayal of the Special Forces in Vietnam in The Green Berets; Sylvester

77 See Special Forces Creed.
Stallone's portrayals in the popular film trilogy *First Blood* (1982), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), and *Rambo III* (1988); and most recently in the film *Black Hawk Down* (2002). This mythology ensures that a large recruitment base exists for the Special Forces within and outside of the U.S. military community, enabling the Special Forces command to exercise a high degree of selectiveness with aspirants. This mythology functions as a value system for the members of the Special Forces community. The Special Forces soldier makes a commitment “to excel in every art and artifice of war”, and to show themselves to be worthy of the “sacred trust” endowed upon them by their fellow soldiers and their nation.\textsuperscript{78}

The commitment that a Special Forces soldier makes is framed within the notion of the “professional” who has undertaken to “do all that my nation requires of me”.\textsuperscript{79} In this sense, the ideal of “professionalism” becomes a standard for the performance of duties that routinely require the performer to enact transgressions of the normative bounds of “civility”. These transgressions would include the possibility of inflicting harm and destruction upon other people and property, as well as the possibility of having such harm and destruction being inflicted upon their own person, in the course of their duties. The value system that allows for such transgressions is defined and elaborated in the notion of a “warrior ethos” – set out as “the professional attitudes and beliefs that characterize the American soldier”, and as the “intangible factors” that comprise “unit cohesion, integrity, physical and moral courage, dedication, commitment and leadership”. This value system is thought to be “developed through discipline” and “knowledge of the Army’s proud heritage”. The Special Forces is set out as “a brotherhood of warriors who are bound by their dedication to mission accomplishment, by their loyalty to one another, and by their moral and physical courage”.\textsuperscript{80} The camaraderie that develops and becomes cultivated in a small Special Forces unit in operational deployment is essential to the sustainment of the performance state of the individual soldier and the unit. Amerine comments that for the members of the unit “you’re a close group, like family”.\textsuperscript{81}

The “core values” of the Special Forces is considered to be contained in the notions of the “warrior ethos” and “professionalism”, as well as in qualities that promote

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
“innovation”, “versatility”, “cohesion”, “character” and “cultural awareness”. The “core purpose” of the Special Forces is considered to be “to achieve our nation’s objectives”, to conduct missions “through, with, or by surrogates, indigenous organizations or indigenous populations”, and to serve “as a force multiplier”. Amerine considered his mission to be a “noble duty”, to work with Afghan forces to depose the Taliban regime in order “to help the people of Afghanistan”.

The Special Forces soldier is also inspired into commitment and action by knowledge and skills that have been acquired in the preparation for their mission; and by the resources which they are able to access – the financial, technological, informational, political, and physical power that they are able to invoke through their communications systems. Thus Amerine was able to confidently declare that “we could go in there naked with flip-flops and as long as we have good radios we could do our job”. After being wounded and airlifted from Afghanistan in the care of a medical evacuation team, Amerine commented that “we could not have penetrated so deep behind enemy lines without faith that they would be there for us – our faith was requited on that dark day”. Thus the Special Forces soldier can confidently make the commitment that “my goal is to succeed in any mission – and live to succeed again”.

The imagination of the Special Forces soldier is involved in the mythology and ethos of the “Green Berets” as recalled in the deeds of its heroes; in the knowledge and skills that are considered essential for the performance of their mission; in the perceived power of the resources that they are able to draw upon; and in the belief that their nation – their community of family and friends – supports and is served by their actions. In Amerine’s case, his mentality would also certainly be involved in the events that had triggered his unit’s deployment, and that had become inextricably linked with his own experience in the operation, as he reflected that “our fallen will not be forgotten, September 11th will not be forgotten”.

In this chapter, the processes through which the performative modes required by the U.S. Marine Corps and the Army Special Forces are induced in their recruits have been analysed, in order to illuminate upon the ways by which motivation and

---

84 Finn. ‘Wounded Army Captain Details Teamwork Against Taliban’.
86 See Special Forces Creed.
commitment are formed and sustained through particular applications of text and training. Through the physical experiences created, as well as by the affective and imaginative involvements produced and cultivated, the recruits have been shown to undergo transformations in their modes of embodiment and enactment that are brought about by intentional and systematic processes of enculturation. The acts of identification that the trained and inducted soldier subsequently engages in have been demonstrated to have been informed by discursive streams grounded in themes of conflict, survival, and higher good. Such themes provide the justifications for the alterations or redefinitions of moral and behavioural standards which are deemed necessary for performance of the soldiers’ required acts and duties.

The Basic Training of the Marine Corps has been shown to provide foundation and initiation experiences that produce the “soldier” as a distinct group-sanctioned role that the recruit is expected to embody and enact. This role is dissociated from the “civilian” role and identity which had previously served as the performative norm for the recruit. The construction of the “enemy” as a target of performance violence has been shown to also require certain processes of dissociation that, in the investigated practices, have been effected through processes that alter, redefine, or intensify particular perceptions held regarding experiences of gender and the self.

The training and deployment experience of the Special Forces soldier has been analysed in order to illuminate upon processes of further and advanced training and enculturation by which more specialised and developed roles have been constructed and prepared for in states of conflict. The analysis of such experience has been carried out along the framework of the elements of induction that apply to the particular experiences.

The processes of identification at work have been shown to encompass the experiences and perceptions of the individual performer, the immediate group to which they belong – the operational team – and the group with which they collaborate – their allies. The element of “rapport” was shown to be particularly important, and a key element in the elicitation of involvement. The soldier’s involvement in the preparation and in the operation required the development and application of a diverse and complex set of skills. The importance of isolation as an element of the soldier’s culture

---

has been demonstrated in the perceived necessities of the preparations and operations that take effect. The information and the instruction that the Special Forces soldier receives has been shown to encompass a breadth of contexts by which a very particular set of physical and psychological attributes are developed and tested. Experiences of initiation have been shown to be provided by events that mark the end of training cycles – such as the SERE course, the Robin Sage or the Crucible exercises – as well as by events that mark increased levels of involvement – such as the soldier’s initial deployment. The invocation of the role and mission of the soldier has been shown to occur when orders for deployment are received, while further invocation occurs with ceremonies that mark increased status – such as by being recognised as a “war hero” or as a higher rank. The imaginative and affective involvement of the soldier is elicited through the conveyed or celebrated history and mythology of the military tradition, through attributes developed in preparation for their mission, through belief in the resources they have at their disposal, and through the identification with the ideals and the group which they serve.

**Conclusions on Conflict – Fundamentalisms**

Agency of the jihad warrior is attributed to the “will of Allah”, to the “act in the way of God”. Actions are not subject to moral judgements, only to the presence of a “desire to win the pleasure of God”. In the fatwahs of Usama bin Laden, final authority is consistently attributed to passages from the Qur’an and its interpretations. Agency is thus deferred and attributed to the interpretation of the Qur’an as the sacred text, the “word of God”. The polar opposite of such acts and the attributed motivations of the “other”, is considered to be the misguided, “selfish” or “self-centred” act. The identity of the jihad warrior does not allow or ascribe agency to the concept of “self” or “nation”. The individual is a member of a group, subject to the “will” or authority of the divine entity – Allah – as mediated through the words of the Qur’an and interpreted by religious authorities. Similarly, the acts of the President of the United States is subject to the protocols of public office and to political expediency; the U.S. Special Forces soldier is subject to military authority, operational doctrines and objectives. These deferrals and attributions of authority entail a sense of “self” boundary that is similar to that experienced by the actor on stage, within a dramatic performance.

