Scenographic Light: Towards an Understanding of Expressive Light in Performance

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Abstract

In the expanded field of performance design research there is a growing understanding of the dynamic and affective capacities of performance materials, and how such materials may play a fundamental role in the audience experience of a given performance. Parallel to this research in scenography is a similar extension of the conception of the roles of light and dark in performance. Reconciling and extending these areas of research this PhD thesis posits the term 'scenographic light' to encapsulate the ability of performance light to actively inscribe dramaturgical meaning in space and time, arguing that light is capable of independently contributing to performance through its manipulation of space, time, and visuality.

This doctoral research uses auto-ethnographic spectatorship as a means of identifying the unique contribution of light to performance. Employing a phenomenological framework to explore the dynamic role of light within performance, this study presents an ontology of light that is rooted in dramaturgical action. The experiential framework put forward in this research facilitates a theoretical discussion about the dramaturgical impact of light, revolving specifically around questions of how light affects other elements in performance, how it seems to perform as a material in itself, and how, in respect of these things, it can become a generative force in performance. By applying these questions to a wide range of contemporary performance practices I identify and articulate ways in which light can be considered a significant contributor to performance, working simultaneously with, but independently of, other elements in performance. The implications of this research invite an expanded view of the position of light in performance analysis, and suggest that the study of light may be productively aligned with explorations of audience engagement and affect.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the mercurial and polysemic phenomenon of light in the theatre, seeking to explore what it is that light does in performance and arguing that light can be considered a consequential dramaturgical interlocutor in the construction of performance. By way of introducing the multiple, overlapping strands of this research I begin with an extract from my field notes:

> *I am transfixed by a slowly shifting pattern of blue light on the floor of the stage as the three dancers' limbs flick and coil around each other. The whole grid is slowly pulling away from the trio as they tumble and jump among each other. It's almost like I can feel the light pulling away from my skin, even though I am sitting in the dark in the auditorium. I am leaning forward in my seat, watching hazy ridges of darkness spread in rows across the floor as the lanterns lift out. One of the dancers seems to walk up and round the body of another, as though he were a spiral staircase, and as she does the light seems to shift. I am unsure if this change in intensity has really happened, or if it only seems so in the force of my attention. Until she stands on the shoulders of one of her partners and falls back into the arms of another, triggering a gradual swoop of the light to darkness.*

These notes reflect an attempt to capture the action of light as a component of performance, attending to both its role in the unfolding action and the ways in which it creates the conditions in which meanings unfold for the spectator. There is also a clear imbrication of light and darkness here, a theme that is fundamental to the research enquiry into the role of light in performance, a context in which I argue that light and dark are different aspects of the same phenomenon, rather than separate phenomena. The experience recorded here captures a sense of uncertainty, an idea that will emerge as a key facet of performance light. One of my central arguments is that the provision of instability is a foundational trait of expressive light in

performance. Additionally – although perhaps most obviously – this extract establishes the methodological use of spectatorship as a research practice, rooting the examination of light in the perspective of an audience member, in the context of live performance. The subjective nature of this extract also sets up a theme in this research of offering personal experience as a mode of articulating theoretical insights about light. This project is not directly about perception or spectatorship, but instead uses spectatorship as a tool for examining the dramaturgical role of light in performance. More of these extracts, and more subjective recollections, will appear throughout the thesis as a means of grounding analysis in contemporary professional practice, and offering two distinct tracks through this thesis. In addition to the analytic voice that seeks to underpin observations about light with theoretical rigor, there is also a subjective voice, recounting the experience of being an audience member attentive to light at each of the examples that populate my analysis of light in contemporary performance.

Light is a complex element within performance; it is at once the means of perception — that which makes it physiologically possible to see — and an object of perception in its own right. It can operate diegetically, — within internal dramatic logic — or non-diegetically, as commentary on the action. Furthermore, within the already liminal context of performance, light is subject to continual shift and change, demonstrating the instability and temporality of performance. Light is an agent of mediation, selecting what can be seen and affecting how an object, body, or space appears. Professional theatre practice has adopted a number of conventions with regard to light, which audiences have learned to interpret. Shifts in light are used to signal changes in time and space, and audiences read the widely used trope of the blackout as theatrical punctuation or as a pause or gap in time (Rayner, 2006: 158; Welton, 2013: 10). Light can be used to refer to specific circumstances or locations

but can also indicate the psychic or emotional state of a character. All performance engages in some way with light – whether through a deliberate lighting design, or in more spontaneous ways such as an outdoor performance that happens to use conditions of natural light. The negation of light in performances that take place in near or total darkness[1] also amounts to a use of light. In both its presence, and its absence, light forms an integral part of the means of experience.

As an artistic practice, performance lighting refers to the specific, intentional use of light for performance. This use may span a range of conventions, and styles, and may be used with a variety of objectives in mind. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein posed the question, 'what is a game?' intending to show that within the broad classification of games there is no single identifiable trait or aspect common to all games (in Weitz, 2008: 412). There may be similarities or relationships, but there is no single commonality linking board games, ball games, Olympic games, card games, etc. Morris Weitz relates this thinking to the classification of art, arguing that aesthetic analysis of an artwork cannot be a case of checking an art object against a set of criteria. 'Knowing what art is not apprehending some manifest or latent essence but being able to recognize, describe, and explain those things we call "art" in virtue of these similarities' (ibid.). This same plurality is evident in practices of lighting for performance. Like Wittgenstein's games, then, performance lighting admits multiple kinds, many of which seem to contradict each other. Nevertheless, it is usually true that the conditions of light in which a performance takes place have been specifically manipulated or chosen for the purposes of performance. So, perhaps, what does distinguish performance lighting in general is a sense of its

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[1] Such as Chris Goode's *Who You Are,* discussed in detail by Welton (2013).

distinction from everyday contexts. This is true at the basic and practical level that

theatre buildings have separate systems for everyday use (work lights) and for

performance (stage lights, and house lights). It also holds at a deeper level in that

there is something inherently *other* about light that is manipulated for performance.

The German theatre director Dieter Dorn describes the difference as follows

> in everyday contexts, light serves to make existing things visible. On
> stage, however, it creates a new reality. 'Created' light helps us to thrust
> forward into spaces that establish and nurture their own reality, helps us
> to thrust forward into dimensions that are different from the ones we
> experience everyday (in Keller, 1999: 10).

Dorn's succinct comparison points to the ontological particularity of light in

performance and it is worth elaborating on his assertions in further detail. His

evocative description of light working to thrust us forward into new realities

certainly attests to the power of light, but it is perhaps his description of stage light

as 'created' that most succinctly accounts for the artistic role of light in performance.

Instances of street theatre or outdoor performance may utilise daylight, or other

public street-lighting, but in general, light in performance is light that has been

specifically introduced for that performance. While this may seem something of a

circular statement, it is important to stress that performance lighting has been

artificially manipulated. I favour the term 'manipulated', rather than 'created', in

recognition of the fact that not all artistic uses of light in performance are necessarily

artificial; judicious use of daylight can form an equally important scenographic

intervention to the kind Dorn describes. The examples discussed in this thesis do all

use electrically controlled light, but the insights produced in this research about the

agency of light could also apply to managed natural light, or any kind of light that

makes a clear affective impact on the seer. In the cases discussed in this thesis, the

simple fact of this manipulation, the choice and the artifice that it implies, generates

a sense of instability. Light that has been produced (or manipulated) artificially can

be retracted as easily as it can be applied, and it can shift from one moment to the

next in a way that is markedly different from our implicit understandings of the cycle of light and dark.

Our atavistic relationship with light and dark holds that night follows day in a one-directional cycle. But this cycle is disrupted in both theatrical and domestic settings. Technology allows us to create artificial brightness, prolonging the hours of visibility in our homes, offices, and social spaces. Arnold Aronson argues that a consequence of this is that darkness has been banished from modern western cities, meaning that the social and cultural context of theatrical lighting is utterly changed since the time of Adolphe Appia's still influential writings about passive and living light (Aronson, 2005: 33). Beyond the theatre, cultural geographer, Tim Edensor, notes that the re-emergence of urban darkness, in part due to economic limitations, might be 'conceived as an enriching and a re-enchantment of the temporal and spatial experience of the city at night' (2015c: 436). Edensor's essential argument here is that, in public spaces, light and dark do not present a clear oppositional binary and that the experience of each is infused with strong cultural and social practices. As Edensor affirms, both light and dark offer myriad possibilities for affective experience, and his argument reinforces the need to examine the affective capabilities of light and dark in aesthetic contexts, like performance. This thesis takes as a starting point, however, the idea that the use of electric lighting in everyday settings and in the theatre remain, as Dorn suggests, ontologically different. Part of this difference lies perhaps in the rhythm of possible cycles of light and dark. The use of light that permeates social and cultural life does not necessarily alter the rhythm of light and dark but suspends darkness (in the case of somewhere like New York's Time Square as in Aronson's example) or extends the light (in domestic settings). A domestic use of light still broadly employs a cycle of light to dark, albeit with longer and longer hours of brightness at the expense of the dark. In

performance, however, the circadian rhythm of light is utterly confounded. Extremes of light and dark can co-exist, and there is rarely a discernible pattern separating light from dark. Darkness can appear and reappear multiple times, at irregular intervals, and the quality of light can shift in almost infinite ways. As Samuel Beckett succinctly puts it 'where we have, at one and the same time, darkness and light, we have also the inexplicable' (quoted in Knowlson, 1972: 11). The uncanny interplay of light and dark marks the reality of the stage as fundamentally different from our own. This, I expect, is what Dorn means by spaces that 'establish and nurture their own reality' and this instability of an artificially managed space is at least part of the active role of light in performance. The artificiality and created*ness* of performance light marks it as both an aesthetic and an artistic phenomenon that works on its audiences through the senses.

Within a theatrical context, as well as within the wider cultural economy, there is a growing appreciation of the role of light. Practitioners of theatre and performance often attest to the power of light, without necessarily exploring the specifics of that power. Canadian theatre maker Robert Lepage, for instance, states that theatre and opera are, fundamentally a 'celebration of light', and that 'the idea of theatre is first of all to bring people in a dark room and do the festival of light' (in Delgado and Heritage, 1996: 157). Robert Wilson, whose work is often lauded for its use of light (Abulafia, 2016: 126–137; Crisafulli, 2013: 166–174; Di Benedetto, 2010: 35–62), has frequently emphasised the dramatic power of light, describing it as 'the most important actor on the stage' (in Holmberg, 1996: 128). The use of the word 'actor' in Wilson's statement is an important moniker as it implies that light is an active force in performance, one that may dynamically and creatively contribute to the dramaturgical progression of the performance in question. There remains a great deal to be said, however, about the kind of 'actor' that light may be, and about how

precisely it does contribute to a performance. These examples demonstrate a shared implicit understanding of light, however they seem to lack a specific language to articulate the precise nature of light in their work, and while this area of research is growing, there remains a great deal to be explored about the impact of light on performance. This is the gap in knowledge that this thesis is addressing, aiming to explore the dramaturgical action of light, and the role light plays in generating meaning. Critical reviews of performance, too, increasingly make reference to the impact of light, with critics and commentators seeking to redress the balance in which light is often under considered in appraisals of performance work. Mark Fisher, in *How to Write About Theatre* notes that the common assessments in popular criticism of light as 'atmospheric' or 'evocative' bear little meaning without a more thorough rendering of what the atmosphere was, or what emotions or associations were evoked (2015: 179). Another critic, Matt Trueman has also recently commented about the dramaturgical significance of light, noting that light animates and punctuates performance. At the same time, however, Trueman observes that lighting design is 'all too easy to overlook' and also, 'bloody hard to write about' (2016). Lyn Gardner has likewise written about light 'becoming its own character in the unfolding drama' (2009), a statement with echoes of Wilson's determining of light as an actor. The majority of theatre reviews, however, feature only a cursory assessment of light as 'atmospheric' or 'slick'. There is, it seems, a cultural appreciation of light, which is broad but not deep. A pertinent example of attitudes to light in the professional and popular sphere emerged in the tone of public debate around the tenure of Emma Rice as artistic director of The Globe. Her perceived 'addition' (Cavendish, 2016; Furness, 2016) of light and sound revealed deep divisions in attitudes to light in performance among critics, practitioners and audiences.

Emerging from this cultural context, my research aims to investigate precisely the affectivity of light and to develop a language for a deeper understanding of the role of light in performance. I mention popular criticism here, alongside academic scholarship, and the references to eminent theatre directors above, because there is a need to position this research across scholarly and professional contexts. There exists a peculiar lag between research and practice that this research hopes to at least address, if not reconcile. The world of contemporary professional practice is, at once, a wellspring of radical design practices and a continuing perpetrator of what might be termed 'design anxiety'. On the one hand, contemporary performance offers boundary pushing work that seems to challenge traditional production hierarchies – the kind of hierarchies that would position the crafts of writing, acting, or directing as the principal carriers of meaning and quality in a piece of theatre. Yet alongside this there remains, at least in certain circles, a sense that design is a lesser art, there to support the principal elements without drawing too much attention to itself. This attitude is revealed in, for example, Fisher's speculation that dominant design 'may signal weaknesses elsewhere in the production' (2015: 174), a position that utterly discounts the possibility that scenography may itself perform. Similarly, in the academy, scenographic research has continually asserted the significance of design elements in the unfolding dramaturgy of performance. Yet the comparatively recent entry of scenographic scholarship into the academic discipline of theatre and performance studies means that the full depth and range of scenography and scenographic thinking has yet to gain full purchase in the wider field of performance studies. In response, scholars writing about scenography often seem to (perhaps defensively) restate the significance of scenographic elements (as in, for example: Abulafia, 2016: 6). This paradoxical mix of dynamic thinking and doing being met with internal and external resistance seems to span both performance practice and

performance research, and so is a contributing factor to the context in which this research comes about. At the same time, the recent flourishing of scenographic thinking provides a fertile bed of understanding about the power of non-human performance elements and the affective, kinaesthetic force sensory experience can yield (in, for example: Lotker and Gough, 2013; Baugh, 2013; Collins and Aronson, 2015; McKinney and Palmer, 2017). So while in conducting this research I am mindful of the ongoing debate for the significance of scenographic elements, my focus will be to attempt to further understandings of *how* light in particular operates at this affective level.

This research project has emerged after years of professional work as a lighting designer and theatre maker, and the core research interests reflected here have been developed through practice. Working as a lighting designer I have experienced first-hand both the immense possibilities of light as a performative material, and the limitations placed on light by existing structures of production. While this research is largely formed through reflection on examples I have viewed as an audience member, these reflections are naturally informed by my professional expertise. Applying this tacit knowledge to a practice of spectatorship means I can apply a heightened sensitivity to the action of light in a given work, and am equipped with specific skills of observing and creating light, and a predisposition to notice even the most subtle shifts in light. Through my own practice I also have a sense of the functions and possibilities of light in performance. In many respects, this PhD research represents an attempt to translate this tacit knowledge to an academic sphere, where it can be examined and developed. Within my practice I have a history of working very closely with writers, directors, and dramaturgs, establishing light as a prominent performative communicator. However, I have also witnessed several barriers to conceptual work with light in professional practice, characterised above as

'design anxiety', which have prompted me to undertake this research. While current practice often features dynamic uses of light, there remains a certain marginalisation of light in practice and criticism, especially within the context of British and Irish theatre where I have predominantly worked. This marginalisation manifests in practice with crucial decisions regarding dramaturgy and setting being made, in some cases, before a lighting artist is hired. Such a model means that lighting designers are asked to respond to requirements rather than generate, or contribute to, content. This approach, although often governed by economic factors, demonstrates a limited view of the creative potential of light. Beyond the increased propensity to notice light in performance and the underlying knowledge of the processes involved, the tacit knowledge of a lighting designer holds that lighting a production is much more than a practical or stylistic process. Designing light for any given production involves determining the style and scope of the light in the space, and also its progression through time. Inherently then, to design light is also to grapple with crucial aspects of theatrical world-building at the core of any performance. Through my professional background I can, therefore, assert that there is more at play in creating the kind, quality, and stability of light in a performance than is accounted for in current subject literature. A more thorough understanding of the ways in which light can generate meaning in performance is vital for continued innovation in both light and performance praxis.

This sense of there being *more* at play in performance lighting has been a crucial prompt for this project. Accordingly, the research journey began from this hunch of the as-yet-unwritten *more* in performance light, viewing this sense of excess at both dramaturgical and philosophical levels. The operation of light in performance can reveal a great deal about the dramaturgical construction of a given performance; the pace of shifts in light, for instance, dictate much of the rhythm of a piece while the

formal aspects of light (including its colour, shape, angle, intensity) can establish tone and setting. Philosophically, reflecting on the nature of light in performance reveals a great deal about the kind of aesthetic event that performance is, and the ways in which a particular performance assembles its world. I am not suggesting that lighting designers necessarily engage with philosophical questions during their work, but that light in performance can be examined in such terms in a way that yields productive insights into the nature of performance as a philosophical practice. In creating or transforming the performance environment, light becomes – to lift Graham Harman's words out of a context to which I will later return them[2] – 'a force that generates a world' (Harman, 2002: 21). Attending to the kinds of 'worlds' generated by light, then, becomes a means of examining, simultaneously, the sensual or affective offer of a performance and the 'underpinning principles' of its construction (Turner, 2015: 2).

Research Context

Light research is a small but growing field in which the landscape of research has developed profoundly in recent years with a flourishing of texts treating performance light as an object of theoretical inquiry. In addition to the important cluster of recent monograph-length texts devoted to light (Moran, 2017; Abulafia, 2016; Palmer, 2013; Crisafulli, 2013) consideration of conditions of light and dark is also, increasingly, imbricated into broader research on performance practice (Baugh, 2013; Welton, 2012; Fischer-Lichte, 1992) In discussing work dedicated to light in performance it is worth noting that there also exists a wealth of instructional textbooks that aim to guide the reader in how to create a lighting design for

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[2] See page 213.

performance. While many of these texts implicitly reveal sets of assumptions about the role of light in performance, I make limited reference to this genre of writing about light because such craft manuals are at a significant remove from the objectives of the current study.[3] Indeed, the oppositional distinction between lighting for performance as an art or as a craft can be seen in these opposing approaches. The need that many lighting practitioners feel to assert that their work is an art *and not a craft* is echoed in texts on light that assert their opposition to such handbooks (recently: Moran, 2017: 1; Abulafia, 2016: 6; and, less recently: Mumford, 1985: 46) This opposition indicates, perhaps, the precarious artistic position that lighting designers often find themselves in, in which the creative role is little understood, and is also a product of the specialist technical knowledge needed to produce a piece of lighting design for performance. This oppositional tension is a response to the uncertain position of lighting designers within production hierarchy, and emerges as a means of asserting the artistic significance of light as a material beyond the technical background. These binary terms broadly work to orient further consideration of lighting design as a creative act against certain cultural and professional oppositions, but are of limited value in performance scholarship. In this thesis I am, resolutely, arguing that light in performance is an important, generative material and that the practice of making it is a creative act that ought to be considered alongside other formative elements.

Returning, then to considerations of light in a more scholarly context it is encouraging to note that there exists an increasing volume of research that deals with

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[3] Examples include: Skip Mort, *Stage Lighting* (2015); Nick Moran, Performance Lighting Design: How to Light for the Stage, Concerts, and Events (2007); Francis Reid, *Stage Lighting Handbook* (2001); Neil Fraser, *Stage Lighting Design: A Practical Guide* (1999); Richard Pilbrow, *Stage Lighting Design, The Art, The Craft, The Life* (1997); Oren Parker, *Scene Design and Stage Lighting* (1985); Frederick Bentham, *Stage Lighting* (1950).

the role of light in performance. The significant richness in the diversity of approaches employed in research on performance light indicates both the breadth of light as an object of study and the value of light research for performance studies more broadly. Of the pool of existing light research it is possible to discern three distinct strands of inquiry into the nature of light in performance; historiographical, practitioner focused, and a range of dramaturgical inquiries that I am characterising as analytic approaches. For concision I will discuss significant pieces of light research in relation to these discrete strands, however it is important to note that there is some significant overlap between these approaches. My research extends analytic approaches to light, but in order to orient my approach it is important to briefly survey the development of each of these themes, particularly given the interdependence between these strands.

Historiographical approaches to light research

As this research deals primarily with contemporary practice there are many studies of specific histories of lighting in performance that I do not draw on (e.g. Morgan, 2005; Rees, 1978) While it is certainly possible to view the history of light in the theatre as a kind of catalogue of technical possibility, or as an arc of cumulative potential, it is important to establish how various techniques influenced performance practice. In this vein there are a number of historiographical texts that also posit specific dramaturgical impacts of light on the evolution of performance, laying important groundwork for enquiries into the nature of light as a phenomenon of performance.

Gösta Bergman (1977) provides a chronological account of the developments in theatre lighting from liturgical plays and medieval open-air spectacles up to the work of Brecht and Svoboda in the twentieth century. His historiographical approach

enables him to chart developments in practice, and his descriptions of the relative brightness of gas and electric sources demonstrate the radical differences in the materiality of light through historical periods. He aims to address the lack of attention paid to light in theatre history, acknowledging that there is a strong creative component to light in performance. There are limits to Bergman's historical approach, however, as his account is weighted towards the analysis of technical details and therefore provides only a cursory suggestion of the dramatic composition of light.

Bergman's historical work has proved useful in examining the dramaturgical impact of evolving lighting technologies in theatre practice. Christopher Baugh, for instance, asserts that far from being simply a different execution of light, the advent of electrically controlled light in theatre constituted a radically new performance material (2013: 93). Baugh notes that the changes instigated by electric light had profound dramaturgical effects on the theatre. The possibilities of electric light, which included the ability to fade between states more subtly and effectively than ever before, Baugh considers responsible for the consideration of theatre as a medium based in time and rhythm (ibid). The other major dramaturgical development that Baugh recognises as being generated by light was the revelation that the theatre was 'fundamentally a place of darkness that is energised and brought to life by the performance of light' (ibid.: 134). Aronson, too, has drawn on historical understandings of stage lighting to theorise about current practices. Noting that many of the 'rules' by which stage lighting operates are grounded in the writings of Adolphe Appia and the technical teachings of Stanley McCandless, Aronson advocates a reappraisal of performance light in our own postmodern context (2005: 31).

Elsewhere, other scholars have attempted to weave together a sense of how the evolution of lighting practice has impacted on the development of theatre practice. Laura Gröndahl charts the practical and philosophical evolution of stage lighting design, arguing that technical advances have granted a prominence to light that means it can be considered as an art on its own terms (2014: 25-26). She argues that developments in lighting practice have enabled greater flexibility in staging, as seen in examples of devised work that utilise a bare stage, animated by light and projection. For Gröndahl there is a connection between these staging practices and the construction of postmodern identities; lighting and projection technologies facilitate a continual re-construction of the actor and the space (ibid.: 30). Similarly, Christine White observes that developments in lighting techniques have enabled new freedoms in staging practice, as it has become increasingly possible to light, in isolation, any given part of the stage (2013: 218). The fluidity and increasing sophistication of light for performance has indeed, as White argues, played a significant part in the changing aesthetics of twentieth and twenty-first century theatre, and led to the rising creative autonomy of the scenographic team. There remains, however a great deal to be said about how these aesthetic developments in light influence the construction of performance, beyond the broader flexibility of staging options. Interestingly, both Gröndahl and White argue that the development of projection technology represents the ultimate autonomy for light in performance, a position that seems to negate the power of the light beam itself as a performance material. While digital projection offers immense flexibility to performance design – a flexibility showcased in the UK in, for example, the National Theatre's production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,* in which Paule Constable's lighting design, Finn Ross's projection design and Bunnie Christie's stage design all worked cohesively to create an environment that continually and seamlessly shifted to

suggest a series of external spaces as well as presenting the main character's internal thoughts and feelings. However, suggesting that projection represents the most effective demonstration of light's contribution to performance (White, 2013: 222), is to ignore the immense creative potential of manipulated light and dark from other kinds of sources. I do not mean to set up an opposition between light and projection; after all, projection is light and its use in performance exemplifies important aspects of light as a performing material, (such as its fluidity, its ephemerality, its ability to radically transform the appearance of other objects, spaces, and bodies) but it is important to acknowledge the significance of the material of light before engaging with specific debates about technology. Furthermore, many digital projection practices, particularly those that involve filmed sequences, introduce wider issues around the doubling or the abstracted presence of the human figure that divert from the question of what light itself offers to performance.

Practitioner focused approaches to light research

It is significant that the majority of studies of light in performance involve discussion of the work of particular practitioners, or an exploration of their processes. Given the close relationship between reflections about performance light and the practice of performance lighting, this kind of process orientated work can be a rich source of information as regards the artistic intentions behind a work or the processes involved in bringing these intentions to fruition. Inherently, though, this work reveals the understandings that lighting artists have of their work, rather than how other collaborators might respond, or how the work might be received. Most recently, Nick Moran's *The Right Light* (2017) explores questions about the role of light in performance through studying the practice of lighting designers. Moran

conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with prominent UK lighting designers, and has used their responses to weave together an argument about the importance of light in the theatre. A considerable merit of this approach is that it enables Moran to provide for the reader a non-technical insight into the workings of stage lighting design (ibid.: 1), while encompassing the creative processes involved. The interview format presents artistic as well as practical reflections on the kinds of choices made by lighting designers, and enables a non-specialist to understand the formative role of light at points that might otherwise go unnoticed. An excerpt from an interview with Neil Austin, for instance, describes the lighting designer 'directing' scene changes, drawing focus to one part of the stage to enable a shift elsewhere, or the light serving to motivate the changes in space (ibid.: 21). While a scene change in theatre can appear small and inconsequential and these moments often go unnoticed or unremarked upon by an audience, demonstrating the level of creative consideration involved in this seemingly practical moment goes a long way to articulating how light operates in performance. Implied in this snippet from Austin is the way light works to conduct focus, drawing – or deflecting – an audience's attention and the integration of light and music. For a reader unfamiliar with the practice of lighting design this insight demonstrates the impact light has on the way a stage image is read. Elsewhere designers Nick Richings, David Howe and Peter Mumford each mention the influence of film and television on the both the style of contemporary theatre and the ways that audiences have learned to 'read' an image (ibid.: 10-11), and through these accounts Moran presents for the reader an evaluation of lighting practice as a key creative component of the theatre. That Moran uses the input of multiple lighting designers adds a richness to this project and the multiplicity of views further demonstrates the dynamism of lighting practice. Interviewing lighting designers can be an invaluable method for exploring the wealth

of creativity in the practice of designing light, and for assessing the range of approaches to light in production. However, the emphasis on practitioners' processes in such an approach provides just one view of the role of light in performance, a view which cannot account for an audience's response or experience.

A gap between creation and reception has been widely debated since the post-structuralist turn of the 1960s.[4] There can be a considerable difference between a maker's intentions and the experience as received by an audience. Moran's interviews with practitioners reveal lighting designers' objectives and ambitions for light in the process of making theatre. Such an understanding of the depth and detail of a lighting designer's work is invaluable, and recalls the comparable contribution to the field of scenography made by Pamela Howard's seminal *What is Scenography?* (2002), which famously posed its titular question to a wide range of practitioners. However, addressing the question of light through a series of interviews implicitly develops a sense of what light *can* do in performance in general, yet does not in isolation further an understanding of what light is doing in the particular experiential context of live performance. While Moran's valuable work demonstrates the range of meaning making processes involved in making light for the stage, the approach would bring us no closer to understanding the audience experience of light. It is true also that many of the lighting designers interviewed remain acutely aware of the tasks involved in lighting the stage. At length designers, Ben Ormerod, Mark Henderson, and Rick Fisher, for example, discuss the need to light the actor's faces, and to serve up visibility to the action as it unfolds (ibid.: 8-9). An important aspect of creating a lighting design, it seems, is to weave specific requirements (to see an actor's face, or

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[4] In 'The Death of the Author', for example, Roland Barthes argued against the privileging of the author's intentions; claiming that the reader instead could work to construct, rather than decipher, the meaning of a text.

to obscure another's entrance, for example) into a cohesive visual, spatial and temporal scheme. So, while a practitioner may understand that a final design is composed of both practical and stylistic decisions, for an audience, this separation of light into constituent elements is unavailable. In attending to a performance audience members witness the event in its entirety, and the way in which they perceive visibility is intrinsically part of the whole. It is important to note that Moran's occlusion of the audience experience of light is not a failure of his project, but simply an aspect of enquiry beyond the scope of his objective. Moran is concerned with questions of the 'right' light; what is the right light for a given moment, how do designers know when the light is right, how might light be right for one moment and not for another. He conceives of the idea of the 'right' as a continuum, and in consequence the multiple views of the nineteen lighting designers interviewed demonstrate a further continuum; the myriad possible roles that light can play in performance.

Yaron Abulafia's *The Art of Light on Stage* (2016)*,* tackles questions of what light does on stage from a perspective that seems to encompass both a designer's process and the analysis of resultant 'images' created by light. Abulafia's interpretative methodology combines semiotic analysis with aspects of media studies, cognitive science, and phenomenology and is informed by his professional practice as a lighting designer. From this broad theoretical base his analysis proceeds largely as a study of signification. Central to Abulafia's methodological approach is the identification of 'two dimensions of light' (ibid.: 102). First, he identifies the visible qualities of the light under consideration, noting the colour, shape, brightness, and relation to other media on the stage. This he terms 'aesthetic analysis' and it forms the first level analysis of his study, the second, and higher, level of analysis he terms 'semiotic and poetic analysis' (ibid). It is within this second phase of analysis that

Abulafia considers how the visual properties described in the first stage might be considered as signs, or how their composition might form a meaningful impact on an addressee.[5] Alongside these two dimensions of light Abulafia defines six 'grounds of representation' (ibid.: 106) that frame the kinds of signification manifested in light. Given in order of increasing autonomy from the text these are: narrative, character, theme or (dramatic) action; atmosphere or emotion; sensation of light itself; open meaning (ibid.: 106–114). For the most part, Abulafia considers these types of representation in relation to the performance text. Progressing towards autonomy from the text, these grounds of representation describe a spectrum of relationships between light and text, from simply illustrating ideas, through to supplementing or emphasising given elements, to, eventually giving form to ideas and experiences beyond the frame of the dramatic text. Although he discusses 'text' at length here, Abulafia remains concerned with post dramatic performance, and as such takes a wide definition of 'text' in performance.

This frame of enquiry provides Abulafia with a systematic method of analysis for each of his examples. From each example Abulafia selects, what he calls, 'light-images'; specific moments in the action (usually illustrated by a photograph) and decodes individual aspects of the image according to his framework. First, he provides the formal description – this is his first dimension of light, which he terms

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[5] 'Addressee' is Abulafia's preferred term for the audience and so I use it here in discussing his work. Elsewhere, when speaking about audience members in general I use Maaike Bleeker's term 'seer', complete with its implications of seeing more, and less than is there to be seen. As Bleeker reminds us, there is a significant and unknowable gap between what is given to be seen and how that offer might be taken up by an individual.

'aesthetic analysis',[6] he arrives at these descriptions from watching the performance but he clearly applies his industrial knowledge to provide precise details of the construction of the image, as well as its form on stage. His aesthetic analyses therefore divide each image into its component parts, such as front lighting, or side lighting, and provides a through description of each element. From his aesthetic analysis of Castelluci's *On the Concept of the Face,* for example he describes;

> Two groups of backlights, six in each flying bar, are used above the stage, […]. The front line of lamps illuminate the downstage plane while the back line is focused deeper, more up-stage. These light sources emphasise the silhouettes of the performers against the background of the portrait. Fresnel lenses on these light sources, distribute light with soft optics and coloured with a slightly cold filter, probably Lee 201#: Full CT Blue (ibid.: 155).

Thus armed with a description of the formal qualities of the image, he proceeds with his in-depth analysis, which he terms 'semiotic and poetic analysis'. In this phase he examines the light-image, and its place within the action against the criteria laid out for each of the 'grounds of representation'. After discussing each ground in turn he offers a synthesis of his analysis through an account of the dramaturgy of light evident through the images described. He defines the dramaturgy of light as the system by which light operates within a given performance: 'the organization of central ideas of the light designer and the creative team, using forms of light (aesthetics) to embody these ideas by a sequence of light-images' (ibid.: 119). It is in discussions of the dramaturgy of light in his examples that Abulafia offers his most thorough account of the impact of light. To cite a brief example, in his discussion of Heiner Goebbel's *Stifters Dinge* he identifies the problematising of visual perception as one of two core ideas within the dramaturgy of light (ibid.: 190). This is a

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[6] Again, while referring to Abulafia's work I will refer to the terms as he uses them, but – as detailed elsewhere – my research takes a rather more holistic account of the term 'aesthetic'.

fascinating topic, and one that deserves more attention in performance studies

however Abulafia's analysis remains underdeveloped in terms of the specific

phenomenological effect of light on the spectator. He argues that light works to

challenge the neutrality of sight, but fails to adequately demonstrate how that was the

case in performance; 'the light changes our perception of the space: the pianos

disappear, the containers turn blue and the splashing drops get illuminated' (ibid.:

193).

 Although Abulafia mentions the importance of the phenomenological experience of

light, the emphasis here is resolutely semiotic. Discussion of the phenomenological

impact of light is mostly restricted to his fifth ground, 'sensation of light itself'. As a

result Abulafia's analyses of his examples feature tantalising, but underexplored

descriptions of the phenomenal experience of what it was like to actually sense the

light in question. Of Robert Wilson's *Madama Butterfly*, for instance, he informs us

that the

> distinctive formal characteristics that comprise this light-image leave a
> vivid and memorable impression of light. Light facilitates an interesting
> new relation with the other media, for example by breaking the
> coherence of the scene and dividing it into separate visual sections (ibid.:
> 137).

Yet, Abulafia's framework does not, it seems to me, provide sufficient space to allow

the reader to access a sense of how the light worked on him as an audience member,

or how it might work on another audience member more generally. Furthermore, his

commendably authoritative descriptions are written in a language most accessible to

those already familiar with lighting practice. With his descriptions of instruments,

positions, and colour filters he risks steering the analysis towards the kind of

technological account he claims to want to avoid. The emphasis on a systematic

decoding of light does not adequately account for the multiple interrelationships and

instabilities generated by light in performance. Furthermore, his focus on individual

'light-images' negates the crucial temporal dimension of light. Within the terms of my research enquiry the temporal instability of light is a key concern, it is my contention that the continual shifts – or at least the constant possibility of change – in light have a profound influence on the experience of performance. Similarly, Aronld Aronson has argued that transition has become the preeminent feature of contemporary lighting, pointing to the instability of 'a light that ebbs and flows, startles and surprises' (2005: 36) A means of addressing this temporal flow is a final, and crucial, gap that I see emerging from Abulafia's work. The terms of his method direct him to focus on individual scenes and on particularly striking images, and he can therefore devote little time to the effect for the audience of light that shifts in time.

Originally published in Italian in 2007, and translated into English in 2013, Fabrizio Crisafulli's *Active Light* aims to explore light as an artistic issue, arguing that light in performance is 'structural, constructive, poetic, and dramaturgic' (2013: 18). Crisafulli uses Adolphe Appia's idea of 'active light' to frame the exploration of light as a constructive power in performance. A lighting designer himself, Crisafulli uses his artistic sensibility to explore historical examples of light in performance and to posit three modes of active light; illuminating the actors or set, as a visual object or image, and as a 'source, tool, or device' (ibid.: 129). For Crisafulli, these modes relate to the myriad ways in which light works to organise space and time, and provide a language with which to position the form of light as an active force in performance. Crisafulli's account of the role of light in performance is valuable, but, in terms of method, tends to conflate his artistic perspective with the experience of light more broadly. While his argument is compelling he provides little sense of the phenomenon of light as it might be experienced by a seer. Both Crisafulli and Abulafia extend their discussions to posit some wider observations about the nature

of light in performance. As such these texts combine a practitioner focus with some analytic approaches to the study of light. For Abulafia, this is principally achieved in semiotic terms, while Crisafulli is more concerned with material approaches to light in production.

Analytic approaches to light research

Scott Palmer's (2013) monograph, *Light,* explicitly positions light as a creative practice in performance, and uses historiographical details to extrapolate its dramatic role. He provides interpretative commentary on the dramaturgical influence of light in performance, and therefore places light in the wider context of the evolution of (principally European) theatre practice. Within this frame Palmer traces the often symbiotic relationship between light and theatrical form; detailing, for example, the influence of Jo Mielziner's lighting and stage designs on the dramatic style of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller (ibid.: 139), and, reaching further into the past, the social impact of darkening auditoria in the eighteenth century (ibid.: 52). The wide scope of Palmer's study also includes contemporary work and practices, within and beyond the theatre. While my research begins from a similar conceptual standpoint, arguing that light is a dramaturgical agent, the practical methods of my study are significantly different to Palmer's. This thesis builds on Palmer's work, but takes a more narrow view in order to explicate more exhaustively the specific agency of light in performance.

In current performance scholarship there is also a growing interest in the use of darkness in performance. Adam Alston and Martin Welton's recent edited collection, *Theatre in the Dark* (2017), for instance draws together a range of historical, theoretical, and practical reflections on the phenomena of darkness in performance. Significantly, this volume emphasises the plurality of conceptual and experiential

ideas of darkness, revealing the dark as 'a theatrical medium that offers creative potential to the imaginations of artists and audiences alike' (ibid.: 30). Elsewhere, Simon Donger's doctoral research configures scenography as a practice of *imperceptibility*, highlighting the control and limitation of visibility as a key premise of scenographic practice (2012). Although often written about in experiential terms, and not explicitly tied to practices of lighting (Welton, 2013; Alston, 2013) the phenomenon of darkness is an important aspect of controlled performance light. Indeed, the judicious use of darkness in performance is integral to the sculpting of light, so much so that light and dark are not separate phenomena in performance but opposite aspects of the same phenomenon. I argue that darkness is a condition of light, and the growing field of its study establishes the potency of controlled – or controllable – conditions of light in performance. Alston's account of Lundahl and Seitl's *Rotating in a Room of Images,* for instance, relies not only on the immersion in darkness, but on the experience of alternating light and dark (2013: 219). Alston's description of the emotional response produced by immersion in darkness is equally an account of a response to light. Equally, Welton's argument that darkness invites different modes of seeing and being (2013: 6) is a testament to the affective power of conditions of light as well as dark. Critical reflections on darkness as a performance material can thus be refracted back on to the study of performance light, revealing the critical and affective potencies of the overlapping phenomena of light and dark in performance.

In addition to specific studies of light, or darkness, in performance there are also examples of performance analysis that pay particular heed to the conditions of light in given productions. Stephen Di Benedetto uses examples of Wilson's work to articulate the physiological processes by which light operates on the spectator (2010: 35 - 68). He maintains that Wilson's characteristic use of dominant, noticeably

coloured light can trigger 'potent physical reaction' in the viewer (ibid.: 39), and that

Wilson uses light and dark to direct the audience's focus, thereby generating rhythm,

(ibid.: 41). Elsewhere, Mireia Aragay and Clara Escoda (2012) have dissected the use

of light as a dramaturgical tool in Martin Crimp's triptych *Fewer Emergencies.* Their

article about James MacDonald's 2005 production demonstrates a synesthetic fusion

of light with text. This close analysis of the impact of light on an individual

production demonstrates the value, to performance studies, of sustained thinking

about light. Specifically, they describe how light is used in each of the three pieces to

convey thematic information. Their account would suggest that this synesthetic

merging of light with the deeper themes of the play texts implicates the audience in a

certain reading of the text, the precise timbre of which would not have been

achieved without this particular use of light. While the authors of this paper are

concerned with the role of light from a postdramatic rather than a scenographic

perspective, it is useful to consider their study as an example of scenographic light,

and perhaps also to note where the complicities between postdramatic and

scenographic readings might lie. The postdramatic assertion that scenography, as 'a

theatre of complex visuality, presents itself to the contemplating gaze like a text, a

scenic poem' (Lehmann, 2005: 94), provides a clear articulation of the expressivity of

scenographic elements in general, and in this case light in particular. If the essential

function of scenographic light is to bring forth something of the dramatic content,

then the light must be encountered as a performance text. Interestingly, the term

'scenography of light' appears in Brian Arnott's analysis of a production of *The*

Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, produced in the National Theatre in 1971 (Arnott,

1973). Arnott's account gives a vivid reading of the production's scenography,

noting the 'stark and disquieting' stage (ibid.: 74) and the flexible and diverse lighting

(ibid.: 76). However, while his reading appears to give credence to the power of light

in the piece, Arnott appears to lack a nuanced language with which to discuss the confluence of light and scenography. Instead he attributes the 'scenographic concepts' to the director, Victor Garcia, and the stage designer, Michel Launay, noting that their established concepts were 'extended' by the lighting designer, David Hersey (ibid.: 74). Arnott's subsequent discussion of the role of light in the performance focuses primarily on the means of its production and the fact that lighting operators were required to improvise, without giving any in depth sense of how this improvisation impacted on the performance.

What I hope this charting of the scholarly landscape makes plain is that, although lighting is a comparatively small area of performance scholarship, it is an area of enormous importance to the wider field and not a niche technical concern. It is also important to note that, in spite of the dominance of manual-type publications, there is a lineage of more conceptual thinking about the role of light and dark in performance, which this present research seeks to extend. Advances in light research and related areas of study have already established that light can be a powerful force in performance, and that the experiential conditions of performance can trigger affective and emotional responses in audience members. There remains, however, much to be addressed about the specific nature of light's role in performance, and about how light sculpts, influences, and informs an audience's experience of a performance. This thesis will attempt to build on existing research, and to move beyond assertions *that* light impacts aesthetically and dramaturgically on performance, to a sustained questioning of *how* precisely light impacts on the dramaturgical structure of performance. The above examples also demonstrate a range of established methodologies in the immediate discipline of light research, and also point to an expansion in the study of light in recent years. It is significant that each of these studies of light have employed disparate, if sometimes overlapping,

methodological approaches. The established methods demonstrated here also point to a gap in the literature when it comes to the specific phenomenological experience of light in the context of performance. A concern with the experiential domain of light has certainly been touched upon by Di Benedetto, in his focus on sensorial experience, and by Crisafulli, Palmer and Abulafia in terms of the formative impact of light on performance. However, there remains much to be investigated about the way light operates in performance, how light is experienced by the seer, and the dramaturgical agency of light as a material of, and in, performance. It is precisely this gap that my research sets out to address.

Research Objectives

The primary goal of this research, then, is to explore the unique contribution of light to performance. Integral to this goal are two core objectives: to examine the role of light as a significant component of performance; and to find a means of analysing light that is sensitive to its underlying complexities. The central thesis of the research is that light is an agent of aesthetic affectivity, capable of independently generating meaning in performance. This claim is examined through a theoretical investigation of the particular aesthetics and phenomenology of light in performance, as well as through observation of contemporary performance examples. In this I mean to explore the potential of light to be dramaturgically and affectively consequential in live performance. This kind of aim implies a focus on the action(s) of light in the experience of live performance. At the centre of this research is a particular manifestation of light that I have termed *scenographic light*. This can be defined as an affective use of light that works to generate meaning independently. Scenographic light may operate in harmony with other elements of performance but, rather than

functioning in a solely supportive manner, it presents a discrete contribution to performance.

In distancing the discussion of light from the means and processes with which it is created, I hope to provide a language for the analyis of light in aesthetic and dramaturgical terms as a component of performance. The focus, in this research, on the audience perspective, is an attempt to reconcile this gap in order to reach out to other areas of performance practice and research, demonstrating the role and the value of light as a creative practice. David Hays', *Light on the Subject* (1998) is a book that shares this aim, but Hays' approach is to explain light in clear, non-technical terms, while hinting at the wider dramaturgical possibilities of light as a tool in performance. This doctoral project takes the reverse approach, using analysis of how light is used in particular moments of performance to illustrate its wider role. Exploring light in terms of its impact on an audience member's reading and experience of a performance frames the discussion in terms of the dramaturgical construction of a play, a clear, and analytically productive, move away from concerns of technical production or process. At the heart of this research is a concern with the ways in which light affects the construction of performance, and as such its context extends beyond the immediate study of light. Scenographic research is also crucial to the terms of this project and, as indicated above, I am interested particularly in an active conception of light, exploring the ways in which light transforms sensual, material, and dramaturgical aspects of performance.