The conclusions of this study support the premise that consciousness is an effect of language and embodied practice. In the knowledge systems that we inherit and
utilise, identity and knowledge is constructed through language and embodiment. Languages and practices are atemporal, whilst communication and narratisation are processes that are temporal in nature. In combination, they make up our understanding of human experience. The performative act is a process that is temporal, whilst the guide or motivation of a performative act is an atemporal element. This is the text or role – script or spirit, the knowledge – that is embodied or enacted in the performative act. Each state of consciousness implies its own interpretation of experience and the world – reality as defined by its textually designated truths. Symbolic codes and discourses apply to cultural contexts and processes through interpretive and communicative acts – through performance.

The self, the “I”, is brought into existence through acts of identification and is integrated as a hierarchical system of values or “sentiments”. Acts of will and choice serve to induce and maintain the states out of which performative acts are manifested. Within the hierarchical system of values are various sub-systems; the sense of self becomes located and centred on such a sub-system which comes to be regarded as the core values of the individual. The core value sub-system – the disposition – is the dominant state of the individual, the state that is performed. The individual’s consciousness is thus filled or possessed by the core value sub-system.

In the liminal space created by the conflictual state, the act or event performed effects a thoroughly corporeal resonance. The acts and events investigated in this chapter have had, by their intensity, the effects of invoking a heightened sense of corporeality, particularly evident in the powerful emotions stirred up by this social drama. The acts examined in this section are highly performative. In each case the performer’s body is involved – the body of the mujahid, the bodies of his captives and victims are obliterated in attacking highly symbolic targets. The body of the president is placed under heavy protective security measures, and appears at important selected moments and locations to make emotionally charged proclamations. The body of the Special Forces soldier is placed “in harm’s way” after having undergone rigorous preparations for battle. The body of the audience is either involved or implicated. Fear is felt in the body and the body is destroyed – this is the sensual power of the performative act.

---

89 See McDougall in Segal.: pp. 58-59.
The power of the image at the beginning of this section comes largely from the knowledge of the number of bodies – human beings – involved in the tragedy about to occur, hidden yet vividly present. In the belief system that the fundamentalist is invited to accept, there is a little cold comfort. The body is discarded in order to proceed to divine grace in religious fundamentalism, or to heroic mythology in secularism. This performative event highlights the compelling problem of the body and redemption.

In religious fundamentalism, the “truth” claim is exclusive, there is but “one way” to redemption and salvation – one way to avoid the meaningless vacuum of atheistic death. The advent of “rationalism” posed a challenge to the foundation of discontent and fear upon which the power of the Christian religious establishment was based. If the Islamic religious establishment is considered to be simply 600 years younger than its Christian counterpart, it would be tempting to conclude that the Islamic tradition has yet to undergo a period of “enlightenment”, and that it is undergoing a historical moment that is comparable to that which the Christian tradition faced around the 15th century. To come to that conclusion, however, would be a dangerous step. Firstly, it requires us to put our “faith” in some notion of a cycle of religious traditions or “civilisations” based on the history of the Christian and scientific traditions. This may not be a reliable sampling. A lack of effective historical consciousness makes it difficult to make such claims. Secondly, such a conclusion lends itself too easily to the notion that this social drama represents a conflict between two civilisations – Islam and Christian. This would not be a particularly useful analysis of this highly complex situation.

Instead this situation, this conflictual state, can be considered to be the result of an intersection of various forms of fundamentalisms, brought about by human actors – agents and traditions. It is possible to identify one of these as a form of militant Islamic fundamentalism to refer to the discursive stream that inspired Mohammed Atta to his performative act. It is possible to identify the Christian Evangelism and Christian Reconstructionism that, to varying degrees, exerted some influence upon the words and actions of George W. Bush on and after the 11th of September. However, it is also important to acknowledge the influence of other forms of fundamentalism that appear to influence the actors involved. If the notion of fundamentalism can be taken beyond

---

the ideas of “God” and the “sacred text” to encompass all forms of truth claims that strive to exercise influence on adherents and others, it would be possible to elaborate further on the discursive streams that intersect in the social drama that is examined in this section. The words and actions of Bush and his administration reflect an adherence to a form of “pluralism”, however much this can be attributed to political considerations it is also a “truth” that comes into conflict with the form of fundamentalism adhered to by Atta. There is also the “professionalism” of the Special Forces soldier and U.S. society, as well as the “rationalism” and “modernism” that pervades corporate media discourse on the social drama.

The term “militant Islamic fundamentalism”\(^1\) is most useful because it identifies a religiously inspired political movement that does not necessarily include the wider religious community from which it draws its recruits. The term identifies a tradition that has become included in the religiously inspired narratives of elements of Islamic thought, and has been further contextualised by some religiously inspired political movements within the intelligentsia of Islamic communities in the 20th century.

In the previous three chapters, the fundamentalist cultures that intersect in the 9/11 event and its aftermath have been shown to be the belief systems that became engaged in the conflictual state, that compelled its adherents to place particular meaning-making frames upon experience, and that invoked particular imperatives for action states. Fundamentalism compels its adherents to impose truth claims and expectations of normativity upon others. Therefore it is in the imposition of truth claims that the conflictual state and the paranoiacigenic trance can be invoked.

Why does fundamentalism prosper? Why does it appear to be necessary? Fundamentalism offers a claim of certainty and clarity – it offers a “vision” for the experience and existence of physicality. Although generated by the corporeal presence, the vision is generative of a realm beyond corporeality – it is transcendent of the limitations of physical experience and existence. Physical life is endowed with meaning by it, and it is a vision that provides the promise an “eternal life”. The notion of physical mortality is given a meaning-making frame that includes the possibility of divinity – it is the light in the darkness of death. In similar fashion, the notion of “professionalism” within modernity provides physical experience and existence with a
framework for normativity, a sense of purpose and values beyond the basics of survival. The values of “professionalism” are inspired by the cultures of modernity in order to provide meaning and direction to human life, in much the same way that the values of “fanaticism” provide expectations and modes of involvement in the cultures of religious faith. These values provide a framework for beliefs about the future and the purpose of action.

Reflecting on the notion of physical mortality, it is possible to conclude that these belief systems deal with the future and the purpose of action as eschatologies of imminent global catastrophe and as teleologies of the unending march of progress. The eschatology and the teleology are sometimes combined in a belief about the cycles of civilisations. Beliefs about the ends of civilisations are easier to demonstrate than beliefs about the end of the world.