In setting out to explore the independent contribution of light to performance I may appear to be granting an implausible degree of autonomy to light. I am not claiming sentience for light, but rather I am purposefully choosing to focus on the possibilities of light as a material component of performance. Implicit in my description of light is an awareness of the vast hinterland of creative and technical

labour involved in its creation, however by focusing on the action and appearances of light itself in the moment of performance I mean to identify light's potential contributions to performance. In limiting my analysis to light itself, and describing the consequences and expressive implications of light's action in performance I am, perhaps, stating the claim for light's significance more boldly than my predecessors, and this, too, is part of this project's ambitions to move the disciplinary conversation forward. It is also worth noting that I am presuming a degree of sophistication in lighting design that I acknowledge is not universally present in performance practice. However, my aim within this research is to articulate the possibilities that light may bring to practice, when it is used in such a way as accords it significance.

Research Questions

The principal concerns outlined above prompt the central inquiry: 'what is light *doing* in performance'? With 'doing' understood in terms of both action and consequence. Such a focus on what light is doing in performance, opens a productive space in which the progression of light in performance is uncoupled from the processes with which light is produced for performance. Accordingly, this kind of questioning furthers the aim of articulating the formative role of light in performance. Elsewhere, Hannah and Harsløf, following Elin Diamond, write about performance design as both a 'doing and a thing done' (Hannah and Harsløf, 2008: 13; Diamond, 1996: 1). As they report, performance design is a broad and porous term, capable of accommodating the many ways that 'places, things gestures and imagery are rendered more mobile, dynamic and affective' (Hannah and Harsløf, 2008: 12 - 13). Applying this expanded understanding of performance design to light demonstrates the formative and constitutive properties of light as a performance material. Considering the temporal material of light as, in itself, both a doing and a thing done points to

the continually emergent properties of light in performance; continually bringing one moment into being while simultaneously disappearing into the past. Furthermore, Diamond's elucidation of the negotiation between the 'doing' and the 'thing done', and her sense of continual drift between presence and absence provides a useful frame for considering the active, yet elusive, ways in which light is an active force in performance. I examine this primary question, of what light is doing in performance, through the following interrelated research questions.

1. What is the dramaturgical impact of light's mediation of performance?
2. To what extent can light be considered a physical presence on the stage?
3. How might light be understood as a generative element in performance?

All of these questions address the context of the experiential domain of live performance, exploring what light does in the moment of live performance and in relation to the whole performance event. Each question approaches the central question from a distinct position, aiming to delve progressively deeper into the quiddity of light as a performance material. These questions overlap to some degree and they are also cumulative, each building from the claims of the previous. Fitting with the overall aim of the research, each of these questions can be considered a different articulation of the action and impact of light in performance, or of different kinds or aspects of light's *doing*. They can be summarised, in brief, as asking: 'what is light doing *to* everything else?; 'what is light doing as itself?'; and, 'in virtue of these things, what is light creating, or bringing forth'?

The first question – what is the dramaturgical impact of light's mediation of performance? – interrogates the role of light through a dramaturgical lens, exploring the ways in which light not only facilitates vision in performance but wholly mediates the experience of attending to a performance. This question aims to

address what light does in performance through its orchestration of visibility, space, and time; questioning what light is doing to other elements within a given performance, noting how objects, spaces, and bodies are transformed by light. In terms of motivation, this question arises partially in answer to the dominant understandings, commented on earlier, of light as a primarily facilitative medium in performance. By exploring, in theoretical terms, the multiple complex processes at play in the 'making visible' of a performance this question seeks to expand the understanding of light's influence on the construction of a performance. The explicit dramaturgical focus of this question also aims to explore the role of light in terms of its meaningful impact on the resulting performance. Through this research question I argue that in determining the possibilities and qualities of vision – or, indeed, visual attenuation – light is a significant component in the construction of performance, and in determining the rules of the created stage world. Although this is the only question that explicitly references dramaturgy, all of these research questions are concerned with the dramaturgical role of light, seeking to articulate the impact of light on the construction of performance.

The second question – to what extent can light be considered a physical presence on the stage? – takes a more focused view of the material properties of light itself, examining the consequences for performance when light is presented as though a tangible material, investigating what light is *doing* in and of itself, and how it might be considered a performing object. Recalling Hannah and Harsløf's previously mentioned account of performance deisgn as both a doing and a thing done, this research question follows the idea of performance light as a 'thing done' in asserting that light can be a kind of material thing produced in and through performance. This questioning relates to ideas of object orientated ontology and intersects with current debates around new materialism in performance, extending these considerations to

the ephemeral material of light. Principally though, through this question I mean to explore the ontology of performance light, examining instances where light seems to manifest as a kind of physical object in the performance. While the previous question explores how light works to transform bodies and spaces in performance, this question explores ways in which light can interact with bodies and spaces, operating not only curatorially in constructing performance, but also as an active, and actorly, presence within performance. Through this question I hope to explore the ontological specificity of performance light, examining how light can be considered as a kind of thing, and what kind of thing this might be.

The final question – how might light be understood as a generative element in performance – aims to explore whether and how light can be considered a creative force in performance. This question builds upon the previous two while also taking a deeper view of the expressive and meaning-making potentials of light in performance. At base, this question investigates what emerges in performance because of the light, while the other questions focus on what emerges through the light. While all three research questions address the idea of performance light as a creative component of performance, this question explicitly explores this practice as a generative one. This emphasis aims to facilitate an exploration of light in terms that extend beyond the facilitative and towards a rigorous account of the ways in which light becomes an active participant in the unfolding performance. The focus on light as a generative element here is a means of further interrogating the tendency in subject literature to position light as a responsive or facilitative element in performance. Through this line of questioning I aim to explore the extent to which light may express or produce meanings – or kinds of meanings – rather than merely enhance or elicit meanings otherwise produced.

Chapter Outline

In drawing this introduction to a close I will provide an overview of the progression of the thesis from this point. Chapter One provides an account of the central concept of this research; scenographic light. In laying out my use of this term, this chapter establishes the scholarly background and conceptual approach that the rest of the thesis builds upon. This chapter also argues the case for the consideration of light in scenographic terms, and demonstrates how examining light in terms of its ability to manipulate a performance environment (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 4) or, indeed as a performative environment (Lotker and Gough, 2013: 4) provides a productive means of analysing visual, spatial, and temporal dramaturgies. Chapter Two outlines the methodological approach taken in this research. In describing the methodological framework applied to this research I also share how the methodology has developed in tandem with the research aims, acknowledging that part of the research journey has involved finding, developing, and refining the methodology into its final framework. Chapter Two thus argues for the value of auto-ethnographic approaches to writing about light in performance and considers the kinds of knowledge that become available through this approach. Accordingly, the method used here forms part of the claim to new knowledge. After these first two chapters, each of the following chapters deal with a specific research question, and each draws on three performance examples to analyse aspects of light. Chapter Three considers the ways in which light mediates performance, and what the dramaturgical effect of this might be. Chapter Four examines how light might be considered as a kind of material presence in itself. Chapter Five, the final chapter, draws together the insights of the preceding two in consideration of how light might be considered a generative force. This chapter is then both a response to the research question, 'how might light be understood as a generative force in

performance?' and a summative response to the findings of the previous chapters. In considering the generative properties of light, this chapter also offers a synthesis of the previous two, building on their claims to progress an understanding of light as a creative element within performance. This cumulative relationship between the chapters is in response to the underpinning enquiry of what it is that light is doing in performance. In concluding the thesis I offer a summary of the principal findings and suggest some implications this work may prompt for future research in the field.

Chapter 1 **: Scenographic Light**

With the term 'scenographic light' I mean to do two things. First, quite simply, to explicitly position light in relation to scenography. This positioning serves to redress the balance in contemporary research on scenography in which light has received less critical attention than other performance elements, and it also serves to relate recent insights about the nature of scenography to light. Light is widely acknowledged as a constituent of scenography, but rarely has specific attention been paid to the particular ways in which light works to inscribe meaning in space and time as an independent scenographic interlocutor. The launch, in 2015, of the *Theatre and Performance Design Journal* heralded the emergence of a 'scenographic turn' in which scenography, as a way of reading performance, is 'formally instated as a significant contributor to the production of knowledge' (Collins and Aronson, 2015: 2). Critical thinking about the role of light in performance provides a useful addition to the insights generated through this 'turn'. It is also especially important, as conceptions of scenography expand, to establish the role of light within scenography, and within scenographic experience. There is a confusion here too in that 'scenography' is sometimes seen as synonymous with 'stage design'. Pamela Howard, for instance, writes that she favours the professional credit of 'scenographer' to 'designer' in recognition of the dramaturgical importance of the work (2002). Texts on light, too, often perpetuate this equivalence of scenography with stage design. Abulafia, for example, often credits a 'scenographer' when listing production credits (2016: 125, 198, 221). This distinction is not merely terminological; closing off the role of scenographer like this creates divisions, resulting in mentions of 'scenography *and* light' (ibid.: 114) 'light, projection *and* scenography' (ibid.: 35), or 'scenography *and* costumes' (ibid.: 148, emphasis added). Here a terminology that equates scenography with stage, or spatial design, fails to

admit the scenographic interplay between light, costume, projection, movement, or any other element. And indeed fails to identify the power of light as, itself, scenographic. While it is true that titles such as 'set designer' and 'stage designer' imply a more narrow view of the affective and experience-making role of performance design, attributing the title of 'scenographer' to a single member of the creative team is problematic. As a phenomenon, scenography emerges in the moment of performance; it is a phenomenon that involves the interplay of multiple elements in space and time. Individually, elements can be scenographic; creating provision for the inscription of meaning in performance, but scenography itself emerges in and through the moment of performance.

Similarly, Rachel Hann has noted that a difficulty in the field is the frequent confusion of scenography with set design, employing a deliberate play on the word 'set'. This is an equation that denies the dynamic dramaturgical function of scenography by implying that it is something either decorative or fixed, while also limiting the perceived remit of scenography to stage design (Hann, 2015). This view is still relatively common in professional practice and is also represented by Gay McAuley in her influential monograph, *Space in Performance*. McAuley's classification of theatrical space specifically avoids the term 'scenographic', instead naming the physical performance space as 'presentational space' (2000: 29). Her rationale for this terminological decision is that the principle of presentational space abides even in performances where there is no 'scenery'. Her presentational space includes elements of scenography, but is fundamentally created by the movement of the actor in space. This assessment reveals a narrow conception of scenography, and certainly one which conflicts with the definition used in my research. I would contend that actor's occupation of space in McAuley's account can be understood scenographically because movement and gesture are forms of inscribing meaning in space. McAuley

correctly asserts that the craft of the actor is a spatial one, but does not acknowledge that this spatiality is inherently scenographic.

My second, and more important, aim in the use of the term 'scenographic light' is to conceive of light as an explicitly active force in performance. Through demonstrating light's unique mode of inscribing meaning in space and time as scenographic, I hope to make clear that light is not only an important constituent of scenography but also a consequential and active component of performance. Contemporary thinking about scenography provides a useful foundation for this conception of light as an active performance element because it opens avenues of thinking about performance in which material, sensual, spatiotemporal experience become key factors in the reading of a performance. Scenography, despite yielding no useful verb (Baugh, 2013: 240), is an active force within performance, rather than a fixed state that frames dramatic action. Defined by McKinney and Butterworth as 'the manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment' (2009: 4) scenography encompasses multiple interactions between elements within space and the ways these interactions impact on the events unfolding. Understood as an active, consequential unfolding of elements within space, and, indeed, as a way of reading performance, scenography extends far beyond the narrow definition of decoration or set design.

Having established the dual objectives in my use of the term 'scenographic light' this chapter will now argue that, in pursuing these aims, the concept of scenographic light serves to highlight the fundamental importance of light within performance, and to relate the work of the 'scenographic turn' to the study of light. In the following section I will detail the mutual value of light and scenographic thinking, and then go on to define ways in which light can become an active force within performance. While acknowledging the increasingly detailed scholarship on the role of light in performance, and on its potential as a dramaturgical force, I am also

conscious that there remain some resistances to a more active conception of light, as indicated in the introduction of this thesis. Ultimately, I hope that a dramaturgical study of light, one concerned, principally, with the affective and experience making properties of light, may serve to reconcile these resistances. Throughout this chapter I hope to demonstrate the current lacuna in thinking about light and the ways in which a more active, scenographic understanding of light is valuable for performance studies in general and the discipline of scenography in particular. Further to this, I will seek to define the phenomenon of light in performance on its own terms, taking light for performance to be an ontologically specific object of inquiry, necessitating particular aesthetic and analytic concerns. What I hope will become clear through this discussion is the value of light for an understanding of performance more broadly. Because the scenographic is concerned with the event making capacities of a given material, its study is inherently dramaturgical, and to view light in this way reveals the impact that it can have on performance as a whole.

As with any term there are potential limitations and pitfalls in pinning the insights of this thesis to a specific term like scenographic light. Perhaps the most urgent of these is the fact that the phenomenon of scenography emerges in the moment of performance, and relates to the whole performance, so cannot be easily attributed to a single element. While there may be instances where light is the most dominant element of the scenography (and some such examples are discussed in this thesis), it is not possible or productive to attribute the emergence of the scenography to any single element. It is for this reason that I stress the distinction between scenography and the scenographic, aiming to open a productive space in which light can be considered in terms of its active, *scenographic* qualities without claiming that the power of light is somehow eradicating the work of other elements in performance. There is potentially, a further problem in dissemination, given that scenography is still a very

small area of scholarship within performance studies and part of my argument here is that the power of light encompasses many aspects of the ways in which performance works. Nevertheless, the ongoing developments in this field and the growing understanding that scenography can be fruitfully considered as a means of reading performance, are inviting conditions for developing critical, theoretical understandings of the ephemeral, and often misunderstood material of light.

Light in and as scenography

In attempting to position light in relation to scenography it is important to acknowledge the slippery position of light as both an element within emergent scenography and a material component of performance. Scenography, of course, is the whole, the 'all-encompassing visual-spatial construct' (Aronson, 2005: 7) and yet, as a player within scenography light can independently construct visual, spatial and temporal environments for performance. In this vein, Crisafulli identifies the fundamental functions of light as 'to shape time and space, to become a dramatic structure, and serve as a means of unfolding or producing "actions"' (2008: 93); recognisably scenographic ambitions.

The word 'scenography' originates from the Greek *skenographia,* which is often translated as 'scenic writing', (Aronson, 2005; Collins and Nisbet, 2010) but has many more complex meanings (Baugh 2013; Hann, 2015) including marking, drawing, etching, and inscribing. The latter definitions are more useful to the terms of this research because of their implied dimensionality. To the extent that scenography can be understood as 'scenic writing' it should be understood that this writing is active and spatial, and though 'writing' implies text, the particular language of scenography is plural and unstable; conveying manifold subjective meanings. 'Scenographic' can be (and often is) used to mean 'pertaining to scenography'. In this

study, however, it is used as an expression of the underlying principles, rather than the activity of designers. 'Scenographic', in this research, implies a mode of spatial inscription, of translating the abstract into sensual experience. Scenography emerges through the complex interactions of performance elements, while the scenographic refers to the spatiotemporal meaning-making of a given element. This distinction between specific elements and the whole event facilitates in-depth analyses of the meaning-making properties of individual constituents of a performance, while remaining cognisant of the interdependence of elements within the whole. To provide an example of this distinction, the stage directions of Samuel Beckett's *Play* demand a single, swivelling spotlight, to light each of the actors' faces in turn. The spotlight is cast in the role of 'inquisitor' (Beckett, 1990: 318), and the text dictates that it is the light that provokes their speech; they are compelled to speak when the light shines on them. These directions clearly indicate a *scenographic* intention for light, even before the scenography is completed in the context of performance. Conversely, the emergent scenography of a performance of *Play* would demand broader consideration of the conditions of performance, such as: the material qualities of the light; the position, shape, and structure of the urns the actors are confined to; the spatial relationships between the audience and the actors.

The somewhat ambiguous position of light within scenography is, in many ways, surprising. Light is widely recognised as an *element* of scenography (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 6; Collins and Nisbet, 2010: 2), yet what is less discussed is that many important aspects in the scenographic construction of a performance are wholly dependent on light. There can be, for instance, no sense of space without light, and the particular use of light in any given moment can have profound impact on the way space is perceived. Later, in Chapters Four and Five, I will discuss the spatial plasticity of light in relation to specific performance examples, but for the

moment it is important to note that, much as light can generate a sense of spatial flexibility, the plasticity of performance space is also, at least in part, dependent on light. The appearance, too, of objects, materials, and environment can be completely modified through the use of light, making light not only a single element of scenography, but a material that knits together multiple aspects of the emergent scenography. Therefore, while it is the case that scenography relates to the wider performance event –a network of interrelationships between space and the body, between movement and time, encompassing the entire experience– it remains a valuable exercise to examine light as *scenographic*. Understanding light as scenographic entails the impact of light on the entire performance event, requiring an assessment of not only the visual aspects of light but also the ways in which light impacts upon spatial perception and experience, and the ways in which light changes over time and affects our understanding of the passing of time in performance.

Scenography and the Scenographic

The shift away from thinking about performance design as a decorative practice and towards an understanding of scenography as a way of reading performance is encapsulated in the work of several theatre makers who foreground the material, spatial, and structural environment in which their work is performed. Much scholarship in this field focuses especially on the work of such makers as Heiner Goebbels, Kris Verdonck, and Robert Wilson (some of whose work I discuss in Chapter Three). These practitioners make work that is profoundly scenographic, and is recognised as such by many scholars (McKinney and Palmer, 2017; McKinney, 2015; Hannah and Harslof, 2008) but it is important to note that scenographic communication is not limited to large scale work like Wilson's, but is equally effective in a wide range of production styles and contexts. For this reason it is vital

to differentiate between scenography and the scenographic. Scenography is the emergent phenomenon that arises through performance, while the scenographic – in my formulation, at least – refers to the underlying principles of spatial and temporal inscription. In this way the difference between scenography and the scenographic is equivalent to that between drama and dramaturgy, in that dramaturgy refers to the 'underpinning principles of theatrical construction' (Turner, 2015: 2) and the scenographic refers to the principles through which materials become meaningful in performance. This is analogous, too, to Turner and Behrndt's assertion that dramaturgy will be present within a performance, irrespective of the presence of a dramaturg (2008: 4), in that it is also possible to discuss the scenography of a given performance in isolation from the work of a scenographer. Boel Christensen-Scheel, Christina Lindgren, and Anette Therese Pettersen examine this question in a paper entitled 'Scenography in the Staging / on the Stage / in the Mind of the Audience' (2013). Drawing on examples of contemporary Norwegian performance, they examine the role and functions of scenography in the context of an increasingly expanded practice. Conducting interviews with different companies they reveal a wide range of attitudes to scenography and the role of scenographer. Only one of the three companies included used 'scenographer' as a title for a specific role (ibid.: 132), with another company outright rejecting the role of 'scenographer' and the word 'scenography', in favour of the term 'materiality' (ibid.: 127). Yet, regardless of nomenclature, scenography happens through their focus on materials and the construction of their installation-performances. Accordingly, the scenographic becomes a vital frame for analysing the active and affective roles of components of performance, and how they might interact with the wider performance structure. In contrast to McAuley's understanding of presentational space, I would argue that there is always scenography in performance, irrespective of the extent or

sophistication of the design. Scenography is the question of the physical, spatial, and temporal interactions inherent in performance work and is part of what distinguishes performance as an art form (in contrast to literary fiction or fine art, for example). For clarity, then, it may be helpful to examine the scenographic principles at play in an example with less dominant design.[7] One such example is in Forced Entertainment's *Tabletop Shakespeare* project, in which the company recount the complete stage works of Shakespeare using a host of unlikely domestic objects and kitchen implements. This example might be seen to ratify McAuley's assertion that the actor is the ascendant force in performance, that they imbue the space with power through their acting skills and presence. Indeed, these pieces – each told by a solo performer – in many ways are a testament to the power of the human performer; the cast condense the full plot of each of these plays to a piece of solo story-telling lasting roughly an hour. However, while there may not be a wildly striking design, this is, manifestly, a scenographic performance. If scenography relates to the principal of inscribing meaning in space and time then the use of various salt shakers and tea cups to tell the story is a clear example. The cast use their various domestic items as ciphers for the characters, arranging and moving them across the surface of the table to illustrate the story. This is inherently scenographic, and the seemingly arbitrary selections appear to take on meaning as they are used.

So, a heightened awareness of the potential for affective experience and forms of hermeneutic meaning to emerge in performance through the play – and interplay – of material and spatial elements marks scenography as an important mode of critical

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[7] Understanding scenographic principles in this way is a topic of increasing importance within the field. At the time of writing, Hann's monograph *Scenography Beyond Scenography* has yet to be published but promises to explore the scenographic as a mode of critical analysis.

analysis. This dual shift towards both a critical understanding of scenography, and of scenography as critical frame with which to analyse performance, is evident in the rapidly expanding discipline of scenographic research. Such research invites consideration of scenography as a system, discipline, or method in its own right (Lotker and Gough, 2013: 3), influencing 'both the meaning and the experience' of performance (Lotker and Gough, 2013: 5). More recently, McKinney and Palmer have noted the need for a new framework to accommodate the expanded field of scenographic research (2017: 1). Examining scenography from the perspective of the spectator, they posit relationality, affectivity, and materiality as integral concepts underlying manifestations of expanded scenography (ibid.: 8-13). These concepts not only serve to indicate the potency of the scenographic address to a spectator, they also resonate very clearly with experiential qualities of light. For example, the ephemerality of shifting light and the potential for an individual spectator's embodied, atavistic, and deeply subjective, response to light in performance speaks to a relational experience between the seer and the light. In spite of the common terminology of 'lighting effects' in depth considerations of light often highlight the importance of affect over effect (Rosenthal and Wertenbaker, 1972: 3). Through the concepts of new materialism and object oriented ontology it becomes both possible and productive to view light as having its own distinct form of materiality.[8] Yet, it is also significant that neither Lotker and Gough's special issue, 'On Scenography', nor McKinney and Palmer's edited collection, *Scenography Expanded,* include extended discussions of light as a potent scenographic material. The concept of 'scenographic light', then, may serve to reconcile the gap between the bifurcated fields of light and scenography.

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[8] This is a topic I explore in detail in Chapter Four.

Amid the advocacy for light that underlies my core arguments, it is important to acknowledge that there are, of course, performances that do not use light in a considered or measured way while remaining valuable pieces of work. I do not mean to argue that light is *always* an important and active contributor to meaning, or that the principal qualities of light – transience, mutability, proprioception, focus, spatial reconfiguration, and so on – are only achievable through light. I do, however, argue that that when light is used in this way it can create the possibility for new kinds of meaning and transformation to occur. Scenographic light envelops the whole performance experience, influencing the ways in which an audience see a performance, the ways in which the bodies onstage interact (or appear to interact), and a whole gamut of spatial and temporal relationships. This aligns with contemporary research that positions scenography as a way of reading performance, and as a frame for accessing the ways in which performance materials work on spectators (McKinney, 2013; Irwin, 2017). Thus, studying the scenographic meaning-making of light (as more than the means through which a performance is seen) provides a holistic frame for reading performance, and for further analysing how a performance is written in space, time, and material encounter.

Light as an active force

As indicated above, an understanding of light as scenographic implies that it is a consequential material in the construction of a performance. Scenographic light is creative rather than responsive, meaning that it is possible to attribute some aspect of meaning to the light itself. Much more common than the generative uses of light that I am discussing are responsive uses of light, which, by contrast, serve to reinforce or supplement some aspect of the performance that is given elsewhere. The highly influential Czech scenographer, Josef Svoboda, succinctly defines this

tension between creativity and responsivity from a practitioner's perspective when he says 'I do not find it necessary to underline in the décor that which the drama expresses already in an adequately clear manner. When I sense that something is sufficiently and well said, I don't concern myself with it' (in Till, 2010: 160). There is a tentative caveat in Svoboda's statement, in that he feels he needn't emphasise something that is 'sufficiently and well said' elsewhere, leaving space to reinforce things that may be only weakly said elsewhere. There are undoubtedly many examples of performance practice in which light works to *strengthen* ideas in the text, or in the setting, and while this would make a valuable topic for further study, such examples are outside the scope of this study. I have chosen to focus on strong examples of the active, and thus the creative, role of light in performance, where it has been possible to identify something generated by the light that would not be otherwise present in performance.

Accordingly, the examples of scenographic light detailed throughout this research feature a manifestly generative and creative role for light in performance. In order to assess the extent to which light can be creative it is necessary to look beyond the formal qualities of a design. I have outlined this objective to investigate the underlying action of light rather than its appearance already in the Introduction. However, it is worth restating that in order for light to be considered truly scenographic it must be possible to identify that light is *doing* something constructive within performance. Thinking, in this way about how the light in a given moment is working is a means of accessing the consequential and creative role of light in performance.

In a sense, then, 'scenographic light' provides a challenge to the adage – originating in the teachings of Stanley McCandless in the United States and popularised by Richard Pilbrow in the UK – that light should not draw attention to itself, and

provides further challenge to the idea that the principal function of light in performance is to provide visibility. In any case, given that the art of lighting design in the theatre is often said to have its genesis in the darkening of the auditorium (Palmer, 2013: 7) this assertion requires some scrutiny. It is light that makes it physiologically possible to see, and there is a legacy of practice that suggests the primary function of light in performance is to ensure sufficient visibility. Pilbrow, for instance, specifically cautions against attempting to achieve an 'attractive visual picture at the expense of visibility' (1992: 16). I would argue instead that a disrupted visual acuity owing to the composition of light should not be considered to occur at the *expense* of visibility, but *as* the visual experience within that moment. Visual experience (occasioned by light), in this formulation, is a more complex phenomenon than the utility suggested in Pilbrow's account. In this respect I follow strands of research in the fields of art and visual studies that focus on vision as a practice of looking, defined through historical and cultural trends. In *Techniques of the Observer* art historian Jonathan Crary argues that practices of vision are historically constructed, specifically examining the nineteenth century as a time of enormous transformation in the construction of vision (1999: 7). In the field of visual studies, Hal Foster distinguishes between vision – the physical operation of sight – and visuality, the social, cultural, or historical context in which vision takes place. Maaike Bleeker has applied this idea of *visuality* specifically to practices of seeing in the theatre. Vision, Bleeker argues, is necessarily entangled with particular cultural and historical practices of visual experience.

> This is a situation in which what we think we see is the product of vision 'taking place' according to the tacit rules of a specific scopic regime and within a relationship between the one seeing and what is seen. What seems to be just 'there to be seen' is in fact, rerouted through memory and fantasy, caught up in threads of the unconscious and entangled with the passions (2008: 2).

Further to Bleeker's notion of visuality occurring as an active, and unreliable, process, it is important also to note that light in performance serves, or can serve, to radically alter the appearance of the visible, creating uncertainty and perceptual instability.

Amid these reflections on the vagaries and practices of vision in performance, it seems absurd to think of light as a neutral conduit. Naturally, from a practitioner's perspective it is the case that if a moment is to be seen it must be granted sufficient light. The process for an artist designing light will consequently involve determining what can be seen and how it will be seen. From the perspective of experience, however, what is seen is always already mired in the transformative impact of light. Lit from above, for instance, bodies seem shorter; a steep angle of light can make a face look older, or more drawn; the use of colour can alter an actor's skin tone, or completely mask the colour of a costume, to give just some examples. In experiencing performance a spectator sees the whole image in a way that blurs the boundaries between the thing being lit and the way in which it is lit. Perception is necessarily influenced by light, and light will always make perceiving possible in some way. Within the artificial constructs of performance, therefore, visibility is perhaps better thought of as a consequence of light, rather than its *raison d'être*. There is no 'neutral' in light; it is always, in that respect, an active or transformative element within performance.

At this point an example may help to elucidate the active role of light and its extension beyond the provision of visibility, and into the sensory and meaning-making composition of a piece. For this I turn to Toneelgroep Amsterdam's production, *Kings of War,* directed by Ivo Van Hove (2015). This is an epic, four hour long performance that combines Shakespeare's *Henry V, Henry VI,* and *Richard III,* transposed to a generalised modern era, in a meditation on leadership and power.

Designed by Jan Versweyveld, the stage is reminiscent of a military bunker, covered in maps with computer screens blinking and surrounded by partially obscured stark white corridors, that seem to twist and turn in a dense maze behind the open space of the main room. The production makes much use of live and pre-recorded video footage, with details of scenes being relayed on large LED screens at the back of the stage. Adding to the verisimilitude of the setting, there are fluorescent strip lights hanging from the walls and recessed into the ceiling tiles of the corridor. For much of the action, the lighting is relatively understated – here, it is the roving camera that seems to provide a layer of curatorial attention, rather than the light. Until, in *Richard III* towards the very end of the cycle, one scene in particular where the light creates a bold and striking stage image. At this point the stage has been stripped of everything but an armchair. The screen is lowered, covering the upstage corridor, but also confining Richard, leaving him alone with his, increasingly unstable, thoughts. He has been sitting in the chair, with his back to the audience, with a camera relaying his actions to the screen, as if it were a giant mirror to which he looks for validation. Turning away from this engorged reflection, he rises from his seat, leaving the image of the leather armchair filling the screen. Without his face to focus on, it seems at first at though there is a glitch as the camera refocuses on the chair, distorting the colour of the image which now becomes warmer and warmer. Soon though, the feed from the camera recedes completely, crossfading with an image of pure colour on the screens, now glowing red. Over the course of Richard's ensuing monologue, he circles wildly around the space while all the light fades from the stage except for the red screens and some white fluorescent strips upstage left. As the other light in the space fades away, the red on the screens seems to deepen still further. At the climax of the scene, Richard comes to stand downstage, a darkened figure silhouetted against the sharp red glare of the screens and the cold fluorescent glow of the

corner. There is no other light on stage so his face is in the dark, and his body stands not in the light but on the fringes of it. He is not in line with the screen, so does not appear fully in silhouette but, rather, one side of his body is tinged with red and the other lightly with white, but neither intensely enough to see him clearly. He appears as a figure in the murky darkness of the corner of the stage - coexisting with the striking light image, rather than at its centre. In this example, inability to see the actor's face is not a failure of the light but a feature of the scene.

In this one gesture – of shifting from a state in which there is even, colourless, light across the stage, to the violent glare of the red screens – the light seems to stake its claim as a scenographic force in the performance. As a striking image – the hunched shadowy figure on the fringes of the glaring red screens – the moment announces itself as boldly theatrical, but it also seems to provide an unsettling echo of the character's increasingly frenzied state. In making it difficult to see the actor's face, the light invites a different kind of seeing. The other light shutting down around him, as he is dwarfed by a glare of red light may well be analogous to the mounting bloodshed, and the character's lack of control, described in the text. However, the sheer boldness of the theatrical image – so different from what has gone before in this production, and so striking in its own terms – means that it operates viscerally. In Roland Barthes' terms, this is a sort of *punctum,* a kind of visceral attention provoked by an image – as distinct from the more general interest with which an image might be viewed; *studium* (Barthes, 1981: 26). Barthes is writing about photography not performance, and yet his description of the 'element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me' (ibid) offers a succinct description of the modes of attention these kinds of theatrical moments can induce. It is not necessarily as *punctum* that light becomes scenographic, rather what is happening here is that the action of the light provides this piercing element. What

light is *doing* here is creating the visceral shift from one kind of viewing to another. In refusing the established convention of making an actor's face visible – especially when speaking – this moment turns the practice of viewing on its head. Speaking from my own experience of watching this play, this moment created a defined shift in my watching of this play, from a largely intellectual experience to a strongly bodily one. The light suddenly ceased to afford[9] easy viewing of the actor's face, and that caused me to register the effort of seeing at the same time as the glare of the screens made the stage image uncomfortable to look at. I argue that *causing* this shift is a scenographic gesture by the light; comprising a drastic manipulation of the performance space, and the sensual experience of watching, ultimately causing new meanings to emerge. The specific meanings that do emerge, however, do so as a result of the whole performance; the space; the light; the context, the script, the actor's performance of that script, and his physicality in the scene all coalesce to produce this moment, which may be interpreted in different ways by different audience members. What is clear is that, while the light is not acting in isolation it does make a discernible, independent contribution to the scene.

Studying performance light

The multiplicity of forms of light, and of its functions within performance, speaks to a difficulty in accessing performance light as a material in itself. Yet, light has no physical presence – at a molecular level it can be understood as a stream of particles but these leave no physical trace discernible to a human hand. Light is made by objects – the kind of performance light that I am describing utilises a whole host of

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[9] I use the term 'afford' here in the sense used by James Gibson, considering the 'affordances' of an environment in terms of what it offers or provides to those immersed in it (1979: 119).

specialist instruments, and yet the instruments themselves are not equal to the light they emit. It is possible to consider light as a range of effects – or through its potential impact on the construction of a performance but these kinds of considerations do not get us closer to an understanding of light in itself. A possible template for considering light in itself comes from Harman's *The Third Table* (2012). This is an essay in which Harman considers a definition of the object, and in particular offers his definition for the consideration of art objects. Harman frames his analysis of objects with reference to the physicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington's parable of the two tables. Eddington declared that there were duplicates of all objects available to the senses. Using the example of a table he was sitting at to write, Eddington described the two tables as the familiar table of everyday use, and a scientific explanation of that same table. The familiar table is the one available to the senses, the one that appears solid, that has a certain colour, that he recognises from years of use. By contrast the second table is composed, not of wood but of electric charges and empty space. Eddington acknowledges the perceptual difficulty in accepting the collection of molecules over the solid, experienced table but nevertheless contends that the scientific table is the 'only one which is really there' (in Harman, 2012: 6). Harman argues that neither of Eddington's tables constitute the real table, and it is in this argument that Harman's conception of objects begins to apply to light. Harman argues that each of Eddington's tables amount to a form of reductionism (ibid). The scientific table reduces the object downward to invisible particles, while the familiar reduces it upward to its effects on people. Harman instead argues that the real table is a third table, lying between the polar reductions of Eddington's account. Harman's third table acknowledges that the table as a whole has features that its component parts do not have in isolation (ibid.: 7); that the table has a certain reality (or a certain table-ness) over and above its causal components

(ibid.: 8). Similarly, Harman argues that the upward reduction of the table to an object at which one can sit and write, on which one can lean, or place paper, does not sufficiently explain the constitution of the table (ibid.: 9). Any use of or engagement with the table in its practical sense will fail to exhaust all of the table's reality. In considering performance light, the pattern of Harman's argument is perhaps even more significant than his assertion that the third table exists. The attempt to access the real table, in Harman's argument exceeds the apparent physical presence of the object, and eludes its component parts.

There is a parallel to be drawn here between this kind of engagement with an object and the various approaches to writing about light. A technical account of a lighting design includes the details of the instruments used and the component parts of each given state. This is analogous to the scientific account of the table. Reducing light to its individual component parts fails to account for the (dramaturgical) effect of the whole. Likewise, an account of light as a series of effects on a performance text negates the material intervention of light in itself. Like Harman's third table, a third way of looking at light could reveal more fundamental truths about the material in itself. A way of examining the qualities of light may then be to attempt to locate the active qualities of the material, as a means of getting at its essence. This would mean neither reducing light downwards to a list of its formal properties or an assessment of how a particular lighting state has been constructed. Neither would this entail a reduction of light upwards to its assigned functions within a production context. This way of looking at light aims to observe the actual affective properties of light within a given moment.

Using the perspective of scenography to explore issues of light in contemporary performance facilitates an understanding of light as having the potential to impact on the whole experience of performance. Not only facilitating what can be seen but

offering an invitation to see in a particular way. Examining the scenographic action of light (the extent to which it is scenographic) is less about judging the quality of the design than it is about assessing the impact of light on the *experience* of performance. Scenographic light is inherently dramaturgical, in that it is concerned with the impact of light on the structure of experience and the influence of light on the construction of the performance event. I am not arguing that all uses of light in performance are necessarily scenographic. Indeed there are many examples of practice in which the light does not express or produce meanings or affect in excess of the most basic levels of facilitation, whether through a lack of ambition, resources, or skills. However, I do argue that the material of light, as applied in performance has the potential to inscribe forms of meaning in space and time, and that such uses can have profound impact on the whole construction of performance.

Conceptual Approach

Central to this research is a phenomenological approach, an approach that, through its focus on lived experience is increasingly important in scenographic scholarship (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 166-168; McKinney, 2013; Shearing, 2014). There are productive complicities between phenomenology and performance in that both are

> modes of thinking and embodied engagement with the world that invite ambiguity instead of identification, and that locate the stakes of grasping that world in our urgent and inconclusive contact with others. Both performance and phenomenology engage with experience, perception, and with making sense as processes that are embodied, situated, and relational (Bleeker et al., 2015: 1).

Phenomenology, as such, provides quite a broad frame of analysis, and has been utilised in performance scholarship in a variety of ways: as an alternate, or partner approach to semiotic analysis (States, 1985); as a means of exploring the body in performance (Kozel, 2007); in exploring the agency of objects in performance

(McKinney, 2015b). In this thesis the phenomenological stance of the twentieth century philosopher Martin Heidegger provides a pivotal point of access into the kind of thinking used here to uncover the nature of light in performance.[10] For Heidegger, phenomenology is principally a method of enquiry, a mode of questioning (1996: 24). This questioning, he argues ought to be rooted in the lived experience of being in the world, and alert to the fact that the true nature of things is hidden from view in our normal dealings with the world. The phenomenological task, then, is to use lived experience as a site for further questioning the being of things, the being of technology, the being of humans. Heidegger's view that the essential being of things is obscured or covered in our normal dealings with them is a particularly useful stance in examining contemporary performance lighting. Much as Heidegger argues that we tend not to perceive elements in themselves but instead to subsume objects towards their use value, the ubiquity of lighting design in theatre practice, and the proliferation of recognisable tropes and conventions of light can blind the viewer from questioning the deeper role of light in performance. To bring to light itself the kinds of questioning that might uncover something of its essential being enables a deeper investigation of the nature and purpose of light in performance, and indicates ways that light can be considered a significant contributor to knowledge.

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[10] On a political level, Heidegger is a deeply divisive figure, whose relationship to National Socialism in 1930s Germany is profoundly troubling. There has been wide debate about the nature of this relationship (Sluga, 1993) with arguments as to whether it was a case of naïve complicity or a darker collusion with the ideals of the Nazi party. Following the model laid by other scholars working with Heidegger's thought, (Causey, 2006: 32) my aim here is to draw from the aspects of Heidegger's work that offer the possibility for a radical re-thinking of light in performance, while remaining conscious of the disturbing path that Heidegger's own thinking led him.

Although Heidegger left an enormous body of written work, covering a wide range of subjects and topics, there is a clear central inquiry underpinning all his work. Of this central focus he wrote that, 'to think is to confine yourself to a single thought that one day stands still like a star in the sky' (in Moran, 2000: 195). The fundamental idea in Heidegger's work is often described as the question of being; that is, while other philosophers have considered specific problems of being, Heidegger's work delves into the nature of being itself. A student of Edmund Husserl's, Heidegger went on to develop a form of phenomenology markedly different from his teacher's. Husserl's work focused on things as they appeared to consciousness, positing – in what Moran has described as the 'clarion cry of phenomenology' (2002: 9) – a focus on the things themselves as the way to understanding. In developing his former teacher's thought, Heidegger noted that things do not fully reveal themselves to consciousness, and that a majority of human interactions with the world involved not attending to the things themselves but rather 'coping' with our everyday surroundings. Using the term 'Dasein' to describe the kind of being specific to humans – literally, 'being there' – Heidegger found that, in contrast to Husserl's focus on the appearance of things in experience, the true nature of experience involved the withdrawal of things. Through this conception of the mysterious nature of things Heidegger formed his philosophical enquiries around not only the question of *being* but more specifically with what he calls the 'ontological difference', that is, the difference between the presence of something and its essence. That is, that there is more to the being of beings than is accounted for in their presences. This fundamental thought underpins his thinking on technology ('technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology' (1977, 4)); on art ('The artwork is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than what the mere thing itself is' (1978: 145)) on what it means to be alive ('the characteristics to be found in this

being are thus not objectively present "attributes" of an objectively present being which has such and such an "outward appearance," but rather possible ways for it to be' (1996: 40)) This central thought, this ontological difference, is a vital starting point for this research.

Mapping Heidegger's mode of philosophical questioning onto the study of performance light provides a position from which to ask deeper questions of light, and the nature of light as a performance material. Some of the most crucial gaps in light research are perhaps due to the tendency I have already identified to ask limiting or surface questions of light. The lingering debates I pointed to in the Introduction, as to whether light is an art or a craft (Caird, 2016), are stultifying because they fail to engage with deeper questions relating to the kind of art object that performance light might be. To begin from a Heideggerian perspective instead is to already assume that there is more happening in the shifting appearances of performance light than a surface description can capture, opening up a productive space in which to explore the role and agency of light in performance. Such a space allows for a deeper consideration of light as a constructive material, a consideration often lost in what Crisafulli identifies as the incorrect assumption that light is mere 'fancy wrapping' (2013: 18). The kind of questioning applied in this research then begins in this conceptual space, presuming that light cannot be fully understood only through its form. That its blue-ness, or its brightness, or its from-over-there-ness is the beginning and not the end of its study. For Heidegger, Dasein reflects a mode of being unique to human beings – for whom their own being is a question. My aim here is not to extend this exclusivity to light or to claim light as a kind of sentient self-questioning being, but to turn this mode of questioning on to light, thus exploring more deeply the nature of light as a material for performance. There is precedent to drawing from Heidegger in this way; the Australian artist Barbra Bolt

draws from Heidegger's exegesis of the crafting of a silver chalice the idea that the silversmith and the material are each *co-responsible* for the chalice produced. Bolt uses this frame to consider fine art practice in terms of a collaboration between the artist and her materials (2004). The conceptual frame of this study is further bolstered by Harman's more recent applications of Heidegger's thought, in developing what he terms *object orientated ontology* (2002). Harman extends Heidegger's famous consideration of equipment in *Being and Time* to posit a metaphysics of objects, in which objects sustain their own realities, not exhausted by their contact with human subjects. It is in this vein that both Heidegger and Harman provide a pivotal conceptual frame for this research. Heidegger's major departure from Husserl was the observation that most relations with objects are not, as Husserl proposed, fully conscious, but instead in the way human beings navigate through the world, objects withdraw from us or are bracketed off from other higher level processes. As Harman develops it, this withdrawal points to objects having a fundamental level of reality, meaning that objects retain aspects of their own being not fully exhausted by human contact with them. It would be equally productive to use a Heideggerian frame to address the practice of lighting for performance, to use – as Bolt does – Heidegger's thinking about gaining knowledge about entities through use of them to consider the relationship between the lighting designer and the light created for performance. However, by applying this perspective to the relationship between the light and the seer I am explicitly locating the moment of performance as a site of productive exploration, and further positioning the action of light within performance, rather than viewing this through the processes of production. This position furthers the claim for distance from the technical when considering light and identifies a primary *doing* of light as a dramaturgical act.

Combining this conceptual approach with auto-ethnographic reflections on performance I mean to explore the ontology of light as a performance material. It is worth noting a crucial distinction here between this phenomenological approach and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's embodied perception that is more commonly applied to performance. Although Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the lived body as a thing among things is illuminating when applied to the embodied experience of attending to performance, his approach still focuses on the consciousness of the perceiver, rather than the reality of the perceived. A tension in this research is that I am using first-hand experience as a means of addressing the essential reality of light, acknowledging, of course that my observations are limited to my own embodied experience. Nevertheless, rooting the work in a philosophical position that admits light as a phenomenon replete in itself enables a kind of questioning as to the specific impact of light in performance.

It is also worth noting here that I discuss, throughout, the potential of light to generate meanings in performance. In making this assertion I am not attempting to advance specific meanings that are or could be produced by light. Although phenomenology and semiology, as Bert States notes, can sometimes overlap, or borrow from each other (1985), I am not attempting to provide a decoding of light but, rather, to identify the ways in which light generates conditions in which meanings emerge. A tactic for achieving this will be to share with the reader a sense of the meanings that became apparent in my interpretations as spectator in the examples discussed. Whenever I do include this kind of interpretative commentary I do so alongside a descriptive account of the light – making clear what about the light worked to produce this meaning for me, acknowledging that for a different spectator the particular meaning might be different.

Proceeding, then, from the conceptual position indicated by both Heidegger and Harman's ontological stance, opens up a particular mode of questioning about the nature of light. In pursuit of this line of questioning, drawing on performance examples and spectator experience admits a wider range of theoretical perspectives, and I draw from aesthetic and dramaturgical discourses in examining the action of light within performance.