The eschatological apocalyptic discourses and symbols that are of concern to this study are the ones that are used in the invocation of the paranoiagenic trance and the sustainment of the paranoid state. In particular, this study is concerned with the apocalyptic visions and texts that promote the belief that through destruction, the body – individual and group – is reborn into divinity. This is the belief that the corrupt is redeemed through destruction. These beliefs provide powerful justifications for the conflictual state. The beliefs provide a vision that frames the process of destruction within the notion of divinity – as the “highest” form achievable by human experience and existence. The body of the fundamentalist is discarded to enter divine existence. In this notion, the power of apocalypticism as a construct is most apparent.

---

CONCLUSIONS
II. Conclusions: Performers and Performances

The aim of this study has been the development of a theoretical approach to the problem of “trance” as a performative practice. By analysing “trance” as a process and a technique, this study has endeavoured to illuminate the ways in which actions and communications are compelled or motivated in both individuals and groups. Central to this endeavour has been the formulation of a theory of inductions in order to understand the processes by which states of consciousness are invoked. In considering this problem, an account of the processes by which agency and responsibility are attributed has indicated the centrality of acts of identification engaged in by the performers and the receptors of performances. This study has found that such acts of identification are insignificant without adequate levels of affective and imaginative involvement, therefore the processes by which such levels of involvement are elicited and produced have also been shown to be of central concern to the problem investigated. Such processes have been shown to require an adequate level or sense of isolation from the “normal” temporal and spatial environment of the wider social and cultural milieu, within a particular performance environment that is physically and psychologically circumscribed as both a place and an event. The study has demonstrated that the capacity to participate in, appreciate or become engaged by a particular performance requires adequate levels of instruction or information to have been processed or integrated by the performer and the receptor into the performance experience. Therefore, both performer and receptor have been shown to require an adequate sense of initiation into a group entity governed by particular shared values and traditions, beliefs systems and structures that ascribe meaning to the performance experience. The sense of common purpose produced allows the performer and the receptor to invoke the state or process required by the performance experience. Such an invocation has been demonstrated to provide a focus for the imagination of the performer and the receptor that is considered to be appropriate for the performance experience. Furthermore when these processes function as an uninterrupted cycle, a closed system has been seen to be generated by which the experiential field of the performance becomes a reality.
Thus the theory of inductions proposed in this study has been demonstrated to provide a framework by which to investigate and develop a wide range of performance states and traditions across a variety of social and cultural contexts. The theory of performed states of consciousness or trance that has been developed in this study offers a framework by which to consider the experience of the performer and of the audience of the performance in relation to the wider context of drives and expectations that exert influence upon the performance experience.

Data from interviews indicate a sound basis for the proposed theory of induction. Each of the proposed elements of induction has been shown to be present in the performance practices of the interviewees. It is apparent that exit processes appear to be less defined in Western performance practice. However, elements of performance traditions such as curtain calls, post-performance parties or drinks, procedures such as the removal of costumes and make-up, as well as debriefing processes has been seen to serve the functions of the exit of performance states. In the context of this study, the trance state experienced by the soldier performing their duties on a battlefield and the trance state experienced by the medium in performing as a channel have been shown to be qualitatively related. The experience itself in each respective instance has been demonstrated to involve the fundamental requisites of the trance state, as well as the elements of and the necessity for induction and exit procedures.

**Actuality and Liminality**

One important problem encountered in this study has been the delineations and distinctions between the experiences of “actuality” and the performance event. The problem of differences between what is “actually” occurring and what is believed to be happening encapsulates the contestation of “reality” that is central to developing the understanding of “trance” as a performative practice. Thus the notion of performed states of consciousness has been shown to be vital in approaching the problem of trance as performance. Furthermore the notion of a “normative trance” has been important in conceptualising and analysing the range of states of consciousness that have been investigated in this study, as a constant by which to discern divergence from or transgressions of group-defined standards and conventions. It follows that the notion of “normativity” requires adequate consideration in relation to the social and cultural contexts from which it has been derived in order to arrive at a useful understanding of what is entailed in the performance of normativity, and consequently in the
performance of divergent or transgressive acts or states. It also follows that notions of “actuality” and “reality” require qualification in considering their relation to divergent or transgressive performance states, particularly when the performances in question have undertaken to interrupt or influence the normative states in which the social and cultural milieu function, as have many of the performances examined in this study.

This study has been centrally concerned with the ways in which symbolic processes impact upon the worlds in which they are performed. Such symbolic processes have been seen to employ a range of strategies from the applications of the power of “beauty” or “purity” to the applications of the power of “suffering” or “terror” – from authenticity to authority. Such processes demonstrate the mechanisms by which the performatve states investigated serve to define relevant situations and “reality” itself, as acts or states sanctioned by particular social and cultural groups. These acts or states emerge from particular practices or traditions informed by processes of narratisation and association. In performance, such acts or states have been shown to both respond to and seek to influence – to transform in some way – the normative streams of narratisation and association salient in the social and cultural milieux of its audiences. Thus this study has illustrated the processes by which the performance of trance – as a transformation effected upon the “inner world” of the performer – influences the world of the performance by invoking a sense of credibility and authority that impacts upon the discursive streams of that world. Beginning with the premise that all modes of performativity require particular states of consciousness to be present for effective embodiment and enactment to occur, and that particular performances can also generate or develop distinct states of consciousness, this study concludes that both performances and states of consciousness can effect either normative or transformative influences upon the world of the performer and audience. Thus the performance of forms of trance – as both normative and transformative forces – has been shown to function as a powerful instrument of cultural programming that literally shapes the lives and worlds of its performers and its audiences – both as individuals and as a group.

**The Trance Performance State**

Some of the key aspects of an investigation of trance performance have been shown to be the functions of the imagination, emotion, and memory in such practices. Each of these aspects are essential in the performer’s process of entering a trance
state and in an audience’s perception of an “altered” or “heightened” state of consciousness – the sense of being “larger-than-life”. The levels of absorption experienced and generated by these aspects determine the power of the resonance evoked in the moments of performance. A discussion of states of consciousness inevitably concerns itself with the power of focused attention – the “concentration” in both the performer and the observer of the performance. It is by such a power that a series of actions and expressions comes to resonate with the depth of meaning that is made accessible by the performance. Such resonances are made possible when both imagination and emotion are conjoined upon the object of attention.

Other key aspects in the practice of trance performance have been shown to include the process of preparation for the trance state, which would include the training of the performer and the sense of structure that is internalised by the practitioner. These are essential in the process of producing the belief systems that the performer employs in order to create and sustain the sense of the world of the performance. In addition, this study has demonstrated that the interactions engaged in by the performer during the trance state serve to develop and elaborate the world of the performance. The environment or context of the performance also provide material that is necessary for the invocation and maintenance of the performance state.