Towards an active aesthetics of light

Alongside the focus on the audience experience of light, this research draws on aesthetic frames to elucidate the scope of the role of light in performance. I specifically use the term 'active aesthetics' here to solidify the sense that the role of scenographic light is bound to a conceptual as well as a sensual doing. Use of the word 'active' therefore aims to configure light in terms of what it is doing, rather than merely what it looks like. Implicitly also the word 'active' links this phrase with a lineage of light research; connecting with Appia's famous term of 'active light', or Crisafulli's more recent adoption of this term in framing modes of active light (2013: 129-140). Moran, too, has used the term 'active aesthetic' to describe the working practices of contemporary lighting designers. For Moran, observing that contemporary lighting practitioners often work with a much deeper awareness of and involvement in the dramaturgical processes of constructing performance 'active aesthetic' captures a practice that is simultaneously about constructing pleasing visual images and about serving the needs of a production (2017: 10). 'Aesthetic' in this sense far exceeds the common usage of the term, or is more specific than the more generalised usage – what Gareth White refers to as the 'fuzziness' surrounding the use of the term (2015: 21). As White observes, the ambiguity with which the term 'aesthetic' is used in relation to performance risks misunderstanding in which

nuances of meaning can be lost. In lighting, this ambiguity often means an elision between aesthetic and formal properties, an amalgam that negates the depth of experience contained in an aesthetic encounter.

Taking from Heidegger the starting point that the being of an entity (in this case, light) exceeds its presence, it is useful to identify distinctions between the formal properties of light (such as colour, shape, form, angle, etc.) and the deeper ontological question of the nature of light in the context of performance. For me, this is the distinction between the formal and the aesthetic experience of light. Interestingly, Abulafia makes a similar distinction between levels of light, but he considers the aesthetic analysis of light to encompass only the formal aspects, and the 'semiotic or poetic' analysis to capture a deeper level of signification. While I follow his general direction in identifying layers of analysis in light, there are important differences in our respective terminologies around this split. In my work the aesthetic experience of light comprises affective and interpretative dimensions – what Abulafia describes as 'poetic' – simultaneously with the experience of the light as an aesthetic, created object. There remain dimensions within the aesthetic experience – between, for example sensory qualities and aesthetic qualities – but these are not as neatly segregated in my work as in Abulafia's. The distinction drawn for the purposes of this research will be that sensory qualities are those that can be received through the senses, while aesthetic properties result from some level of processing from the viewer. Colour, for instance, is a sensory quality, while an impression of 'warm' or 'cold' is an aesthetic quality. Similarly, Crowther uses the term 'phenomenological depth' to correlate ideas of the analytic aesthetic tradition and phenomenology, highlighting the ontological reciprocity of the subject and object of experience (2009: 3). Crowther's study of the *intrinsic significance* of the

image (2014: 1) is particularly useful in fleshing out the significance of light in and of itself.

Another potential misunderstanding about the aesthetic experience of performance light is that it is always necessarily concerned with beautiful conditions of light. Here again the sense of affective aesthetic provides useful orientation; aesthetic experience of light is not limited to aesthetically pleasing instances of light but denotes a kind of impactful relationship in which the light operates sensually, suggestively, or imaginatively on the seer. In the example briefly alluded to above, for instance, the fluorescent strip lighting around the stage of *Kings of War* would not be considered 'beautiful' in any recognisable or conventional way, yet provided an aesthetic dimension in the experience of the play.

Aesthetic study encompasses the philosophy of art, but is also concerned with experiential encounters with beautiful objects or occurrences, or what Crowther terms 'symbolically significant form' (Crowther, 2006; 4). Aesthetic appreciation, however, applies not just to forms of art but refers to the apprehension of the 'sensuous givenness of something' (Seel, 2005: 22). Naturally occurring phenomena can of course be understood aesthetically, but here I will explore aesthetic experience as it relates to artificially constructed light, rather than exploring general aesthetic properties of light. I aim to demonstrate that an understanding of an aesthetic appreciation of light exceeds the apprehension of beautiful form and creates a productive dialogue between the rational and sensuous (Crowther, 2006: 6). I will also demonstrate the multiple interdependent stages contained within aesthetic experience, and how the mechanics of this experience can help to ascertain the expressive role of light in performance. This exploration of light through successive aesthetic theories aims to develop a succinct account of the aesthetic affectivity of light in performance.

As I have indicated, scenographic light is an agent of *aesthetic affectivity*, capable of independently generating meaning in performance, through its presentation and organisation of space. I use the term 'aesthetic affectivity' here to indicate that light in performance is fundamentally transformative, affecting the experience of performance, and its interpretation. The affectivity of light is principally aesthetic, which is not to say that it is principally about the formal or visual characteristics of light, but that it involves the complex modes of engagement implied in the philosophical understanding of the term 'aesthetic'. Therefore it becomes necessary to go into detail about the nature of the aesthetic experience of light in live performance. For James Hamilton the aesthetic experience of theatre is grounded in the intentionality of the performer/audience relationship (2013). For Fischer-Lichte, an aesthetics of performance emerges from the transformative potential of the encounter between performers and audience (2008). Although her account is primarily concerned with human agency, rather than with scenographic elements, the principle of transformation is also key to the role of light. Multiple changes in light are an almost universal feature of contemporary works of theatre and dance, even when there are few cues the artificial manipulation of light means that there is a constant *possibility* of transformation. This possibility, and the instability that results from it, is as crucial to the aesthetic of scenographic light as are its formal properties.

An inherent difficulty in analysing the specific role of light is that, in performance, light is an element within a complex entanglement of aesthetic, perceptual, and interpretative experience. Part of the project of this research is to extract from the complex multi-modal aesthetic experience of performance a sense of what light itself is doing. The sensory and cognitive experience of performance is one in which many perceptual and interpretative processes occur simultaneously; as an audience we are

affected by numerous individual elements, and especially by the interaction between such elements.

To an extent, light provides a succinct example of the 'significant form' that Clive Bell assumes to be the defining feature of all works of art. The colour and shape of light in performance have (usually) been carefully implemented, and it is often light that directs the eye to take in other forms and their visual significance. For Bell, significant form is a defining characteristic shared by all aesthetic experiences, it is a quality whereby the shapes, lines, and colours of a given object conspire to stir the viewer's 'aesthetic emotions' (in Cahn and Meskin, 2008: 261-265). However, Bell's theory of significant form suggests a collapse of successive levels of processing in favour of an account of formal structure. This relates to the unproductive divide between the form and content of an aesthetic object or event. Within this formalist account, aspects of experience such as subject matter or content are not considered to be aesthetic concerns, as they do not relate to the phenomenal structure. However, I would argue that it is precisely the further experience of expressive or affective content that renders an experience aesthetic rather than merely sensual. Crowther elaborates on this problem as a tension between the *infra-structural* and the *super-structural* (Crowther, 2006: 18-20). The *infra-structural* qualities of an aesthetic object relate to its phenomenal structure, while *super-structural* appreciation emerges through apprehension of formal qualities. Crowther uses Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to provide an example of this, where the formal qualities of language and character development lead us to consider the aesthetic significance of Claudius' guilt in relation to Hamlet's action (ibid.: 20). Here the aesthetic experience encompasses the formal and expressive content of the work in question, in this case the text of the play. Super-structural qualities, then, are the means by which form attains

significance. Crowther's elaboration of the interplay of infra-structural and super-structural qualities help to elucidate the substance of aesthetic experience.

In pursuit of an active aesthetics with which to analyse light, then, the work of German philosopher, Martin Seel, provides particularly useful orientation. Seel's work aims to distinguish the philosophy of aesthetics as a philosophy of *appearing* rather than of appearance (2005). For him the core facet of aesthetic understanding lies in the distinction between appearing and semblance. In the terms discussed here, semblance is the apparent form, as received by the senses, while appearing refers to the dynamic play of appearances perceived in a particular mode. Thus, aesthetic objects are those that

> in their appearing stand out more or less radically from their *conceptually determinable* exterior image, sound, or feel. They are given to us in an outstandingly sensuous manner; they are grasped by us in an outstandingly sensuous way (ibid.: 22. Emphasis in original).

For Seel this 'outstandingly sensuous' appearing is not the exclusive preserve of the art object; it is the play of appearances in the moment of apprehension that marks aesthetic appearing. Thus, even banal objects can be experienced in this way – like a familiar street after a frost, for example. Further to this, Seel argues that when aesthetic perception becomes an event for the person perceiving this may be understood as aesthetic experience (2008: 99). The emphasis in Seel's work on emergence, temporality, and the event makes his concept especially relevant to an exploration of the nature of the aesthetic experience of performance. He also demonstrates that attentiveness to the presence of an aesthetic object calls attention, vividly to our own presence. That, through the aesthetic encounter we 'allow ourselves to be abducted to presence. Aesthetic intuition is a radical form of residency in the here and now' (2005: 33). Returning once more to the example of *Kings of War* this idea of radical residency in the here and now seems to capture

something of the sense of *punctum* that I described in the moment of encounter with the starkly silhouetted figure of Richard III.

If I have begun to establish that an aesthetic experience exceeds the merely sensual, to include something resonant or expressive, then there remains the question of what kind of expressive or resonant quality can be specifically produced by light in performance. Philosophers of art, such as Bell, Weitz, and Wollheim, use examples of representational art to describe the 'content' of painting. The relationship between light and depiction is less clear. Light, like space, can be thought to contain the objects in its path, but also has its own sensory qualities that could be considered content. Is 'red' the content of a coloured beam of light? Or is it the person standing in a beam of red light? In the example of light being used to recreate or suggest a sunset, this sunset could be considered the content of the light. However, even in this representational example, there are likely to be other aspects of information conveyed through the light itself, and through the pattern of its appearance. There is likely to be some metaphorical content to the light here too, whether it is real or imagined, or whether we are seeing it through the eyes of a particular character, for instance. In many contemporary performances though, this kind of representation does not occur. If the content of light were merely what appears in it, then light would generate no further expressive function. The expressive quality of scenographic light, however, does exceed this sense of light as a basic revealing. In the case of the scene from *Kings of War* discussed earlier, the actor does not appear *in* the light but *with* the light. In this, and in many other contemporary examples, the meaning expressed by light resembles Barthes' *obtuse meaning,* a type of meaning contained in an image which creates a strong emotion yet eludes definition (1977: 62). Whether or not a designer or artist's intentions are considered in relation to the final product, the fact that light in performance has been artificially produced is

integral to its influence. Light in performance is artificially generated and manipulated, and it is at least partially through this *techne[11]* of light that an audience understands its expressivity.

Philosophical discourse around aesthetics makes clear that aesthetic engagement is a multi-layered experience. Furthermore, not only is the viewer's experience complex, but the nature of the artwork, or the object of the aesthetic experience, is also manifold. There is a clear parallel here to Heidegger's philosophy in general and his view of the work of art more specifically, in which the artwork is always something beyond the mere thing itself. As Seel observes, Heidegger understands aesthetic experience as something always in conflict between meaningful and non-meaningful elements (Seel, 2005: 11). Elsewhere, Crowther notes that senses of feeling and expression are core to Heidegger's understanding of the aesthetic experience (2006: 86). Fundamentally, for Heidegger, the work of art is a kind of bringing forth, in which the essence of a subject is disclosed an a way that would not be possible outside of the aesthetic context (Crowther, 2006: 91). 'In the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be' (Heidegger, 1978: 161). Art, for Heidegger discloses truth, by bringing something forth in to a clearing, an opening in which some usually concealed essence can be revealed. This type of expression is succinctly described by Crowther when he says that, in Heidegger's account art '*achieves* truth rather than reflects it' (2006: 99).

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[11] Ideas of *techne* will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five

Chapter 2 **: Methodology**

The following account of the methodology is both a continuation of the conceptual

approach outlined in the previous chapter and an exposition of its mechanics. This

research examines the role of light in performance through analyses of multiple

examples of contemporary performance. As stated in the introduction, the core

objective of this project is to explore the ways in which light makes meaning in

performance; questioning what light does in performance, and what occurs in a

given performance because of the light. In particular, I have set out to examine the

dramaturgical impact(s) of spatial, perceptual, and temporal shifts in light, as

experienced in live performance. The explicit focus of this research aims to explore

light itself, as a dramaturgically consequential performance element. However, the

ephemeral nature of light means that it can be approached only obliquely. Other

scholars have aimed to resolve this tension by approaching ideas of light from the

perspective of, for example, the practitioners who work with it (Moran, 2017), or

through consideration of the evolving means of its technological production (Baugh,

2013; Bergman, 1977), or through semiotic analyses of the images produced by light,

(Abulafia, 2016). The approach of this present research has been to examine light

from the perspective of the spectator – specifically offering an auto-ethnographic

account of my own practice of spectatorship as a means of accessing the action of

light in performance. In so doing, this research positions the experience of attending

performance as a productive site of knowledge, and as a valuable means of exploring

the nature of light as a material of performance. This focus on phenomenological

experience as a means of assessing the dramaturgical role of scenographic light

recalls Baugh's assertion that we 'can only define scenography through a description

of what it does and how it works within broader understandings of performance'

(2013: 240). It is for this reason that examples of performance practice form such an important part of the work undertaken here; through analysing what light does in a range of instances, it becomes possible to posit the kind of impact that light can have on performance when understood as an active and vital constituent of performance.

Setting out to present a detailed understanding of the ephemeral, and shifting, nature of light is a complex task in which I have attempted to balance pragmatic concerns of how to appropriately gather information with a theoretical understanding of light as an agent of affect on the stage. To this end I have explored a number of recording and documenting techniques, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. In many respects, the research methodology here is closely imbricated with the discoveries produced. In an academic discipline as comparatively young as scenography this is, of course, to be expected. The methods employed here have been honed specifically to address the research objectives, and the precise terms of such an inquiry are sufficiently different from previous research as to demand the development of a new methodological approach. As McKinney and Iball have stated in their account of existing methodologies in the field '[r]esearch methodologies in scenography can be viewed as active responses to the issues that have been figural in its emergence' (2011: 111). Accordingly, the use of auto-ethnographic techniques employed here facilitates insight into aspects of light that have previously been underexplored in subject literature, namely the generative possibilities of scenographic light.

In this chapter I set out an account of the methodology developed throughout the course of my investigation, detailing how the conceptual framework and the research objectives have necessitated a novel methodological approach with respect to the study of light. In the introduction I indicated that there is a need for more in-depth audience perspectives in research on light, and in this chapter I will expand on the

theoretical value of such an approach. I will then go on to provide a detailed outline of my approach to the examples cited in the thesis, the rationale involved in their selection, and the conceptual framework employed.

Towards a New Methodology for Researching Light

In carrying out this research, a significant aspect of the undertaking has been to develop a methodology appropriate to the task, in devising this methodological structure I have aimed to remain alive to the ephemeral and nebulous aspects of light as a medium, while also being conscious of the importance of intellectual academic rigour. The resulting methodology, I hope, goes some way to reconciling these factors and presents a way of examining the polysemic phenomenon of light.

In approaching the central research questions I have compiled a mix of methods from other areas of performance studies, and from further afield, and adapted them for the study of light in performance. The approach has evolved concurrently with the research, and over the course of study I have modified and revised the design of the study, continually checking the methods against the research objectives.

The methodological design of the present research has, from the beginning, been concerned with the ways in which light operates in live performance. This stance, and its implicit focus on the action of light in the event of performance, immediately indicated a set of methodological principles, namely: to examine light through live performance; to focus on the audience experience; to use multiple diverse examples of practice. These principles were determined by the overall objective of the research – to examine what it is that light *does* in performance – and, in combination, they drove the approach and methodological design of the research. Therefore, I shall

discuss each of these principles in turn, before detailing the precise methods I employed and the resulting scope of the study.

Light in live performance

A focus on live performance is a fundamental principle of this research for both concrete and theoretical reasons. Rooting this study of light in examples of live, contemporary performance serves to forge a direct relationship between the findings of this research and professional practice. Drawing from, and speaking to, practice in this way is a means of articulating the role of light in performance in a way that expands and extends current thinking. Suggested in the emphasis on the live is a concern with the phenomenological dimension, and this carries with it a conceptual framework through which to explore light. Phenomenological exploration, in this research, creates a kind of access to both the work (of light) itself and to a kind of reflection about the work. States describes the phenomenological approach as providing a kind of 'stopping place, as it were, at the starting place, not of all possible meanings but of meaning and feeling as they arise in a direct encounter with the art object (2007: 27). This notion of direct encounter is especially valuable when the art object in question is live performance. More specifically, as outlined in Chapter One, selected aspects of Heidegger's work have provided a conceptual jumping off point for this examination of light in performance. The 'ontological difference' at the heart of Heidegger's philosophy – a distinction between the presence of something and its essence – suggests a mode of questioning which locates the significance of light as being within, but beyond, its form. Applying this form of questioning to light works, in part, to free consideration of light from its frequent conflation with technical modes of its production. Heidegger's famous assertion that 'the essence of technology is nothing technological' (1977: 35) is a

useful cornerstone in this thinking because of its implied focus on what technology does rather than how technology manifests. The essence of technology, for Heidegger, lies in what it does; what it reveals or brings forth. This is also Heidegger's basic point about works of art; that the essence of what a painting is emerges through its 'thingly' character but extends beyond the form of the work to the ways in which the artwork reveals ideas of truth (Heidegger and Krell, 2011: 155). Heidegger's ontology then becomes a way of opening up the experience of light for further theoretical reflection. Using Heidegger's assertion of the thingly character of the work of art (ibid.: 148) to crack the nut of the ephemeral experience of light paves the way for more thorough aesthetic and dramaturgical analysis.

The analysis of light pursued here is further indebted to the invitation of Heidegger's account of equipment as taken up in more recent scholarship, in particular the field of speculative realism. Harman, in particular has developed Heidegger's philosophy of equipment to expound a phenomenology of objects; *Object Orientated Ontology* (Harman, 2002; Harman, 2010; Harman, 2011; Harman, 2012). In Harman's reading the major insight of Heidegger's work lies in his contention that objects withdraw from consciousness (Harman, 2002: 15). From this position Harman argues that – in contrast to Edmund Husserl's focus on 'the things themselves' as they appear to consciousness (Moran, 2000: 9)- objects are never *fully* present to consciousness and, in consequence, must have an independent reality that exceeds our perceptions of them (Harman, 2002: 224). Harman's philosophical position about the essential reality of objects provides a frame for thinking about light as an independent agent within performance. An essential premise of Harman's work is that objects cannot be reduced downwards to their constituent parts, or upwards to their effects on humans without the loss of a fundamental understanding of the object *qua* object (2011: 6), oversights that he terms 'undermining' and 'overmining' respectively (ibid.:

7). Following this frame, the route to a clearer ontological understanding of scenographic light lies in exploring the material itself, as it unfolds in performance. Understood as a consequential material that cannot be reduced downwards to the technical elements of its production, (such as individual lanterns) or upwards to its intended effects, (like an artist's ambition for a particular lighting state), light may be thought of as a dramaturgically significant thing in itself.

Anchored in this phenomenological position, the analysis of performance examples further takes in perspectives from contemporary research in scenography, from wider theories of performance studies and from both analytic and continental traditions of philosophical aesthetics. The expanded and increasingly interdisciplinary field of dramaturgy casts a wide net of ways of thinking about performance. Proceeding from an understanding of dramaturgy as the 'underpinning principles of theatrical construction' (Turner, 2015: 2) provides a productive frame for examining structures of agency and affect across multiple performance disciplines. In Trencsényi and Cochrane's formulation 'new dramaturgy' is an expanded term; one which does not replace traditional, text-based dramaturgy but which integrates it into a much wider paradigm (Trencsényi and Cochrane, 2014: xii). This broader paradigm reveals the multifaceted layers of interaction between performance elements, with dramaturgy understood as 'the inner flow of a dynamic system' (ibid.: xi). Analysing the action of light in relation to, for example, these expanded understandings of dramaturgy allows this research to demonstrate the impact of light on the construction of a whole theatrical event.

A spectator's experience of light

In using an auto-ethnographic approach to analyse examples of light in performance I am directing towards light a language and a focus that is more commonly reserved

for more human aspects of performance (for example, Kelleher, 2015; Reason 2010; Ridout 2002). There is an implicit aim in this research to invite consideration of light as a significant and generative element of performance, worthy of consideration in comparable analytic terms than might be used for performance analysis more broadly. But I am also suggesting that the focus on spectatorship opens up productive modes of thinking about light. Similarly, in a recent short article about practice as research Frances Babbage has argued that the practice of attending performance can be considered a valuable research activity, recognising that 'experiential engagement produces discoveries that cannot be reached by other means' (2016: 48). Babbage argues that being an audience member produces a particular kind of knowledge of an event, in which the bodily sensations and mental impressions formed throughout a performance are meaningful in themselves, rather than only as a step to a later critical conclusion (ibid.: 49).[12]

 Using auto-ethnography in order to access the role of light in performance, I am presenting my own tacit knowledge of light as a productive tool with which to analyse and explore the impact of light on performance. Drawing analyses from my own practice of spectatorship has both advantages and disadvantages that are worth noting here. Perhaps an obvious critique that may be made about this as a method of gathering data is the subjective nature of spectatorship risks a narrow and biased view of the material. It is also true that, because I am a lighting designer with an

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[12] Her ultimate suggestion is for the consideration –under certain conditions– of spectatorship as a creative practice in itself (ibid.: 50), and while my research is more inclined towards an interpretative, rather than a creative, practice of spectatorship, her account of spectatorship as a valuable point of access is persuasive. In particular comparisons she draws between the spectator as active participant – or, 'spect-actor' (ibid) – and the reflective practitioners of practice-based research point to some of the ways in which experience of performance serves to generate knowledge about performance.

understanding of the medium and a propensity to notice even subtle changes, my perceptions may be somewhat atypical. However, that an auto-ethnographic perspective avoids the tendency identified by Helen Freshwater to treat audience responses as collective (2009: 5). In what has become an influential text in considering audiences, Freshwater argues that the 'common tendency to refer to an audience as 'it' and, by extension, to think of this 'it' as a single entity, or a collective, risks obscuring the multiple contingencies of subjective response, context, and environment which condition an individual's interpretation of a particular performance event' (ibid). Accordingly, my sensitivity to light can be considered a virtue of the research. While other audience members may not notice or recall light in the same degree of detail, I have honed professional skills in understanding light and can use this sensitivity to deliver a vivid account of light to a non-specialist audience. It is important to emphasise, however, that although I am utilising my own experience of light, and drawing on the interpretations that occurred to me in the watching of the examples discussed here, this research is not about spectatorship, but rather uses spectatorship as a means of accessing an ephemeral, sensorial phenomenon. Another potential disadvantage of this approach is that an account of any aspect of performance based on spectatorship is subject to the vagaries and fallibilities of human memory. The frailties of memory have been productively imbricated into reflections on the nature of performance elsewhere (Ridout, 2002) and Joe Kelleher's exploration of the theatre image as some part of the experience that has got 'stuck' implies that other aspects may be lost to reflection (2015: 5).

Yet, in spite of, or perhaps because of this volatility of memory, explorations of spectatorship provide valuable insights into the affective nature of performance practice, and this is a perspective that is currently underexplored in relation to light. In 2012, Deirdre Heddon, Helen Iball and Rachel Zerihan co-authored a paper,

arguing that to be an audience in participatory one to one performance is, in itself, a kind of practice, where practice-as-research becomes spectator-participation-as-research (2012: 122). This provocation has been taken up more recently in a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* on the theme of 'theatre and spectatorship' (2016: 3). The editors of the issue suggest that the expansion of spectator-participation-as-research points to a wealth of important perspectives about performance. While experiential engagement produces valuable knowledge – especially when considering that theatre is primarily made for audiences and so this perspective produces valuable insight into the reception of the work- engagement alone is not sufficient within research. This perspective is also supported in Harman's object oriented ontology, as he notes that equipment has different realities for those who encounter it (2010: 25). It is, as Melissa Trimingham argues, 'the task of the researcher to translate such knowledge, however approximately, however unsatisfactorily, into analytical language' (2002: 54-55). The task underpinning this thesis then is to present a theoretical language with which to explore light. This task aims to redress the balance in scholarship where light has received little theoretical examination.

Using multiple examples of practice

The third principle guiding the research, to use multiple diverse examples, is a further means of directing focus towards what can be experienced in light itself. There are two chief motivations for aiming to maintain a diversity of performance examples. Firstly, to account for a range of styles, thus avoiding any monolithic pronouncements about the state of lighting design practice. Secondly, and more importantly, I hope to use the breadth of the examples cited to draw out common properties of light as material that might be otherwise lost. In discussing

performance examples I often draw on very specific details of the particular conditions of light and the use of multiple examples ensures that the overall focus can remain on the nature of light, rather than on the specific ways in which I note it being used. Furthermore, the range of examples cited here represents a mixture of large and small scale work, from both established and emerging practitioners. This mix is an important principle of the research. Research about light in performance has, largely, been dominated by the work of a small number of influential practitioners and theorists. The work of Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig, Josef Svoboda, and Robert Wilson in particular seems to overshadow discussions about the potential of light in performance. Tellingly, Abulafia dubs these 'towering figures in the history of lighting design' (2016: 9) and the sheer dominance of reflections on their work binds notions of the evolution of light practice in performance to the work of particular artists, rather than to the possibilities of light itself. Part of the aim of this research is to articulate what light can do, as a material for performance and so the multiplicity and diversity of examples in this thesis is intended to move the thinking forward beyond the influence of individual practitioners.

The research inquiry of this project could, perhaps, be most simply stated as the following question: of the things that happen in a performance, which are the things that happen because of the light? It is therefore worth noting that the analytical exercise of this research is to use these diverse examples to think through questions about light and the plurality of samples affords a more sustained reading of the potential of light itself. I will return to the multiplicity of examples in the final section of this chapter, where I detail the rationale behind the selection of the examples included and the ways in which I use examples to think through complex ideas about light.

The Fieldwork Process

In practice, then, the methods of this doctoral research involve cycles of observing performance, reflecting on what I have seen, and analysing the occurrences of light in relation to the research questions outlined in the introduction. All of the examples cited are performances that I have seen within the period of study. The processes of selecting which examples to include have been largely retrospective; there are nine performance examples in this thesis and these have been chosen from a pool of more than forty performances seen in the course of the research. The examples included are demonstrative of light's generative, performative qualities as regards spatial, temporal and perceptual orchestration of performance and have been curated to address the research questions as coherently as possible. It is also the case that the evolving methodological techniques have impacted on selection; the processes of recording and reflecting on the performances have developed significantly over the course of the research, and there are some early examples of work for which the notes compiled contained insufficient detail to be useful in recurring cycles of thinking.

Auto-ethnography and thick description

To turn, briefly, to the underpinning mechanics of the project, the methods used here in gathering information about light are adapted, principally, from the social sciences; namely auto-ethnography and thick description. In qualitative research in the social sciences, auto-ethnography is embraced, both practically and politically, as a method that acknowledges and accommodates the researcher's own subjectivity (Ellis et al., 2011). As a result, auto-ethnographic approaches are open to flux and to explorations of the juncture between subject and culture (Holman Jones, 2005: 764). Auto-ethnographic perspectives have long been implicit in theatre and performance

research, in that explorations of live performance necessarily involve first person perspectives and subjective reflections. This positionality is frequently now more openly acknowledged in both analyses of performance (in, for example: McKinney, 2013) and in artistic practice as research (as in: Kozel, 2007). In my research, the auto-ethnographic perspective enables a close view of both the experience of light within the content of performance and of its affective impact on a spectator. Critically, this perspective enables me to position my subjective responses in relation to a wider theoretical frame, in order to explicate the role of light in the construction of experience.

Thick description is a widely applicable method of combining detailed description with interpretation, popularised by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz in the early nineteen-seventies. Drawing the terms 'thick description' and the contrary 'thin description' from Gilbert Ryle (1968), Geertz advocates thick description as a means of exploring structures of signification and determining social and cultural understandings (Geertz, 2000: 9). Thick description then implies a level of detail, but more importantly is description that also enfolds connections to cultural and contextual meanings. An example offered by Ryle and developed by Geertz to demonstrate the value of thick over thin description, is that of two boys each rapidly contracting an eyelid. A thin description accounts for the movements involved and so renders these gestures equivalent, while a thick description distinguishes one contraction as a twitch and the other as a wink (ibid.: 5). Thick description views the action within its context, and hence draws out social and cultural meanings embedded in the gesture. Significantly, Ryle notes that the boy who winks is not doing two things – closing his eye and then winking – but rather the gesture is the wink when performed with that intention. Interestingly, in relation to my research, Melissa Freeman has argued that thick description is a kind of aesthetic encounter,

not only encompassing context but also capturing articulations of 'how we see and understand' (2014: 827). Freeman argues that the impulse towards thick description – where 'thin' will not do – is an invitation to engage hermeneutically, to go beyond physical appearance and to analyse multiple expressions of meaning, in the context of lived experience (ibid.: 832). There are clear resonances between Freeman's stance on the hermeneutic aesthetics of thick description and the objectives of my own research to go beyond the merely formal or technical dimensions of light and towards the deeper ways in which light constructs meanings through its dynamic appearing.

Thick description is a useful principle in both the practice of gathering and recording data from live productions and also as a mode of dissemination. Throughout the later chapters of this thesis I make use of descriptive writing to offer a sense of the productions I discuss. This is a means of ensuring the observations of this thesis are clearly rooted in professional practice, and is also a means of turning attention 'to the interpretive process itself, the creative act of clarifying our understanding and recirculating that understanding back into the world' (Freeman, 2014: 829). Writing about light, about its role within an unfolding performance, and about its impact on the seer is part of the analytical process, creating space in which ideas about light can develop. Similarly McKinney and Iball identify 'scenographic writing' as a key methodology in the developing field of scenography, one that 'draws on the researcher's responses to the multiple dimensions of the event and to the constituent parts of the performance environment' (2011: 129). Like performative writing (Phelan, 1997), scenographic writing works to recall the ways in which scenographic elements of a given performance worked on the spectator, and seeks to convey, in affective, sensory, or emotive terms, the experiential force of scenographic materials.

Field notes and reflective notes

During or immediately after attending each performance I compiled a set of detailed notes in which I tried to record as accurately as possible my impressions of the light throughout, as well as trying to capture the content and themes of the performance.

As the research has evolved I have in fact added another cycle of note making as a means of thinking through the examples. It became apparent in working through some of my earlier examples that in the process of writing about the performances afterwards I would often recall details through writing that I had not fully or adequately included in the initial set of notes. In response, I began to institute additional phases of note making as part of the process, opening up increased avenues of reflexive thinking about the performance that accompany the processes of reflecting on past experiences.

Before returning to the field notes compiled on seeing a performance, I would first make further notes and rough sketches, trying to capture the experience as I then remembered it, and how I felt this had been influenced by the light. I would then be able to compare the record I had made immediately after seeing the performance with the impression that remained with me some weeks later. The second set of notes, although often less accurate than the first, perhaps provides a useful snapshot of the lingering effect of the work. The notes compiled later often lack in the vivid detail of the first, yet tend to convey more thoroughly a sense of the experience. Thus, the successive pattern of note-making invites a cycle of reflection, enabling a deeper investigation of the event while keeping note of how my impressions as an audience member change over time. While both accounts are subject to the vagaries of subjective perception and memory, the very act of compiling them creates a record of an experience. In capturing these successive degrees of responses to

performances I am compiling a kind of record, similar to what Matthew Reason

terms an 'archive of detritus' (2006: 53). Following Reason such an archive becomes

a kind of practice in its own right, which like performance is fluid. In presenting a

response to performance as a kind of record I am perpetuating the experience of

watching, rather than claiming an empirical account of what took place.

Figure 1 - Notebook sketches

Figure 1 above shows a selection of first stage notes made in response to various

performance examples. Clockwise from top left hand corner these are notes from

Ballyturk, An Inspector Calls, Conceal | Reveal, and *Political Mother.* At this stage these

notes take a variety of forms, some responses take the form of large blocks of text,

some of scrawled drawings, and some attempting to note individual changes in the

light. Figure 2, below, shows some extracts from later phases of the process. The

sketches in this stage are still very rough but generally attempt to capture a fuller

picture of how the moments represented looked, where the first level notes tend to

focus more on particular components within the stage. Some of this development is

perhaps shown in the fact that two of these notebook sketches deal with the same

stage image at different stages of reflection. In the middle of the bottom right hand

quadrant of Figure 1 I have outlined a particular moment from *Political Mother*, trying

to quickly capture a sense of what the light was doing in the action. In later

reflections I returned to this moment, and the bottom sketch from Figure 2

represents an attempt to capture more of a sense of how the moment appeared in

the action. Throughout the iterative stages of compiling these notes my reflections

are primarily handwritten. This is principally a personal preference, but it may also be

interesting to contemplate the embodied nature of handwriting as an activity as a

contrary response to the ephemeral and transient nature of light itself. An obvious

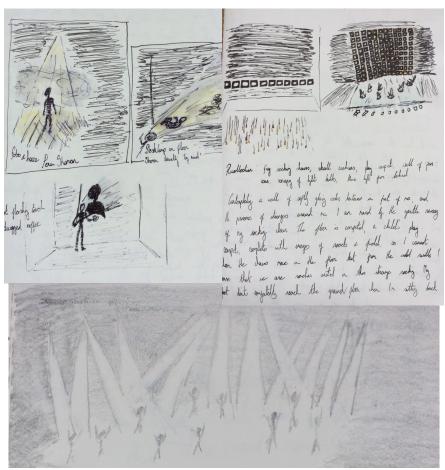shortcoming of these handwritten notes, however, is their illegibility in reproduction.

Figure 2 - Later notebook sketches

Similar methodologies of drawing have been used elsewhere as a means of capturing a full range of responses to a performed work. In Reason's project, *Watching Dance, Drawing the Experience, and Visual Knowledge,* for instance, participants (some of whom had had little exposure to the style of contemporary dance prior to this project) were asked to draw, sketch, paint, or make collages in response to the work they had seen performed. The aim of this project was to extend the range of possible feedback from audience groups, acknowledging that volunteers sometimes seem to feel unqualified to provide detailed feedback to researchers, and that there are significant gaps in the format of responses to a work. What Reason found was that the prompt to make a response to the work creatively lessened the pressure on participants to 'get it right' and many of the participants responded more obliquely than they might have otherwise. These unusual responses, Reason argues, provide opportunities for audiences to express their ineffable experiences of watching dance, expressing 'conceptual, embodied, kinaesthetic, intuitive and sensorial responses' (Reason, 2010b:22) McKinney, too, has invited participants to draw responses to her work, capturing a variety of empathetic reactions to scenographic materials through sketches (McKinney, 2005). In my own research, the position of drawing is somewhat different, but fulfils a comparable role. Unlike Reason's participants I do not feel hesitant in describing the pieces that I discuss; as a lighting designer (and perhaps also as someone who has long been a regular theatre-goer, which many of Reason's group had not) I do, generally, feel that I have the skills to identify elements correctly, or at least to describe their impact on me accurately. Nevertheless, the practice of sketching facilitates a different kind of response than is accounted for through words alone. In itself, this is useful because there is an aspect of light that is not easily paraphrased into language, multiple approaches are therefore perhaps appropriate. What many of these sketches reveal also is a clear

sense of the materiality of light in a given moment. They capture beams of light against the dark (as in the lower example in Figure 2) and denote the shapes produced through light (as in the left-hand side samples in Figure 1).

Alternative Documentation

The use of notes and sketches in this way shifts practices of recording and recalling the light away from more objective practices of documentation and towards a sense of how light operated within the context of the performance event. While it is true that different kinds of documentation are increasingly available, light – particularly light as a dramaturgical force in performance – remains somewhat resistant to processes of documentation. Reflecting Peggy Phelan's famous performance ontology (1993), light on stage is elusive; bound to the temporal construct of performance and to the modalities of its interaction with other objects. And yet, while elusive, light is not so wholly evanescent as might be thought. Indeed there have been significant counters to Phelan's idea of the disappearance of performance (Auslander, 1999; Lepecki, 2010). Similarly, I mean to show that the ephemerality of light is not absolute either. Light in performance, for all its apparent intangibility, is still ontologically present as an event. Light happens, and changes in light have real or performed consequences within the contexts of performance. Further, light can remain after the event of its passing – perhaps through a feeling of residual heat on the skin, or as spots on the retina, or as a lingering affective impression on a spectator. In diegetic terms, too, the consequence of changes in light can stretch forward and backwards in time, from the moment of change. In order to demonstrate the importance of lived experience for my research I want to briefly detail the shortcomings of three common forms of documentation; photography, video, and technical data. Reflecting the tension discussed at the opening of this

chapter, each of these means of recording light is partial and incomplete in significant ways. The notes and sketches that I employ in my thinking through the source material for this research are also partial, lacking in the objective stance of technical plans or the general legibility of production photographs. However, by presenting a different kind of partial account than available through photography, video, or technical data I hope to indicate ways of thinking about light that are not possible through other means.

A photograph, for instance, is a problematic source of information about light because the camera cannot 'see' with the same sophistication as the human eye. The variances in colour and light levels presented in performance are extremely difficult for the camera to capture, and photographs often distort colour temperatures or relative brightness. Additionally, as Palmer points out, many production photographs are taken for publicity purposes, with emphasis on close up shots of the actors' faces (2013: xv). Perhaps the most significant danger in using photography to analyse light would be the overlap between the role of light and the role of the camera itself. When we encounter a record of performance through a production photograph, the camera has captured the active properties that would, or could, have operated through light in performance. The camera lens has mediated visibility in its focus and its treatment of the image; much like lighting, the craft of photography involves manipulating what can be seen, and how it is seen through controlling light levels, colour and focus. Similarly, the photograph provides us with a selection of space, negating the spatial, architectural role light plays in performance. Finally, the camera stills the temporal flow of performance by providing an image of a static moment. A photograph offers a glimpse of a particular instant, but we cannot, through a photograph determine how – or if – light has curated attention, or how the light might differ from preceding moments in the action. As Reason emphasizes,

photography is a transformative medium; a photograph not only records a performance for posterity but also 'fundamentally transforms it into a different artefact' (2006: 113). The photograph is itself a response to performance, and while compositional choices can make a photograph distinct from an audience's view of performance, the sense of proximity in a photograph can indicate an audience's '*imagined* perspective' (ibid.: 120). In the following chapters, however, I do include photographic images of the examples that I am discussing. These photographs are included to share with the reader another avenue for visualising the performances described and not as evidence of the action of the light.

Filmed sequences can, to a degree, provide a more thorough glimpse of the active and dynamic role of light in performance. However, while a filmed sequence accords importance to the temporal dimension, and allows a viewer to understand the emergence of scenography from the interplay of multiple performance elements, this remains a selection, rather than a complete record. Naturally, all of the issues of colour balance and selection that apply in static photography are equally relevant to film. It is also the case that while the camera can capture the progression of light across time it often cannot always register the subtlety of a fade. For this reason lighting changes on film often appear to be more abrupt than they are in performance, or are accompanied by a flare where the camera adjusts to a new level of brightness. Crucially, film as a medium also removes the phenomenal and sensual dimensions of scenography.

By contrast, technical data, can provide a clear and empirical account of the light in a given production. By 'technical data' here I mean the – often extensive – procedural documents produced through the practice of lighting design, comprising lighting

plans, focus notes, cue sheets, and digital show files.[13] A lighting plan will list all of the instruments to be used, in precisely the positions they ought to be in, and will list the colour filters used. Supplementary to this, focus notes provide directions for the exact shape and form of each beam, noting where on the stage each instrument is to be pointed and how it should look. A cue sheet, or an operating script, will list all of the cues in a given show and give the points at which each one should be triggered. A digital show file will list exactly what instruments are used in each cue, at what level of intensity each instrument shines at, and will record the exact time in which each change occurs. Combining these different pieces of information, then, it is possible to reconstruct, with empirical certainty the exact progression of light in a given performance, (barring a mechanical or operator error). However, examined in isolation, a lighting state provides very little information about how the light served to construct a given moment, or about how the light interacted with the objects, bodies and spaces in its path. An identical lighting state will *appear* differently if viewed on its own or in conjunction with a moving body. This kind of technical data might be considered in Ryle's terms as *thin description,* describing, as they do the external or formal aspects of light without accounting for the context or aesthetic content.

The failings of such technical data to address of how light operates, dramaturgically, in performance points to the second methodological principle of this research; to focus on the audience experience, rather than on the production or design process. The information contained in the sets of technical data described above is resolutely

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[13] Most large scale modern lighting designs will accrue significantly more paperwork than listed here, however I am discussing some of the most prominent examples to demonstrate how these could combine to provide information about light in a performance.

in the lexicon of technical theatre. An objective of this research, in exploring light through live experience, is to disseminate the role of light beyond specialist technical knowledge and position this research about light in the dramaturgical context of performance. The work is made *for* audiences, so it is important to explore performance as experienced by audience, and, as I mentioned above, many of the texts that seek to analyse light do so from the perspective of those who make it, rather than those for whom it is made.

Note taking as method

The use of a cyclical note taking practice emerged, in many respects, from the practical concerns outlined above. However the process itself has opened up fecund avenues of thinking about light, and perhaps enables me to capture fleeting, affective gestures of light that might otherwise be difficult to record. Kozel argues that using notes in this way is a vital stage in the process of 'enacting a phenomenology', even though it is a stage rarely discussed in any great detail (2015: 54). Exploring the value of note taking practices as an interim stage between lived experience and academic writing, Kozel affirms that the act of recording thoughts and impressions through rough, unprocessed notes can 'deepen and expose the complexity and richness of the experience' (ibid.: 56). Much as Kozel describes, the initial notes that I make in response to a performance are often raw and messy, containing scribbles, loose sketches, and snatches of words and thoughts. In subsequent stages of reflecting on the performance, and in returning to and rewriting my notes it becomes possible to trace the genus of a particular insight. Part of the power of light as a material for performance lies in its ephemerality – the fact that light can seem to affect a seer in ways that transcend language. Reflecting on light through this cyclical note taking process sometimes seems to uncover elements of the experience that initially elude

description. Again, as Kozel notes, phenomenologies are not born whole but emerge through processes of feeling, thinking, doing. An unexpected discovery of this research project has been the accumulation of these notes, and how they have emerged as a kind of documentation of the performances I have explored. These notes and sketches might not necessarily form coherent documentation of each of the productions but are a kind of record of the affective experience of being a spectator attendant to the work. There is, of course, an enormous gap between the kind of available knowledge contained in these personal notes and the information recorded in technical data, but embracing the emergent, embodied process based reflections in the note taking process seems in a way a means of accessing the ephemeral and transient actions of light in performance.

These kinds of crude notes also represent a way of engaging with the ephemerality of light and deliberately position light as an element within a fleeting performance, rather than a reproducible set of technical data. Related to the ephemerality captured in these records, a final benefit to this style of documentation for the purposes of the current research is to remove the necessity of technical knowledge from the recording of light. Although I do habitually draw on my knowledge of practice when recording thoughts and impressions, a technical background is in no way necessary to compile or interpret this kind of documentation. I tend to use an understanding of the technical workings of a lighting design as a kind of personal shorthand; the ability to take note of a (probable) gel number, for instance, enables me to record very specific information quickly and efficiently in the heat of the moment. In terms of significance, however, the particular gel number, or the particular lantern used is never the important information in a set of notes. The method would be replicable by any theatre goer using their own shorthand.