Each of these factors have been shown to contribute to the depth of absorption achieved by the performer and the sense of “flow” that is created in the performance state. The sense of flow and the notion of the “flow state” have been shown to be central in the consideration of trance performance. One important measure of the depth of absorption and the strength of the flow state is the presence and participation of the practitioner’s sense of “executive control” or “ego” function. When Stanislavski described the actor in the flow state, in whom is awakened the “creative state”, he spoke of a process wherein apparent conscious control is suspended – the executive control “steps aside”. In a flow state, the performer is “carried” by a momentum arising out of the imagination and action of the performer, and their interaction with others and the environment. This momentum has been shown to operate on the level of emotion. In such instances, the performance takes on a quality of “effortlessness” for the performer. In this context, “effort” equates with the individual performer’s conscious decision-making faculties – these appear to be not involved in the performance actions and expressions. The performer is conceptualised as being “plugged into” the flow or
the creative state, and a pleasant sense of satisfaction or empowerment often accompanies such experiences for the performer. The strength of the flow state is, in turn, a measure of the power of the characterisation or transformation of identity that is achieved by the performer – that is, the effectiveness of the practitioner’s performance of the appropriate “mask” or “template”. This study has demonstrated that actions and expressions are perceived as “creative” or “flowing” to the extent that those actions and expressions meet the expectations inherent in the experience and perception of the performance event.

The study finds that the process of “flow” that is made manifest in certain kinds of performance, such as improvisation and trance, has been seen in the Stanislavski-inspired systems of performance to emerge from the “subconscious” or “unconscious” layers of the self – reflecting the Freudian and Jungian influences upon such systems. This “flow” has also been seen to draw such material from certain types of cultural memory or information sets. These various perceptions of such performance experiences are clearly influenced by the belief systems of the performers themselves. The “strength” of the perceptions determine the degree of the sense of reality that is experienced, and is a product of the level of commitment and conviction that is engaged in the performer.

The notion of masks and “archetypes” have been shown to encompass both stereotypic and automatic modes of experience and expression. Similarly, characters and roles have been viewed as unique and autonomous consciousness sets. Antonio Damasio elaborates on the notion of an “autobiographical self” as it is developed, expressed and interpreted as a function of biological memory. A consciousness set has been shown to form into an autobiographical self – a sense of identity – with its own unique and autonomous memory subset. The sense of self-identity has been seen to be a result of an historicised and memorised narrative, of a specific memory subset. Such memory subsets are further influenced by social and cultural factors such as psychology, pathology, aesthetics, theology, ideology and politics – as various systems of mobilisation and motivation.

The sense and levels of executive control present in any particular experience of an event indicate the degree of dissociation that is felt. The “step aside” of the ego or

---

1 For example, see interviews p. 99.
the sense of self, as described by performers, is a central mechanism in the process of
dissociation; leading to the sense of action that is either conscious or unconscious.\(^2\)
This study finds that the sense of identity is therefore a “closed system” state. Trance
states have been seen as expressions of the organism’s systems of “life regulation”
and image processing. In this sense, characters and trance states have been seen as
“closed system” states. Performance is a result and product of such closed system
states. In considering trance, this study concludes that the acts of identification that the
performer engages in can generate a sense of flow when it achieves a closed system
state in performance.

The functions of the sense of individual identity have been shown to be most
central in the experiential dynamics of the trance performance state. The various
issues that arose in these considerations of the practice have dealt with fundamental
questions in relation to the agency of action and expression. As an illustration of the
kind of questions that have been encountered among the range of practices
considered, this study has analysed the phenomenon of “channeling” and engaged the
question of the channeled “entity” and the communication “source”. Current beliefs and
thinking on the subject, coming from a largely materialist perspective, suggest that a
“pure” channel model is not quite appropriate to describe the phenomena that we refer
to as “trance” or “channeling”. However, were we to entertain the notion of an outside
and independent entity communicating through a human host or channel, we would still
have to acknowledge on current evidence – largely from what the “entities” themselves
say – that the psychic and psychological make-up of the host or channel is integral to
the process of trance communication. That is, the entities or signals are considered to
be filtered through the total “personality” of the “medium”. They are, in this sense,
“interpreted” signals. In this case, it is possible to conclude that a “pure” receptor
model, in the same sense that a radio or a television receives a broadcast, does not
seem to apply.

The implication in this is that whatever the level of dissociation experienced, the
host or channel is inevitably “active” in the process. The channel is thus “active” in the
sense that the concerns and beliefs of the medium are invariably reflected in the
communicated messages. It can be surmised that the intelligence and potentiality of
the host or channel is employed in the trance communication. The signal is always

\(^2\) For example, see ‘absence seizures’ in Damasio (1999) pp. 96-98.
“distorted”. With regard to the internal “higher intelligence source” model, the same dynamic is considered to apply – “high” intelligence will always be influenced by “low” intelligence. Therefore it is unavoidable that both external and internal sources – the individual and the group experience – are considered in regarding the trance communication. This study concludes that the boundaries created by the sense of self or individual identity are effectively artificial in the context of the performed trance, and that these boundaries are instrumental in creating a sense of dissociation.

Evidence from the research interviews suggests that dissociative phenomena also occur in “conventional” performance practice. Key indicators of such phenomena are the reported distortion of the sense of time that some performers experienced in certain performance situations, and the amnesiac experience made apparent in reflections upon specific performance events. In this sense, the dissociation is considered to be indicated by the presence or absence of the sense of “self” during the performance experience, and the presence or absence of memories of the performance experience reflected upon by the performer.

The way in which the performer experiences the performance state has been shown to be largely a question of the agency of the performed actions. When the notion of the “character” is involved, the performer is conscious of constructing a physical and psychological “mask” or persona that becomes the embodiment of the performed character. Similarly, an “entity” that expresses itself through a medium or channel has been seen as a construct, but as with a character it has also been shown to be conceived of as a pre-existent agent of the performance action and expression. In both instances, the notion of the self is “preserved” by a process of exclusion – the character or the entity is attributed with the performed action and expression, whilst the performer’s self is seen to be suspended and the integrity of that self is maintained. The self might be involved in the performance of the action and expression, but for some performers what is acted or expressed does not originate from the self. The self or ego is understood to have “stepped aside” in order to allow the character or entity to be embodied.

Some performers do not make such a clear separation between the self and the character. Some performers have been shown to consider the self to be always

---

3 For example, see interviews pp. 98-99.
4 For example, see interview pp. 93-94, and interviews in Belo (1960) pp. 220-225.
present in the performance state; the attribution of actions and expressions is clearly placed in the self as the actor, in interaction with other performers and the script or spirit of the performance event. The performance is thus seen to be emerging from aspects of the self as the performer. Performers have also been shown to conceptualise the performance as a product of the interplay between individual internal elements and cultural external factors. This study concludes that the state of consciousness is produced from both individual and cultural sets of drives and memories. In the context of “conventional” dramatic performance practice, these beliefs in the function of the sense of self in performance has been seen to have been first articulated, in recent history, in the deliberations of Stanislavski, particularly in the notion of the “imagined circumstances”.

In the process of constructing a characterisation, the performer has been demonstrated to access individual or cultural drives and memories which, as subsets, form the sense of identity of the character which the performer then works with. The study has found that the elements that make up that sense of identity is richly layered. As well as individual and personal identities, each of us possess regional identities, ethnic identities, cultural identities, linguistic identities, and presumed identities. Each particular sense of identity contributes to the experience of consciousness of the organism, as an embodied individual and as an enacted collective entity. This study concludes that, in trance, the cultural body is expressed. The performer is thus possessed by a collectively-based sense of identity, such as an archetype or a spirit. Likewise, it is apparent that an individual organism can be possessed by grief or ecstasy – by experiences of intensified emotions.