It is worth acknowledging that different iterations of notes, as well as capturing the experience of watching and then reflecting on a work, sometimes contain notable inconsistencies and inaccuracies. For example, in the second phase of making notes about a production of *All That Fall* (an example I discuss in Chapter Five) I describe being in the dark much sooner, and more completely than was described in my initial notes. A consequence of this is that I describe the co-presence of the other audience members in aural terms. In this account, I note that it is principally the rustling sound of other audience members moving that tells me they are rocking at a similar time and pace. Given the available light – albeit at low levels – I must have been able to see other audience members, but I seem to have principally conceived of the experience as a solitary one. Later in my notes I recall turning around at one point, specifically to look at the reaction on other people's faces, but other than this moment my primary visual experience seems to have been of the lanterns and not of the other audience members in my eye line. Perhaps because I attended the performance on my own my experience was a more solitary one than it otherwise might have been, but my attention was drawn principally by the light and sound, and only tangentially by the other bodies in the room. The discrepancy here between what I could see and my impression of the visual experience may be accounted for by what Reason calls 'imagined perspective' (2006: 120). Reason notes that, in photographic documentation of a performance, tightly framed shots of performers often convey more of an audience's interpretation of a production, expressing something of the emotional intensity of a work, rather than a record of what was visible. In the same way, perhaps, my notebooks capture my imagined perspective of the work, rather than the exact view available to me at the time. I do not claim that the view I recorded was universal among the audience; there may well have been others who were more struck by the co-presence of other spectators and less by the

light. Rather I hope to use the auto-ethnographic account of my own practice of spectatorship to interrogate fully the action (and affective impact) of the light on the performance, as I witnessed it, and through the specificity of exploring this personal experience to arrive at a sense of how light generates the potential for meaning. Another detail from this same example, is that in describing the wall of light that dominates the space in *All That Fall,* I had noted there to be ten columns of twelve lanterns. This is also the number I recorded in the notes I made immediately after seeing the show. However, when subsequently looking at other production images online there appear to be fourteen columns of twelve lanterns each. On one level this kind of technical detail is irrelevant to the enquiry here, this research is not concerned with the execution of design or with the technical details of a given lighting plan but rather aims to capture sense of what light itself is *doing.* Yet, acknowledging the potential for this kind of inaccuracy is important in preserving the authority of the insights here. In this instance there are three potential explanations for the discrepancy of the lantern count; I miscounted at the time; I misremembered in the short gap between the performance and making my initial notes; or finally, that the artists opted for a reduced version of the rig to fit into the smaller space of the Barbican's Pit Theatre. The information as to the precise number of lanterns in the performance I witnessed would be easily acquired, the company or their production manager are very likely to have a clear record, in archived notes or in saved correspondence with the venue. However, knowing exactly how many fixtures were used in a production or in a particular scene does little to express the dramaturgical affectivity of light on performance. In fact, it is my general contention that the role of light in performance cannot be equated with individual technical components. It is not possible to say that a certain type of lamp, or a certain type of colour or angle at a particular moment will result in a given

meaning. Part of the reason for the gap in the literature on performance light is due to the previous tendency to think of light as a technical form, bound by strict conventions. Until recently the majority of books published on light in performance took the form of manuals or textbooks, explaining how to follow specific conventions. More recently research on light has begun to redress this balance, (Abulafia, 2015; Baugh, 2013; Crisafulli, 2013; Palmer; 2013) but there still remains a gap in the literature around the experience of light in performance and how this relates to the processes of meaning making that occur therein. With this in mind I openly acknowledge that there may be inaccuracies in my memory, just as there may be in the memories of other audience members. It might be argued that the methodology I have established here could be fruitfully combined with other, more intransigent, forms of documentation, such as the technical data described above. That I have opted to eschew this kind of information is both – as I have said – a question of intention, aiming to steer the conversation about light away from the technical, and a philosophical position that seeks to value tangible experience over empirical record. Rather than trace verification of what each particular component of a lighting design achieved at each moment of performance, I am attempting to provide an honest account of how the scenography worked on me, and in so doing I hope to arrive at a more broadly applicable account of the potential of light for meaning making.

The Critical Process

To this point I have introduced a number of threads relating to the analytical processes of this research; first in the conceptual approach outlined in Chapter One and then through the methodological positioning and fieldwork processes. I will now draw these threads together as I outline the analytical process of thinking

through the examples. The pieces of self-documentation gathered through the fieldwork enable an important stage in the critical analysis of each production, in respect of the conceptual framework laid out in the previous chapter. In the section outlining the project's conceptual approach in Chapter One I described using aspects of Heidegger's philosophy as a means of opening up (light) phenomena to further, theoretical scrutiny. Having now described more closely the mechanics of the process of attending and reflecting, I want to outline how that conceptual approach is brought to bear on the examples selected.

A level of critical practice is already implied in the iterative cycles of reflection, and in the reflexive stages of thinking through examples. Heidegger proves a theoretical position from which to direct the explorations into the role of light, but I have described this an *opening up* precisely because it allows space to reflect through the examples. The twin anchor points of the work itself and this opening theoretical position mean that I am free to follow where the work leads. The examples I have drawn on are, clearly, independent artworks. While a practice-led project might design work in relation to research questions I have been – for reasons already listed – exploring the research questions through examining current artistic practice, specifically the artistic practice of others. Part of the value of using existing work in this way is the wider scope of answer it offers in response to a directed question. Starting from the position of the 'something more' in Heidegger and Harman's work, I can ask, in each instance, 'what more?' 'What is happening here because of the light? What is the light doing beyond its shape and structure? Following from this line of thinking I can draw on the work of other thinkers or other theories that seem to answer. In seeking out examples of practice I look to find productions where it is clear that the light is impacting in some way on the action, although this may take many forms, and the nature of the light in each production will determine

the analytical terms applied. For clarity, it may be helpful to use an example of the process in order to demonstrate how the critical steps admit these kinds of reflections, and I will outline this by returning to *Kings of War,* which I briefly referenced in the previous chapter. I attended this production in London in April 2016, without much prior knowledge of the production, other than an interest in the company. The processes involved in recording the experience were as described in the previous section. Critically, part of the task is to follow where the production leads, to an extent, meeting the work on its own terms in order to explore the specific role of light as it occurs in that piece. Given that the theoretical aim of this project is to delve beyond the surface appearance of light to its deeper meanings and significance within performance, and that the mechanics of the approach involve a contradictory reliance on memories and recordings of the temporal appearing of light in the context of performance, the thick descriptive notes provide a concrete point of access to the remembered phenomenon. The twin efforts in these notes to pay attention to the context of encounter – as in both Heideggerian phenomenology and Geertz's recommendations for thick description – as well as to the formal details within each moment – the precise appearance of the light – help to build a fuller picture of the action of light within an evolving reflexive process of phenomenological questioning.

As I have established, then, this methodology has been developed in tandem with the terms of this research. The methodological development of this research, as such, bears some interesting similarities to the field of practice as research, in that it has been essential to *find* the methodology (as described in Nelson, 2013). This finding of the methodology, through what might be considered a practice of seeing and reflecting on work, has been as much theoretical as practical. The processes of making, reviewing, and reflecting on notes and experiences of attending to

performance, are indivisible from the conceptual approach that situates performance as a site of questioning and aims to bring the nature of light into a kind of uncoveredness. While the precise methods have emerged then relatively organically through the research, elements of this approach are evident in multiple fields across performance studies. In particular, this approach bears some similarities with some contemporary approaches to sound (Brown, 2010; Curtin and Roesner, 2015; Home-Cook). This overlap is unsurprising given the many similarities between light and sound; both are immaterial and fleeting elements that leave little trace of themselves beyond the moment of performance (as distinct from, for example, costume or set elements which retain a physical presence beyond performance). Arguably, sound might leave more of a trace than light, in that recorded music can be replayed, or moved from one space to another with relative parity. While lighting can be similarly recorded, the aesthetic interdependence of the light and what is lit mean that it is more difficult to capture a sense of the content of the light beyond the context of performance. The most acute parallel between studying light and sound in performance is that both require – or are improved by – a certain aptitude on the part of the observer. There is an amusing anecdote in Moran's interview with Olivier-Award winning lighting designer Michael Hulls (an example of whose work is discussed in Chapter Five), in which Hulls recounts an exchange with an audience member apparently baffled by a shadow effect he had used in a performance. In the show in question, Hulls had been working with projecting multiple shadows of dancers on to a screen at the back of the stage, but this particular audience member had not read the cues of the visible lanterns, or understood the genre of shadow work, and was appalled at the seeming unfairness of not allowing the dancers behind the screen to come out and take a bow. Interestingly, as Hulls recounts this story he postulates that she understood the world through engaging with entirely different

phenomena: 'I thought, "Musician. This woman inhabits a completely different universe to me." I don't understand the universe that is music, and the way that it operates, it is kind of beyond me' (in Moran, 2016: 165). What this anecdote captures quite succinctly is the entanglement of perceptual experience with the skills or predispositions of the viewer. Elements like, light, music, or sound, require a certain methodological sensitivity in order to fully articulate their power.

Performance Examples

As I have outlined, the insights in this research have been developed through observation of performance and I will draw on the experiences of attending to a selection of these examples in exploring the main themes. The majority of the cases that I draw on here feature light that is prominent in the design and in the performance. Indeed, many of the examples are drawn from the field of contemporary dance, a genre within which bold uses of light are commonplace. These kinds of dominant examples provide a means of articulating the action of light in a context in which it is extended, exaggerated and celebrated, (Aronson, 2005: 35). It is important to make clear, however, that the observations about light in these contexts are transferrable to other situations; the accentuated use of light in contemporary dance settings enables a wider view of the capabilities of light, capabilities that, I argue, are particular to light rather than particular to dance and as such are equally applicable in other forms of performance. To that end, there are also examples included here where the light is less immediately dominant, but nonetheless significant. In *Ballyturk*, discussed in Chapter Five, the lighting rarely seems to be a major player in the scene, yet its significance to the unfolding experience of watching the performance is immense. The diversity of the examples also extends to the scale; many of the works discussed here are large, mainstage

productions with very high production values and, one imagines, equally high budgets. Yet I am not arguing that light needs to operate within these kinds of conditions in order to be affective, or scenographic. Also included are examples from the opposite end of the scale, *17 Border Crossings,* discussed in Chapter Three is a much smaller show with a stripped back aesthetic, that I saw in a small bare studio during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Its inclusion here is part of the effort of maintaining focus on what light is doing in the action and it serves to demonstrate that the potential of light to act consequentially is in no way tied to the means of a production. There are natural limitations too to the process of selection and I make no claims to have a representative collection of work here. There are moments of confluence and repetition between the examples that might be seen as contradictory to the aims of diversity that I have mentioned. In particular it is notable that two of the examples I discuss share an author, Beckett. Although the productions discussed (Wilson's *Krapp's Last Tape* and Pan Pan Theatre's *All That Fall)* are dissimilar to each other it is perhaps interesting to note the long reach of Beckett's theatrical style. Three of the productions that I discuss were performed at Sadler's Wells, *Plexus, Piece No. 43,* and *Hidden.* Although *Hidden* took place underneath the stage rather than on it. *Political Mother* which I also discuss has also been performed at Sadler's Wells, although not the performance of it that I discuss in Chapter Three. Given the focus on dance and UK based practice the repeated appearance of the Sadler's Wells stage is perhaps to be expected, and in some ways it is helpful to reflect on how the same performance space can be transformed by different productions. The principal objective with the performance examples is to relate theorising about light to concrete examples of the material in action. Within this frame it is the observed traits and actions of light that forms the heart of the research, the performances are means of accessing these traits and are not the subject of the research themselves. Most of

the examples I discuss here are performances I have seen only once, and part of the objective to capture the impact of light from an audience perspective demands this limited access to the works themselves. I have deliberately not sought out any further information about the pieces from the lighting designers, although I have on occasion viewed a performance more than once or, when available referred to video footage. As an example *Ballyturk,* is a performance that I saw at the very beginning of my PhD research and, consequently, before I had fully developed my process of note taking and recording. As it happens, the production was performed again in March of 2017, albeit with a slightly different cast. Given this availability, I travelled to Dublin to see the piece again, this time ensuring that I could record the experience in the same manner as the other examples given here. In many ways this second viewing provided a helpful opportunity to revisit the material. In other respects though, this second viewing raised further questions for me about the performance, and my recollection of the previous performance. I have limited notes in response to the original version I saw so I cannot be fully sure but I had the impression that the more recent performance had additional lighting cues and a different opening sequence. Whether this is a failing of my memory, or a result of the play being performed in a different space and with a different actor giving a very different reading of a central role, is difficult to tell. What I hoped would be an exercise in confirmation has in fact raised further questions, directing me to seek out a video recording of the production I first saw to act as a kind of arbiter between my conflicting impressions. Another example to which I gave a second viewing is *17 Border Crossings* (discussed in Chapter Four), although in this instance the viewings were only a week apart and the aim of solidifying my memory with a repeated watching was mostly successful. It is interesting to observe, though, that I did mention slight differences between the two performances in my notes at the time,

mainly in the actor's delivery of text. The first time I saw it, for example, he began by suddenly launching into a Shakespearean monologue, speaking for a few lines and then breaking off to comment on the words he had just said. I remember this detail especially vividly, in part because the person that I saw the show with commented afterwards that she had disliked the moment. On the second viewing, by contrast, instead of launching into the monologue without warning the actor introduced the section by announcing that he would begin with 'a little bit of Shakespeare'. I am less certain, though, about other points of diversion between the two viewings of this performance and it may be that I am conflating aspects of both in my descriptions. This raises interesting parenthetical questions about the nature of audience research in relation to the volatility of live performance.

The process of reflecting about light in this thesis is rooted in observations made through the productions included. As such, the chapters include a considerable amount of description of each of the principal examples. These descriptive passages are designed to present a clear sense of how the performance operated, and to provide the reader with information as to how these experiences were interpreted by me. Passages of description are therefore intended to open up for the reader a clear sense of how the light operated in each performance, both in relation to the spectator experience and in relation to the wider dramaturgical structure of each performance. Related to this is the slightly uneven pattern of writing about the examples. In using examples of creative practice I have endeavoured to respond honestly to the examples as pieces of performance, and to ensure that my reflections follow where they lead rather than impose extrinsic constraints. As will become clear, some of the performance examples include thorough discussion of just a single moment, while the discussions of others are formed around a response to the whole piece. In Chapter Three, for instance, the discussion of *Institute* is centred largely

around two individual moments, while the discussion, in Chapter Four, of *Hidden* is structured as a broader response to the whole piece.

The range of scales included here is an important dimension to the selection and multiplicity of contexts, as is the inclusion of a wide range of work from different kinds of production contexts. Each of the chapters dealing with examples includes at least one example of contemporary dance, alongside an example of more text-based theatre. Although there are some examples that deviate from traditional theatrical form (Pan Pan Theatre's *All That Fall* and Lucy Carter's *Hidden*) in general the examples discussed here exploit clearly traditional theatrical forms. While I recognise that there is a lot of contemporary emphasis on immersive experiences and forms of performance beyond the theatre building I maintain that there remains much to be said about the role of light in less adventurous settings. Indeed, a great deal of recent scholarship in scenography has turned its attention to forms of performance outside the scope of the traditional theatre building (Baugh, 2013: 223-244; Carver, 2013; Filmer, 2013) and this work reflects wider industry changes, as evidenced in, for example, the name change of the Prague Quadrennial from 'The Prague Quadrennial International Exhibition of Stage Design and Theatre Architecture' to 'The Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space'. While this shift towards new forms of performance work, and the trend in scholarship that has accompanied it has been vital in progressing the understanding of scenography as a creative discipline in practice, and a crucial means of understanding performance in research, there remain a significant amount of unanswered questions about the role of light in settings *within* theatre buildings.

Chapter 3 : **Light as Mediation**

The first theoretical juncture in this exploration of what light does in performance is an attempt to explicate the complex relationship between created light and vision. Light, specifically designed and controlled for the purposes of a performance is a potent means of manipulating what may or may not be seen in any given moment and as such is an important tool in the unfolding of a performance event. The sense of what may not be seen at any given point is especially telling; demonstrating that the ability of light to negate the visible is at least as important as its capacity to direct the eye. In practice, many established conventions of light hinge on the manipulation of light and dark. For instance, in dramatic theatre, alternating light and dark enables a story to move along several narrative junctions; cinematic editing techniques are often applied to the stage through light, and audiences have learned to read these cues intuitively (Moran, 2017: 10-11). Colour too can be a powerful, though often subtle, indicator of mood on the stage, and different tones and colours can trigger physiological and emotional responses (R. H. Palmer, 1994: 100[14]). These tropes are also significant beyond dramatic theatre; the bare stages of contemporary dance are often energised by light, with shifting beams and colours of light emerging in dialogue with the movements of the dancers (Aronson, 2005: 35). Further afield, highly theatricalised lighting has become a ubiquitous feature of popular events such as music concerts, or public events of any kind – take, for example, the opening or closing ceremony of any recent Olympic Games. Amidst the spectacular light shows

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[14] I am departing from referencing convention here to include the initials of Richard H. Palmer, to avoid confusion with Scott Palmer, whose research on light I also refer to throughout.

in these events, there are judiciously used spotlights, directing the audience exactly where to look at any given moment. Common to all of these iterations of designed light is a kind of direction of vision, using light to signal the most important element or elements on the stage, or within the space. This capacity of designed light to direct the eye of the seer is among the most immediate, and most readily identifiable, attributes of performance light. The discussion in this chapter attempts to provide a more nuanced understanding of what it is that light offers to performance in this making visible of the objects in its path. Specifically, this chapter offers three examples of contemporary performances through which to examine the first research question: what is the dramaturgical effect of light's mediation of performance?

Mediation and transformation

Embedded in the framing of this question is a claim that in making visible, created light is already enacting a kind of transformation. The term 'mediation' here is used as a means of extending the debate about light's role in making performance visible. This aspect of light is perhaps more typically referred to as 'selective visibility' (McCandless, 1958; Pilbrow, 1997) however, 'selection' does not fully capture the extent of the phenomenon. Light not only determines what is and is not visible, but also establishes the degree to which something is visible, the apparent spatial relationship between an object or body and its surroundings, the apparent colour of an object or space, as well as myriad other visual details that can be manipulated by light. The technical details of these capabilities are parenthetical to the research enquiry here, but may be glossed thus: theatrical lighting is malleable to the extent that the intensity, angle, colour, and quality of light can all be tightly controlled and each of these factors impacts heavily on the resulting lit image. The intensity of light,

that is, its degree of brightness ranges from darkness, through just barely perceptible – where the seer needs to strain to view – through comfortable viewing ranges, to glaring levels of seemingly excess light, with multiple interim stages between each of these points. The angle at which light meets its subject also varies enormously in theatrical lighting. Lit from the front, figures seem to flatten, while light from above will carve out a sense of distance between a figure and the background. Light from the side will accentuate the body, and any textures present in costume and environment. The angle from which a light shines also determines the shape, direction, and size of the resulting shadow, factors that can further alter the relationship between the subject and their environment. In addition to casting shadows of objects in its path, light can also cast or accentuate shadows on its subjects. Lighting a human face from a steep angle, for example, can cast dark shadows into the eye sockets, or deepen the appearance of any wrinkles. Whereas light from below can distort the features of a face (as in the torch-lit telling of ghost stories). Shades of colour too, of which there are near infinite variations in theatrical lighting, can radically alter the appearance of an actor's face – from warm glow to sickly pallor – and can also alter the appearance of other colours. In a dark blue light, for instance, black clothes can appear red. The colours of tungsten light also shift with intensity, appearing warmer at lower intensities and colder at higher intensities. The quality of a given light in performance is also highly plastic, combining all these elements of intensity, colour and angle, and also being determined by the possible combination of individual lanterns, and the quality of light over time. A glimmer of light might seem brighter or darker depending on the light that precedes it; after a period of intense brightness, for instance, a stage might seem especially dark, while the same level of light when viewed after a period of darkness may seem rather bright. In addition, shifts in light throughout a performance function as editing

techniques, directing the attention of the seer, indicating shifts in time, or hinting at subtext. All these aspects of created and managed performance light mean that light plays a transformative role in generating the conditions of perception, best described as the mediation of visibility, rather than its provision.

Furthermore, the research question underpinning this chapter aims to reach beyond identifying this kind of transformation, and to articulate the dramaturgical impact of the phenomenon. Following definitions of dramaturgy as 'the inner flow of a dynamic system' (Trencsényi and Cochrane, 2014: xi) and the 'underpinning principles of theatrical construction' (Turner, 2015: 2) this chapter will consider how light impacts on the structure of a performance by managing and manipulating the shifting fields of the visible, the invisible, and the partially visible. As Palmer points out, in manipulating the visible light determines 'not only what is seen but also *how* we look' (2013: xiii, emphasis added). Attending to the impact of fluctuating light on how one watches a performance extends the issue beyond an apparent binary between visible and not visible and towards a consideration of the temporal and proprioceptive progression of light in performance. Light is rarely static in contemporary performance, but shifts and changes, moving from one state to another, or drawing the eye from one location to another. The role of light in performance, as such, ought not to be thought of only in terms of the conditions it creates at any one point. The transitions between states and the temporal score that light creates are also of fundamental importance to the experience of performance. Speaking about, what he describes as 'postmodern lighting' Aronson confirms this emphasis on transition, noting that '[*h*]*ow* we get from one place or moment to the next is more important than what it looks like when we are there' (2005: 35. Emphasis in original). In considering light as an agent of mediation it is important to note that this mediation is temporal as much as spatial, and proprioceptive as much

as visual. The relationship between light and vision, then, in performance is about a great deal more than what can be seen; addressing also the broader phenomenological experience of attending to a performance, in which context light may obscure as much as reveal.

Seeing and understanding

In addition to the physiological relationship between light and vision, there is also, throughout the Western philosophical tradition a metaphorical relationship between light and understanding. Hans Blumenberg charts the history of light as a metaphor for truth, arguing that changing metaphors of light underpin wider shifts in world-understanding and self-understanding (1993: 31). This link is an important point of orientation in questioning light itself for a number of reasons. Firstly, because it is important to recognise the influence of idealised light on established patterns of thinking, in order that these patterns can be adequately critiqued when applied to created light. And secondly, because this deep cultural relationship between light and understanding points to the idea of created light as a kind of philosophical practice. In this vein, common practices of theatrical lighting – such as directing the eye of the seer towards the 'most important' elements – are manifestations of this kind of thinking in practice. Accordingly, the traditionally established values of clarity in theatrical lighting are deeply tied to notions of representational seeing and to ideas of light as a means of providing understanding. A wider conception of the nature of light, and the relationship between light, vision, and understanding, reframes this kind of thinking and establishes different modes of being for created light in the context of performance. In this vein, an examination of light as a force of mediation in performance not only expands understandings of the impact of light on other elements within performance but also points to the dramaturgical rooting of light as

an active, transformative constituent of performance, with an important role in the construction and organisation of meaning in performance.