This study has shown that an individual can also be possessed by a role, or by an action, or by a particular “experiential template”. In contrast, an individual cannot be said to be possessed by their own “normal self” – the sense of “other-ness” is essential to the conceptualisation of the experience of “being possessed”. However, in some cases of multiple personality phenomena for instance, a sense of other-ness can result from dissociative experiences of aspects of the self which can produce similar emotive responses to those produced in instances of possession. In this sense, the notions of trance and possession differ – unlike the understanding of the possession state, the

---

5 For example, see nterviews pp. 91-93.
conceptualisation of the trance state has been shown to more easily allow for the agency of different layers of the self.

To investigate trance performance states is to deal with notions of a layering of consciousness – a multiplicity of conscious states and reality models. Central to this study is the question of control in the trance performance state – what layer of consciousness is the designated “control element” of the performer’s actions and expressions. Many of the practitioners interviewed indicated a concern with this matter of control. The study demonstrates that there is a belief in the necessity for a controlled performance, for instance. Control in this sense is identified with the individual ego – the sense of executive control as it relates to the socialised normative role. This control element is seen as the aspect of the self that makes choices and observes experience.

This study concludes that the control element is most often linked to the “conscious” self, and that the inability to attribute or recognise the agency of that control element is the basis for the sense of dissociation. The performance of trance requires the performer to exercise control. However, the controlling factors are, as in acting, defined by group-defined parameters. The thesis demonstrates by various examples that what is apparent or vicariously experienced by the audience is indeed different to what a performer experienced or perceived in the performance.

The intercultural nature of this study allows confirmation of the hypothesis that belief systems generate the qualities of perception and experience of the performance. This study shows that in the context of a Western performance and cultural tradition, the notions of executive control appear to be an important filter in the experience of trance performance. Likewise, another key issue has been found in the notions of “subconscious” or “unconscious” layers of the self which generate performance material, and function as the filters by which the performance is experienced and interpreted. In contrast, many other performance traditions have been shown to attribute the control element to externalised agents such as gods or demons, angels or aliens, or disembodied life forms.

As an intercultural study, consideration has been given to the various ways of conceptualising both the nature of the actual trance performance being investigated, and the perceived sources of the material conveyed in the trance performance. It is not
the object of this study to arrive at a definitive conceptualisation of a trance performance experience, or a definitive explanation for the sources of the material communicated in trance performances. This study has treated these issues in the context of the belief systems that are used by the practitioners to make sense of these experiences. These issues have not been part of the major thread of the study, which is concerned with the practices and processes that make possible the trance performance experience. Therefore this is one problem that this thesis is not about – it is not concerned with the dualism or reductionism question directly. This question is far wider than the scope of this thesis. The acknowledgment of some elements of the dualist perspective – for example, notions of “transmitted” information or “disembodied” intelligence – is essential but the falsification of these notions is a concern beyond the discipline of Performance Theory. However, this study has also acknowledged the limitation that “truth” claims can only come from materialist views.

As in the practice of hypnosis, the level of belief generated and experienced by the performer and the audience of the performance has been shown to determine the level of commitment engaged, and thus the levels of efficacy and transformation that are brought about by the process. It can be said that it almost does not matter what degree of reality an object holds in the material sense. What does matter is the degree of identification that the individual organism has with the cult and paradigm that sets the parameters of the experiential reality – whether the performer is “pretending” or “being”. This study concludes that the cult and paradigm are necessary because they socialise and rationalise the individual organism’s conscious existence and experience.

In this study, art and trance have both been considered to be doorways through the “self” to other mental or “spiritual” dimensions. Our aesthetics reflect our “dreaming” – in the broadest sense. These have been shown to be the elements that transcend individual existence. There are some who would say that Shakespeare and Hamlet are “alive” in our culture, long after the body of William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon had deteriorated and regardless of the “fictional” nature of his invented character. These memories are held in various forms and invoked through their own rituals of embodiment and enactment. They are a part of “cultural memory”, along with our other cultural constructs. It is possible to conclude that these memories exist independent of, and in autonomy to, the existence of the individual organism. They exist in the traditions and actions of the social organism, as fields that are activated by
consciousness. This is a challenge to the “closed system” model of individual consciousness, which cannot account for the possibility of consciousness existing outside of the individual organism. The cultural memories are not necessarily conscious in themselves, but they can exist as sources of intelligence and potentialities. This study has shown that such memories and potentialities – embodied and enacted by performers – are the stuff that trance is made of.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Trance Forms


Bentley, Eric 1965.


Berndt, Thomas, Jochen Graebert, Stefan Buchen, Christoph Mestmacher, Claus Oliver Richter, Mario Schmidt, Volker Steinhoff, Stefan Stuchlik and SBS TV 2002. Suicide Hijackers - The Life of the September 11 Terrorists. – "Die Todespiloten" NDR TV.


Elman, Dave 1964. Findings in Hypnosis. Clifton N.J.


Mead, Margaret, Gregory Bateson, Jane Belo, Colin McPhee and Josef Bohmer 1951. Trance and Dance in Bali. Character formation in different cultures. United States, Gregory Bateson Margaret Mead.


U.S. Army Recruiting Command, USAREC 2001 . ‘In-Service Special Forces Recruiting Program (Officer and Enlisted)’. USAREC Pamphlet 601-25. Department of the Army.


APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Chapter 4

What do you understand by the term ‘consciousness’?

What do you understand by the term ‘performance’?

What do you understand by the term ‘trance’?

How would you describe the experience of performance? How would you describe the experience of performing?

What is your understanding of what a character is?

In performance, what do you think happens to the personality of the performer? What happens to your self in performance? Do you see it as your own self that is doing the performance?

Have you had any experiences that you might think of as trance?

In preparing for a performance, what is necessary for you to do in order to feel ready to perform? What kind of things do you need to do in order to prepare yourself for a performance?

At the other end of the performance, what do you need to do in order to achieve the sense that the performance is finished?

NB: Follow-up questions sought clarification and elaboration of points of interest and key concepts raised by initial questions.
APPENDIX B

The Last Night

In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate . . .
In the name of God, of myself and of my family . . .
I pray to you God to forgive me from all my sins, to allow me to glorify you in every possible way.
Remember the battle of the prophet . . . against the infidels, as he went on building the Islamic state.
One of the companions of the Prophet said: The Messenger of God commanded us to read/recite it before the raid/battle, so we read it and we were victorious and safe.

The last night:

1. Mutual oath/pledge to die and renewal of intentions. Shaving excess hair from the body and the application of cologne/perfume. Ritual washing.
2. Thorough knowledge of all aspects of the plan, and expectation of the response or resistance from the enemy.
3. Recitation of Al Tawba and Anfal traditional war chapters from the Holy Qur'an with attention to their meanings and all of the things that God has prepared for the believers, the high paradise for martyrs.
4. Remind the soul/self to listen and obey on that night. You will face decisive situations which will require listening and obeying 100 percent. So tame your soul/self, purify it, convince it, make it understand, and incite it to action. God has said: “Obey God and His Messenger, and do not fight amongst yourselves or else you will lose your heart and fail. Be patient, for God is with the patient and those who persevere.”
5. Stay awake and pray through the night, and be persistent in asking God to give you victory, control and conquest, and that He may make your task easier and protect us.
6. Remember God frequently, and the best way to do it is to read the Holy Qur'an, by the consensus of scholars, as far as I know. It is enough for us that it is the words of the Creator of the Earth and the Heavens, towards whom you are heading.
7. Purify your soul/heart of all imperfections. Completely forget that thing called “this world/this life”. The time for amusement is over and the time of truth is upon us. How much time have we wasted in our lives? Should we not ake advantage of these last hours to offer actions that make us closer to God and actions of obedience?
8. Keep a positive attitude, because the time between you and your marriage in heaven is very short. Then begins the happy life, where God is satisfied with you, and eternal bliss “in the company of the prophets, the saints, the martyrs and the good people, who are the best companions.” We ask God for his grace. Be optimistic, because the Prophet, peace be upon him, was optimistic in all his endeavours.
9. Be prepared, if you face adversity: how will you act and how will you remain steadfast and regroup, remember that you will return to God, remember that anything that happens to you could never have happened to you. This text from God is to raise your station and to atone for your sins. And know that it is but a matter of moments, before the adversity passes, God willing. Blessed are those who win the great reward from God. God has said: “Did you think you could enter heaven before God knows whom you have fought hard for Him and those who have persevered?”
10. Remember the words of God: “You were looking for death before meeting it, and now you see it as you face it.” Remember how often small groups defeated big groups by the will of God.” And remember His words: “If God gives you victory, no one can defeat you. And if He forsakes you, who can give you victory without Him? So the believers put their trust in God.”
11. Remind your self and your brothers of the supplications, and ponder their meanings. The morning and evening invocations, and the invocations for entering the town, and the illegible invocations, and the invocations said before meeting the enemy.
12. Bless your body with verses of the Qur'an done by reading verses into one's hands and then rubbing the hands over things over whatever is to be blessed, the luggage, clothes, the knife, your tools, your ID, your passport, and all of your papers.
13. Check your weapon before you leave and long before you leave. “Sharpen your blade, you must not discomfort your sacrifice during the slaughter.”
14. Tighten your clothes well, this is the way of the righteous predecessors, may God's blessings be upon them. They tightened their clothes before battle. Tighten your shoes well, wear socks so that your feet will be solidly in your shoes and do not come out. These are worldly things and prescriptions we are commanded to follow. The rest is left to God, the best One to depend upon.
15. Perform the morning prayer in a group, and ponder the great rewards. Then perform the invocations/supplications, do not leave your apartment until you have performed the ritual cleansing the angels will ask for your forgiveness as long as you are in a state of ablution, and will pray for you. The words of the Prophet as mentioned by An Nawawi in his book, The Best of Supplications. Recite the words of God: “Did you think that We created you for no reason,” from the Al Mu'minun.
The second step:

When the taxi takes you to M probably *matar*, airport in Arabic remember God constantly while in the car. Recite repeatedly the invocations to God, the invocation for entering a car, for entering a town, the invocation of place and other supplications.

When you have reached M and have left the taxi, recite the invocation of the place “Oh Lord, I ask you for the best of this place, and ask you to protect me from its evils”. Everywhere you go say that prayer. Smile and be calm, for God is with the believers. The angels protect you without you feeling them. Recite this invocation: “God is stronger than all of His creation.” And recite: “God, to you is their end, and in you we seek refuge from their evil.” And recite: “God is all we need, He is the best to depend upon.” Remember God’s words: “When the people said, ‘The people have gathered to get you, so fear them,’ that only increased their faith and they said, God is all we need, He is the best to depend upon.” After you recite that, you will find events unfolding beyond your power, for God promised this to his servants who recite this invocation:

1. They will return with the grace of God.
2. They will not suffer any harm.
3. God will be pleased with their deeds.

God said: “They returned with God’s blessings, they were not harmed, and God was satisfied with them. For God is ever blessing.”

All of their equipment and all their gates and technology will not prevent nor harm, except by God’s will. The believers do not fear such things. The only ones that fear it are the allies of Satan, those who are the brothers of the devil. Those who fear Satan become his allies, God save us, for fear is a great form of worship, and the only one worthy of it is God. He is the only one worthy of it. God said in the verses: “It is Satan who instills fear his allies.” These are the admirers of Western civilization, they have drunk the love of the West, they drink cool water and their stomach has become weak. “Fear them not, but fear Me, if you are believers.”

Fear is indeed a great act of worship. The allies of God do not offer such worship except for the one God, who controls everything, with total certainty that God will weaken the schemes of the non believers. God said: “God will weaken the schemes of the non believers.”

You must remember your brothers with all respect. You have to perform in your heart the highest invocations.

No one should notice that you are making the supplication, “There is no God but God.” If you say it, 1,000 times no one should be able to tell whether you are quiet or invoking God. Among the miracles is what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “Whoever says, ‘There is no God but God,’ with all his heart, will enter heaven.” The prophet, peace be upon him, said: “If you put all the worlds and universes on one side of the scale, and “No God but God” on the other, “No God but God” will weigh more heavily.” You can recite these words confidently, and this is just one of the strengths of these words. Whoever thinks deeply about these words will find that they have no dots in the Arabic letter and this is just another of its greatnesses, for words that have dots in them carry less weight than those that do not. It is enough that this is the invocation of the one true God, that you have come to raise and to fight under its banner, as the prophet did, peace be upon him, and his companions, and those who follow after them, God willing, until the Day of Judgment.

Also, do not show signs of confusion or signs of nervous tension. Be happy, optimistic and calm because you are engaged in an action that God loves and will be satisfied with. It will be the day, God willing, when you will be with your heavenly brides in Heaven.

Smile in the face of death, young man
For you are heading towards eternal paradise

You must remember and you must persist in your invocation and supplication wherever you go, and anytime you do anything. For God is with his faithful servants, He will protect them and make their tasks easier, give them success and control, provide them with victory, and everything

The third phase:

When you board the T probably *tayyara*, airplane in Arabic, before your foot steps in it, and before you enter it, recite the invocations and supplications. Remember that this is a raid/battle for the sake of God. As the prophet, peace be upon him, said: “An action for the sake of God is better than this world and all of what is in it.” As the prophet said, this is a battle for the sake of God. When you step into the T, and sit in your seat, recite the invocations and supplications that we have mentioned before. Keep busy with the repeated invocation of God. God said: “Oh ye faithful, when you encounter the enemy be steadfast, and invoke God repeatedly so that you may be successful.” When the T starts to move, even slightly, toward Q touchdown, recite the supplication of travel. Because you are traveling to God, may you be blessed in this journey.

Then you will find that the airplane will stop, and then it will take off. This is the time of the encounter between the two groups. Recite supplications to God, as He said in His book: “God, provide us with patience, strengthen us, and give us victory over the infidels.” God also said: “All that they said was: Lord, forgive our sins and transgressions and make our feet steadfast and give us victory over the infidels.” The Prophet said: “Oh God, You who are the souce of Revelation, who moves the clouds, who defeated the enemy, conquer them and give us victory over them. Give us victory and cause them to tremble.” Recite supplications for yourself and all of your brothers that you may be victorious, triumphant and hit your targets. Do not be afraid. Ask God to grant you martyrdom while you are on the attack, not in retreat, and to grant you patience and the awareness that anything that happens to you is for Him.
Then each one of you should prepare to carry out his role in a way that would satisfy God. Clench your teeth, as your righteous predecessors did, God rest their souls, before engaging in battle.

When the confrontation begins, strike like heroes who do not desire to go back to this world. Loudly proclaim, “Allahu Akbar,” because this strikes fear in the hearts of the non-believers. God said: “Strike them above the neck, and strike at all of their extremities.” Know that the gardens of paradise are waiting for you in all their beauty, and that your heavenly brides are waiting, calling out, “Come hither, follower of God” dressed in their most beautiful clothing and jewelry.

If God grants any one of you a slaughter, you should perform the slaughter as a dedication to your father and mother, for you have obligations toward them. Do not disagree amongst yourselves, but listen and obey. If you slaughter, do not cause discomfort to those you are killing and you should plunder those that you slaughter, for this is one of the sanctioned practices of the Prophet, peace be upon him, on the condition that you do not become distracted by the plunder and neglect what is more important, paying attention to the enemy, his treachery and attacks. That would be very harmful, and would do more damage than good. If this happens, the action at hand should be placed ahead of the plunder, because the action is an obligation to be fulfilled, while the plunder is a sanctioned practice. And the obligation has priority over the sanctioned practice.

Do not act out of a desire for vengeance for yourself. Let your actions be for the sake of God. One time Ali bin Abi Talib a companion and close relative of the prophet Muhammad, may God bless him, fought with a non believer. The non believer spat on Ali, may God bless him. Ali passed his sword, and did not strike him. Then he struck him. When the battle was over, the companions of the prophet asked him why he had paused before striking the non believer. He said, “After he spat at me, I was afraid that I would be striking at him in revenge for myself, so I held my sword.” When he became sure of his intentions, he went back and killed the man. This means that before you do anything, make sure that your soul is prepared to do everything for God only.

Then implement the way of the prophet in taking prisoners of war. Take prisoners and kill them, as God said: “No prophet should have prisoners until he has soaked the land with blood, until he subdues the land. You seek the bounties of this world, while God wants the Hereafter for you. God is all powerful, all wise.”

If everything goes well, every one of you should hold the shoulder of your brother, from the apartment, in the airport , the plane , and the cabin . Remind your brothers that this action is for the sake of God. Do not confuse your brothers or distract them. Announce the good news to them and make them calm, and remind them of God and encourage them. How delightful it would be to recite God’s words, such as the saying: “Let those who prefer the afterlife over this world fight for the sake of God.” And His words: “Do not suppose that those who are killed for the sake of God are dead; they are alive” and other verses. You should chant verses as the righteous predecessors did in the midst of battle, to bring calm, tranquility and joy to the hearts of their brothers.

Do not forget to take some bounty, even if it is only a glass of water to quench your thirst or that of your brothers, if possible. When the moment of truth approaches, the zero hour, open your chest and wholeheartedly welcome death for the sake of God. Always be remembering God. Conclude with prayer, if possible, starting it seconds before the target, or make your last words: “There is no God but God, Muhammad is His messenger”.

Afterwards, we will all meet in the highest heaven, God willing, in the company of God.

If you see the crowds of non believers, remember the factions gathered against the prophet Muhammad. They numbered about 10,000 fighters. Remember how God gave victory to his faithful servants. God said: “When the faithful saw the factions, they said, this is what God and the prophet promised, they had said the truth. It only increased their faith and submission.”

And may the peace of God be upon the Prophet.
APPENDIX C

Remarks from President George W. Bush
11 September 2001

9:30 a.m. EDT in Sarasota, Florida

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a difficult moment for America. I, unfortunately, will be going back to Washington after my remarks. Secretary Rod Paige and the Lieutenant Governor, will take the podium and discuss education. I do want to thank the folks here at Booker Elementary School for their hospitality. Today we’ve had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the Vice President, to the Governor of New York, to the Director of the FBI, and have ordered that the full resources of the Federal Government go to help the victims and their families, and to conduct a full scale investigation, to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism against our nation will not stand. And now if you join me in a moment of silence. May God bless the victims, their families, and America.

12:40 p.m. at the Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana

Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward. And freedom will be defended. I want to reassure the American people that the full resources of the Federal Government are working to assist local authorities to save lives and to help the victims of these attacks. Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts. I’ve been in regular contact with the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security team, and my Cabinet. We have taken all appropriate security precautions to protect the American people. Our military at home and around the world is on high alert status, and we have taken the necessary security precautions to continue the functions of your government. We have been in touch with the leaders of Congress, and with world leaders to assure them that we will do whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans. I ask the American people to join me in saying a thanks for all the folks who have been fighting hard to rescue our fellow citizens, and to join me in saying a prayer for the victims and their families. The resolve of our great nation is being tested. But make no mistake, we will show the world that we will pass this test. God bless.

8:30 P.M. EDT at the White House

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.
Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America— with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could. Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government’s emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it’s prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts. Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight, and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business, as well. The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I’ve directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism. Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me." This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world. Thank you. Good night, and God bless America.
spiritual, 3, 23, 29, 33, 39, 45, 53, 85, 97, 106, 128,
131-133, 135, 139, 151, 153, 159, 167-169, 187,
191, 192, 283
Spiritualist, 165, 167, 177
split-brain, 56
stage, 10, 13, 25, 31, 32, 41, 47, 48, 55, 63, 88, 90,
95-97, 107, 111, 113, 159, 163, 186, 197, 212,
256, 269
Stage Hypnosis, 27
Stanislavski, 4, 9, 12, 15, 20, 27, 30, 31, 33-35, 38,
41, 47, 49, 51, 55, 62, 68, 75, 81, 92, 99, 105-107,
112, 115, 117-124, 129, 140, 149, 277, 278, 281
star, 30, 154
state of consciousness, 2, 3, 5, 7, 21, 32, 40, 46,
54, 59, 60, 71, 72, 78, 90, 102, 104, 114, 120, 127,
131, 134, 139, 145, 158, 185, 196, 201, 206, 263,
270
statements, 4, 38, 223, 225, 227, 230, 231, 233, 242
status, 80, 153, 159, 165, 196, 226, 227, 255, 265,
269
Strasberg, 9, 12, 20, 30, 31, 33, 35, 38, 39, 49, 55,
stress, 95, 187, 193, 194, 231, 237, 238, 247-249,
253, 263
Strindberg, 20, 105, 107-111, 124
subconscious, 27, 29, 31, 39, 41, 63, 66, 84, 86, 87,
148, 150, 154, 169, 177, 278, 282
sublime, 141
subsets of memory, 46
suffering, 37, 39, 130-133, 141, 144, 183, 207, 276
suggestibility, 41, 62, 118, 161
suggestion, 67, 82, 93, 109, 129, 138, 139, 174
suicidal behaviour, 210
supernatural, 14, 51, 147, 149, 153, 156, 159, 163,
165, 168, 170-172, 175, 182
supplications, 214, 215
Suryani and Jensen, 151
susceptibility, 3, 12, 37, 43, 62, 161, 187
suspension of disbelief, 4, 11, 12, 16, 28, 41, 68,
69, 83
symbolic interactionism, 14
symbolic models, 57
symbolisation, 65
symbols, 3, 63, 64, 77, 123, 178, 196, 273

texts, 25, 31, 66, 72, 79, 80, 82, 89, 90, 92, 93, 101,
104, 105, 107, 118, 122, 131, 135, 138, 143, 144,
154, 158, 185, 189, 191-193, 195-199, 204, 208,
210, 220, 231, 232, 238, 241, 243, 268-270, 272,
273
The Constant Prince, 141, 142
The Last Night, 205, 208-210, 214, 215
theatre, 10, 23, 24, 31, 35, 48, 50, 55, 62, 66, 75, 80,
90, 98, 99, 101, 104, 109-114, 119, 127, 129-133,
138, 140, 143, 153, 154, 162, 169, 237
Theatre of Cruelty, 130, 131
theatrical trance, 191
themes, 15, 25, 77, 101, 118, 135, 136, 145, 154,
169, 176, 183, 203, 206, 221, 243, 268
theory, 2, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 23, 26, 30, 55, 56,
58, 60, 121, 148, 151, 161, 169, 180, 192, 274,
275
therapeutic, 21, 50, 70, 130, 180, 181
therapy, 37, 130, 169
thought process, 59
threat, 193, 195, 196, 200, 207, 223, 227, 239, 262
threshold of consciousness, 63
tourism, 163
traditions, 8, 9, 14, 15, 20, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 34, 35,
38, 39, 40, 46-50, 54, 68, 75, 77, 83, 84, 99, 101,
104, 106, 117, 118, 120, 124, 126, 129, 142, 151,
165, 167, 182, 187, 191, 194-196, 213, 217, 218,
224, 244, 245, 259, 262, 271, 274-276, 282, 283
training, 2, 8, 9, 19, 20, 29, 31, 33, 34, 74, 75, 77, 89,
90, 98, 101, 105, 118, 121, 123, 129, 139, 146,
153-155, 161, 162, 176, 180, 183, 185, 189, 202,
212, 213, 216, 218, 242-244, 246-248, 250, 256,
258-263, 265, 268, 269, 277
trance, 2, 3, 5-9, 11-16, 18-21, 23-30, 34-38, 40-43,
45, 46, 48-50, 52-55, 60-71, 73, 75-78, 81, 83, 84,
87-89, 92, 96-99, 101, 109, 114-118, 123, 127,
138, 139, 146-151, 153-156, 158, 160-165, 168,
169, 172, 173, 176, 177, 179, 180, 182, 185-193,
195, 197, 199, 200, 228, 237, 238, 241, 244, 272279, 281-283
trance performance, 9, 19, 20, 24, 26, 34, 35, 55,
68, 147, 148, 150, 151, 163, 282
trance state, 2, 12, 14, 19, 21, 40, 54, 68, 71, 88, 89,
114, 115, 151, 155, 156, 161, 162, 164, 183, 275,
277, 281
transcendence, 5, 7, 23, 97, 124, 128, 141, 143145, 147, 165, 181, 272
transformation, 49, 54, 80, 81, 91, 94, 108, 133,
168, 175, 177, 179-181, 185, 241, 244, 276, 278,
283
transformativity, 3, 33, 40, 101, 124
transgressions, 7, 10, 36, 69, 116, 124, 131, 147,
225, 266, 275
translumination, 139, 141, 142, 146
transpersonal, 45, 169
trauma, 61, 138, 187, 193, 194, 235, 237, 242
traumatic stress, 70
truth, 4, 32, 33, 47, 48, 65, 68, 69, 73, 90, 91, 103,
104, 118, 122, 134, 140, 168, 170, 175, 178, 204,
214, 215, 229, 271, 272, 283
truth claims, 272
Turner, 186
types, 5, 12-14, 19, 21, 36, 67, 68, 72, 89, 101, 117,
120, 158, 165, 177, 185, 188, 204, 243, 245, 256,
278

T
Tannenbaum, 14
tapakan, 159, 162
targets, 188, 207, 212, 215, 217, 228, 252, 254, 259,
270
techniques, 2, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 31, 33, 36, 38, 42,
46, 55, 68, 71, 80, 89, 93, 99, 105, 106, 112, 115,
119, 120, 122, 123, 135, 139, 142, 143, 172, 213,
244, 252
technological, 11, 267
Techno-Performance, 11
teleology, 273
television, 90, 104, 107, 111, 163, 197, 207, 222,
223, 235, 237, 245, 279
templates, 5, 77, 176, 178, 245
Tenet, 223
terrorism, 181, 189, 196, 199, 220, 228, 229, 231233, 235, 238, 239, 255
Texas-One-Two, 257, 264

Trance Forms

315

Ronaldo Morelos 2004


U
unattainable, 126, 129, 136, 138, 139, 146
unconscious, 27, 29, 39, 41, 49, 52, 62, 63, 66, 84, 86, 87, 130, 145, 148, 150, 154, 169, 173, 177, 278, 279, 282
universals, 50

V
value system, 266
values, 3, 6, 15, 17, 18, 21, 33, 34, 47, 53, 54, 106, 120-123, 127, 128, 169, 175, 191, 192, 199, 218, 228, 232, 244, 245, 246, 248, 251, 261, 265, 266, 270, 273, 274
Vatican, 33
verbal reports, 66, 71
via negativa, 140, 145
victimisation, 195
victims, 109, 188, 195, 219, 222, 227, 228, 232, 236, 239, 243, 270
Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), 75, 90
violence, 188, 190, 193, 194, 195, 198, 211, 212, 216-218, 228, 248, 252
voices, 58, 62, 92, 95, 165, 181, 256, 259

W
Waiting for Godot, 127, 134, 135, 137-139
Walker, 247, 251

war against terrorism, 196, 199, 224, 226, 228, 229, 232, 233
warrior, 39, 108, 184, 185, 202, 206, 241, 245, 257, 266, 269
wisdom, 43, 50, 60, 168
workshops, 8, 15, 31, 75, 78, 90, 95, 117, 166, 172
World Trade Center, 182, 184, 186, 196, 211, 217, 222, 223, 227, 232, 237

Y
Yap, 97-99

Z
Zola, 105
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Morelos, Ronaldo Jose

Title:
Trance forms: a theory of performed states of consciousness

Date:
2004-06

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/38845

File Description:
Trance Forms: A Theory of Performed States of Consciousness

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.