In addition to the broad philosophical connection between light and understanding, Heidegger's philosophy is particularly infused with a conception of light as a metaphor for truth. An idea that is especially prevalent in Heidegger's use of the terms of unconcealment and uncoveredness as relating to ideas of philosophical truth. Truth in Heidegger is not simply a propositional truth, not one that can be verified by factual correspondence but rather an opening up, or revealing. While *aletheia* is often translated as truth, Heidegger specifically understands it as unconcealment. This idea of unconcealment is fundamental to Heidegger's idea of the clearing, or, in German, '*Lichtung'*. The word '*Lichtung'* literally means a clearing in a forest – a lightening – and Heidegger connects this idea of open space to practices of thinking, in which one aims to encounter things *in the light* of understanding (Dreyfus, 1995: 163). There is, further, a mutual dependence between concealment and unconcealment in Heidegger's thought. As one being is unconcealed, another is concealed (Heidegger, 1978: 178), the revelation of the clearing is only ever partial. This is analogous to the shifting processes of light and dark in the theatre. Levels of light often shift and change throughout a performance; not untypically a performer may be revealed by a single beam of light while the surrounding stage is concealed in relative darkness. Equally, the aesthetic of light in many contemporary performances can be interpreted as a conflict between light and dark. Darkness, in the theatre can seem to gain a material quality (Welton, 2012: 53), meaning that performers can be covered by darkness as much as by light. Through this dialogic covering and uncovering, performance lighting in a sense makes the practices of thinking of Heidegger's *Lichtung* manifest. So, a single spotlight suddenly picking a figure out of the surrounding darkness is akin to making a cleared space of light in which to

encounter that figure. Dramaturgically, such devices are used to structure performances, to manage the audience's attention, or as Wilson puts it, to 'zoom in' on the centre of a composition (Holmberg, 1996: 125).

While this metaphorical link between light and understanding aligns with traditions of western philosophy, the concept falters when considered with close reference to experiential conditions of light. Bolt, for example, critiques Heidegger's implicit connection between light and enlightenment, arguing – in virtue of her embodied experience of sunlight in her native Australia – that Heidegger's view of light is one that has been formed by the illuminating glow of the European sun (2004: 125). For Bolt, the experience of living in the blazing light of the antipodean sun precludes absolutely the possibility of understanding (sun) light as a force of revelation. The glare of the Australian sun, for Bolt, actually conceals more than it reveals, the sunlight of her experience is one which necessitates a downward glance in order to see, raising one's eye line is to have one's vision bleached out by the sun. While Bolt's argument here is one of opposition between the revealing light of the European sun and the glaring light of the Australian sun, what in fact emerges through her discussion is the sense that different experiential configurations of light can reformulate relationships with the conceptual.

By expanding Bolt's argument beyond distinct experiences of sunlight and into a theatrical context we can begin to see that different manifestations of light require a reconfiguration of thought. Accordingly, the conception of light in the theatre demands a close re-examination of conceptual models of light. Contemporary non-mimetic theatrical light is visually and experientially as far removed from the natural light of the European sun as is the glare of Bolt's Australian sun. Therefore, scenographic light demands an interrogation in similar terms. The light of Heidegger's *Lichtung* – the clearing of understanding in which truth is uncovered, or

revealed, is firmly rooted in a conception of sunlight rather than of light as an active, or transformative agent of mediation. By contrast, light in performance is primarily an agent of mediation. The en-lightening of theatrical practice, is necessarily a kind of distortion; implying a certain light, from a certain angle, in a certain colour, making the performer appear a certain way. This cannot be conflated with truth in the way that metaphors of light can. An idea of light based on an unmediated sunlight is simply inapplicable to the artificial light of the theatre which is always a force of mediation. The transformative properties of created light mean that it is always already a constructed or artistic medium.

Mediation and dramaturgy

To cite a brief example of how aspects of light's mediation may be conceived of in terms of dramaturgy, the 2016 National Theatre production of *The Threepenny Opera* features a use of light indivisible from the production's dramaturgy. Performed on the revolving stage of the Olivier theatre, the perimeter of the stage space contains several exposed ropes and pulleys, while the centre of the space is dominated by a large structure of irregular wooden scaffolding, covered in parts with brown paper. As the action progresses, the actors burst, tear, and slice their way through the brown paper panels, exposing the space and the structure still further. Here the apparent simplicity is, of course, the result of serious technical and theatrical sophistication. When, early in the play Peachum says to Filch, one of his army of beggars, that 'people never believe their own misery, you have to fake it to make it seem real'[15] the parallel with the production's staging seems pointed. Within this

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[15] Quote as recorded in my notebook, 26th August 2016.

approach to staging, Paule Constable's lighting design seems to chime perfectly with the artifice of simplicity presented to us. There are exposed lanterns and bare light bulbs hanging, and the dominant tone of the lighting is the amber glow of tungsten filaments. In much the same way as the continually revolving stage belies its apparent simplicity, the lighting too becomes increasingly complex. Spotlights follow the actors as they sing; light closes in on certain areas of the stage, and colour invades the scenes, with increasing use of bold reds and blues throughout the performance. Palmer observes that while often thought of as a proponent of plain white lighting, Brecht also employed coloured light to emphasise certain moments in his productions (Palmer, 2013: 137). In keeping with what may be thought of as an ethos of exposure, the use of colour in Constable's design is often blunt – deliberately calling attention to the artifice by embellishing it. Yet, this sense of exposure has itself been 'faked'; only some of the lanterns used are exposed and the changes in light becomes increasingly complex as the action progresses. The apparent contradictions between artifice and exposure in the presentational style of this production of *Threepenny Opera* are actually at the heart of its dramaturgy.

In examining the ways that light mediates the presence of other performance elements, I do not mean to suggest that light is an imposition onto an otherwise independent performance. Such an implication would perpetuate the view that light is principally a facilitative element, necessarily of less dramaturgical significance than other aspects, a view that is quite contrary to my argument here. It is, however, important to stress that, as a transformative medium light can radically affect all other aspects of a performance. Additionally, addressing the professional context in which work is actually made, light is normally the last element to be completed; as lighting designer Peter Mumford describes it, 'the last creative act' of making theatre (in Moran, 2017: 49). The constraints of practice mean that in the process of making

performance, light is generally finalised after actors have rehearsed and after set and costume have been put in place. However, at the point of performance, all elements perform together. Within the synthesis of live performance part of what light is doing is managing, manipulating, and mediating the appearance of everything else, but this is not an imposition *onto* a performance but an emergent property of the whole. Light may be added to material that has already been rehearsed but it is an addition that alters the whole. Pearson and Shanks argue that performance might be considered a kind of 'stratigraphy of layers' (2001: 24), in which myriad congruent elements of performance can each be considered a discrete layer, such as music, architecture, text, or space. In this logic, light as a mediating force is not a supplement to a performance work but a layer within the cohesive whole. As in Pearson and Shanks' formulation the 'layer' of light may fluctuate in significance throughout a performance and may 'from time to time bear principal responsibility for carrying the prime narrative meaning whilst the others are turned down in the composition' (ibid.: 25). Some clarification is needed in applying the term 'layer' to light, where this kind of terminology may seem pejorative, or dismissive. The ambiguous status of light within established performance hierarchies, and the lingering spectre of the technical, might lead to a certain anxiety around any kind of term that suggests light is somehow a lesser player. This anxiety is articulated by lighting designer Michael Hulls, observing that '[p]eople have always assumed that lighting can be like a layer, applied over the finished work – that the designer can be brought in at the last moment' (in Mackrell, 2014). Hulls opposes this view, aiming to create creative exchanges between light and choreography – especially within his long standing collaboration with Russell Maliphant, some of which is discussed in Chapter Five. In likening light to a 'layer', in the Pearson and Shanks sense, I am, emphatically, not arguing that light is a kind of gloss, applied over an otherwise

complete piece of theatre, but an imbricated component, a structural layer without which the performance would be fundamentally altered. While light provides a medium in which the whole performance event is brought forth before an audience, it is also, at the same time, a material constituent of that performance, embedded in the meaning-making processes of the full experience. The mediation that happens through light is a kind of invitation to see – and feel – the stage world through a particular lens. This chapter will therefore attempt to explore the role of light in the construction and manipulation of how one sees a performance, and the possible impact of this on a work's dramaturgical construction. In seeking to address this question I will attempt to identify first the kind of mediation manifested through light in examples of contemporary performance. In so doing I contend that the mediation of light extends far beyond its ability to control what is visible, but is a product of its manipulation of the performance environment through selection, transformation and organisation of space and time.

That light can profoundly manipulate the appearance of other elements of performance is, principally, dramaturgical. This affective power of light demonstrates, quite clearly, that the performance event is constructed, and that this is an environment where appearances can be controlled. Consequently, the action of light contributes substantially to the emergence of meaning throughout a production. Furthermore, this kind of mediation, while transformative, is embedded in the moment by moment experience of attending to a performance. In discussing the phenomenology of our ability to be deceived Wrathall writes that perceptual errors – an example of which, in theatre, might be believing, because of the light, that an actor's costume is red when in fact it is brown – are still perceptions experienced by the seer (2011: 65). This genuine experience of deception, he argues, demonstrates the 'inherently meaningful structure of the perceptual world' (ibid.: 67), indicating

that in phenomenal experience one does not first perceive sensations and subsequently attach appropriate meaning but that the processes of seeing and understanding are bound up in each other. The plasticity of light in performance, of course, presents a mode of aesthetic perception that is markedly different from Wrathall's example of mistaking a shrub in the distance for a deer. Scenographic light often invites a seer to view an object in a particular, or even misleading, way. 'Tricks of the light' can be creative commodities in performance, in ways that blur the boundaries between accurate and deceptive perceptions. What is significant here about the deceptive possibilities of light is the sense of perceptual instability that light can generate through its manipulation of performance. While we see in and with light, in performance we can rarely be sure that we are able to see fully through light to the unmediated neutral appearance of a subject. The mediation of light is not, therefore, a separate meaning that is added but is embedded in the meaning experienced by the seer.

Examples in this chapter

The examples I will discuss at length in this chapter – Gecko Theatre's *Institute* (2014), Robert Wilson's production of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* (2009), and Hofesh Schechter's *Political Mother* (2010) – each represent ways in which the performance of light in a production contributes to the emergence of meaning more broadly. More specifically in relation to the objectives of this chapter, each of these examples demonstrates ways in which light affects other elements in performance, through a mediation that includes selection, transformation, and organisation of the visible in space and time. Though stylistically very different each of these examples demonstrates ways in which light enacts a specific kind of mediation, directing the audience's attention, or providing a certain commentary on the play text. The

particular extracts that I describe from Gecko's *Institute,* serve to demonstrate the multi-layered relationship between light and seeing in performance, a relationship in which there is no 'neutral'. Wilson's production of *Krapp's Last Tape* is significant as an example of a dramaturgy constructed largely through light, but is also worthy of consideration given Wilson's status as a central figure of lighting practice in contemporary theatre. The particular style imposed in this production is especially interesting because it is – as a result of the light –immediately recognisable as a Robert Wilson production. So, not only has Wilson transposed the work into his production style, he is explicitly presenting the work through the lens of his own theatrical portfolio. Both Beckett and Wilson have been significant figures in the development of contemporary lighting practice. Beckett's work for theatre, particularly his later works, famously interrogate the theatrical form. Many of Beckett's plays stipulate starkly minimal light that is wholly imbricated in the dramatic content; the single, swivelling spotlight as interrogator in *Play* (1963)*;* the pinprick of light revealing only a mouth in *Not I* (1972)*;* the narrow strip of light revealing May's feet in *Footfalls* (1975); the momentary sweep of light in *Breath* (1969). Wilson's experiments in light are arguably equally interrogative of the form but wholly different in style. The light in Wilson's work is often characterised by its dramatic formal structure, creating a performance language that alternately corresponds to, or contradicts the text (Holmberg, 1996: 127). Many of Wilson's most famous works eschew language altogether, or seem to communicate principally through space, light, and movement, as in the famous examples of *Deafman Glance* (1970)*, A Letter for Queen Victoria* (1974), and *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). The treatment of Beckett's text within Wilson's production style, then, represents, to an extent, the meeting of two canonical twentieth century dramaturgies within a single production: Beckett's sparse modernism, and Wilson's 'theatre of images'. The final

example drawn on here, *Political Mother,* demonstrates a kind of dramaturgical practice in which light is imbricated with the sensual offer of the whole. Pil Hansen notes that dance dramaturgy is a relational practice, continually shifting between multiple processes of engagement (Hansen and Callison, 2015: 24). Conceived as an element within a relational practice, light in this production attains a haptic quality, with an apparent physical presence on the stage, defining and redefining the space of the stage, and the relationships between the bodies of the dancers. Both the spatial and the interpretative instabilities evidenced in the above examples speak to the dynamic connections between seeing and seeming in performance. Light, in performance, is not simply that which allows vision to take place but, through its construction and instability is always already a form of mediation. Bleeker discusses the complexity of vision in the theatre, demonstrating that 'what seems to be just 'there to be seen' is, in fact rerouted through memory and fantasy, caught up in threads of the unconscious and entangled with the passions' (2008: 2). While Bleeker's argument does not take light explicitly into account, the examples drawn on here make it readily apparent that light adds a further layer of entanglement to the complex visuality of performance.

Double Vision – *Institute*

Gecko Theatre's production of *Institute* – with lighting design by Chris Swain and director Amit Lahav – is a piece of physical theatre combining themes of work, mental health, and care. The stage is surrounded by large filing cabinets of irregular heights, hollowing out a space that narrows towards the back. In the central space is a raised platform, smaller than the space marked out by the filing cabinets, so that there is a lower corridor all around the platform. The metal cabinets are a mixture of green, grey, and brown colours, and on each one there is a fixed oval work light. In

the pre-set the stage has been in darkness save for some sharply focused light, picking out each of the three cabinets on either side of the stage.

Flashes of warning

The opening sequence offers a clear example of the kind of mediation that can occur through light. The performance begins, from a blackout, when the light quickly fades up on the stage to reveal a man rifling through files in a drawer of one of the cabinets. The light forms a pronounced corridor around the platform, with a clearly defined strip visible surrounding the raised area, forming a kind of moat while the platform itself remains in darkness. Additional light also floods in from the sides, between the units lighting the surfaces of the filing cabinets in a warm glow. The man is muttering to himself as he rummages, as though attempting to calm himself; 'OK, Martin. Nice and slow. Take it nice and easy, OK, OK'.[16] Finding what he has been looking for he retrieves a file from the drawer, and, still speaking to himself, begins to move downstage, stopping at the corner to collect a piece of paper from another cabinet and slipping it into the folder he is holding. He then turns to cross the stage, walking along the front of the raised platform, within the corridor space created by light. When he reaches the cabinet opposite he slips the folder into a drawer high up on the cabinet. Immediately on doing so, two red orbs light up, suddenly visible high up on the cabinets, one on either side of the stage, accompanied by the sound of a sharp buzz. As these lights flash on, a searchlight swoops over the stage to light the man's face. The man, Martin, responds, speaking

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[16] Quotation may be approximate, this is the text as recorded in my notebook.

as though to the beam, nervously mumbling 'yes, OK, just that's in there'. Figure 3, below, shows a similar scene, with two actors caught in the glare of the searchlight.

At this point it is not at all clear what, exactly, is happening in the narrative however the action of the light seems notable in that the addition of the searchlight, with the glowing red orb beside it and the accompanying sound, implies that, not only do we, the audience, see Martin, but we see *that something else is seeing him too*. Martin's initial furtive rummaging and whispering to himself seems to fit in some way into a world with sudden alarms and searchlights,[17] whatever these may ultimately represent. There is a kind of double sight happening here, where we initially see Martin in the stage environment (by means of the specific corridor and side lighting), and then, additionally, see him caught by another, seemingly threatening, light, within the same space. The beam of light, within the already lit space, might be considered, in semiotic terms, a clear signifier indicating the focus of someone outside of the visible space of the stage. Yet, the beam itself is also significant beyond this reading; as a phenomenal thing, it exerts itself as a clear presence within the space. In Eugenio Barba's conception of dramaturgy as 'the work of the actions' (1985: 75), the sound of the buzzer, the flash of red and the swooping path of the searchlight are each actions in the unfolding drama. The appearance of the searchlight in an already lit space is clear evidence that the role of light here extends beyond the making visible. The light has already carved out a specific path around the space in this moment, and the further action of light heightens the growing sense of the stage space as a charged, and unstable, environment. The unnatural shapes of the light, the visible

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[17] What I am calling a searchlight here is in fact a small moving LED lantern, of which there is one on each side of the stage, adjacent to the red 'warning' lights.

practical sources amplify the sense of the light as *created* light, this is light that has been sculpted for this environment so any change within the light may be read as a consequential gesture in the unfolding action. This extract offers a clear problematizing of the idea that the primary function of light in performance is to render the stage sufficiently visible (McCandless, 1958: 18; Gillette, 1989: 4; R.H. Palmer, 1998: 4). There is significantly more at play in this sequence than visibility, a question I will return to in the following section.

Figure 3 – *Institute.*

Image source: http://geckotheatre.com/about/

Flashes of memory

The kind of double seeing from the opening sequence of *Institute* recurs in a different way in a later scene, when a different character is searching through another one of the cabinet drawers, through what appear to be his own memories. Left alone on stage, the character, Daniel, sees a small red light flicker on the outside of a filing cabinet drawer. He runs towards the drawer and pulls it open, and as he does so light spills out from the open drawer while the surrounding light gradually fades out, leaving, eventually, just the light from the drawer and the faint flow of the dock lights around the cabinets. Peering into the illuminated drawer, his fingers move as though flicking through files, with him occasionally pausing to open one file wide and watch. As he flicks past each one, we hear a sound like a carousel projector

moving to the next slide and see his face fill with light. As he 'opens' each memory, the colour of the light appears to change, and as this happens, we hear voices and sounds associated with each one. There is a party, or what sounds like a party, with a crowd of people cheering him; a snippet of a speech awarding him an architecture prize; the voice of a partner during sex; and finally, the staid tones of a senior colleague chastising him for something. He closes the drawer. As in the above case with the searchlight, the light presented here is apparently serving as a proxy for something external as well as its own presence. With the light closing in around him, the actor's face is only visible because of the coloured light flooding out of the drawer, and yet the light seems to signify more about the invisible contents of the drawer than about what it is making visible.

In both of these short scenes, the audience can see the actors in the light, but, crucially, can also see the light itself around the actors. The overlapping here of light as illumination and light as visible medium emphasises the particular ontological character of performance light as a created element. Light is the means by which it becomes possible to see performance, but in enacting this possibility, light transforms the available ways of seeing. Thus, the question of how we see performance is both political and aesthetic. And, as Dominic Johnson observes, the experience of looking at performance is 'radically contingent' and one that has been in flux along the social and technological developments across theatre history (2012: 32). While the socio-political dimensions of what the audience are invited to see are a vital form of questioning performance (as in, for instance Solga, 2015: 16-33; Aston, 1995: 41- 45), my focus here is primarily on the aesthetic dimensions of seeing performance. Given the 'fuzziness' surrounding the use of the term 'aesthetic' in theatre scholarship (White, 2015: 21), it is worth asserting here that such an aesthetic consideration is not a superficial position, but rather a consideration of aesthetic

engagement as an active bodily experience that extends beyond the merely visual. This position recognises that 'aesthetic experience can provide subjects with a type of consciousness that no other mode of experience can provide' (Seel, 2008: 98), and that, in consequence, aesthetic engagement can both encompass and constitute a form of understanding. Fischer-Lichte offers the concept of 'transformative aesthetics' (2008; 2016) to conceive of spectatorship as an activity in which the aesthetic experience of performance becomes 'an enabling factor' that allows for different and individual responses (2016: 177). Similarly, Bleeker's emphasis on the body as the 'locus of looking' insists that seeing a performance is not an isolated visual experience, but a bodily one (2008: 16). In scenography, McKinney argues for an embodied understanding of spectatorship in which 'the artwork and the materialist conditions of its production are taken to shape the act of viewing' (2018: 113). Such an embodied formulation of the scopic practices of spectators illustrates the possibility that scenographic materials may have agentic capacity in themselves, acting on the spectator in affective ways, as well as carrying social and cultural meaning (ibid.: 113-114). Accordingly, I mean to show that the ways in which light theatricalises seeing in these scenes from *Institute* demonstrates not only the complexity of seeing a performance, but also the multidimensional role that light plays in constructing such vision.

Looking with light

To explore the kinds of seeing that occur in performance means to simultaneously consider the perceptual conditions in which a performance happens, and to reflect on that peculiar theatrical alchemy whereby an audience may look at one thing and see another. In an article exploring precisely this phenomenon of the theatre, Dan Rebellato examines three theories of visual, or representational, fiction in relation to

their usefulness in the theatre (2009). He examines, in turn, the notion of 'imagined seeing' from Kendall Walton *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (1990); the idea of 'imagining that' drawn from Gregory Currie's work on visual fictions (1991; 1995); and Bernard Williams' distinction between visualising and imagining. Ultimately, Rebellato rejects each of these models, positing instead that theatrical representation, and the mode of seeing attendant to it, is metaphorical (2009: 25). While Rebellato's consideration is focused on dramatic theatre and on the relationships between the stage and fictive world implied in a dramatic text, this concept of metaphorical seeing may be productively applied more widely. The depth and flexibility of metaphor can perhaps account for some of the ways in which scenographic materials can work on their audiences. As Rebellato argues, good metaphors reward sustained attention, and are, generally equally as interesting as that which they represent (ibid.: 26). At the same time, however, Rebellato seems to dwell on this sense of dichotomy between the metaphor and the represented fiction. This may be a valuable point in considering fictive events represented by theatre but it provides a limited means of discussing the deep and affective aesthetic experience of scenographic materials like light because of its reliance on the gap between the stage material and what it represents. Yet, the idea of metaphorical seeing remains appealing, as it speaks to processes of seeing performance, in which, as Bleeker puts it, one sees always 'more and less than is there' (2008: 18). In applying this idea of metaphorical seeing to *Institute* then, I propose a modification of Rebellato's formulation, positing a specifically sensual metaphor grounded in light. In terms of aesthetic experience too, this characterisation as a sensuous experience is pivotal, Crowther writes that the ontology of art is defined by, what he terms, the 'sensuous manifold' (2006: 5). In the applied arts, Crowther argues, 'the sensuous manifold of a functional artefact becomes symbolically significant by exemplifying its particular mode of functionality'

(ibid). Appropriating this claim for performance light, provides a means of articulating the richly symbolic, or metaphoric dimensions in light's role in facilitating – and therefore mediating – vision. Sensual metaphor, or the metaphor as sensuous manifold, relishes the middle ground of experience while also recognising the materiality and importance of the object itself – in this case, light. The symbolism of the metaphor works on me, the spectator, through a lens of my personal history and subjective experience, but this only partially explains the phenomenon. As Harman's object oriented ontology demonstrates, an object cannot be reduced only to perceptions of it. Fittingly, Harman uses the example of appearing before a crowded auditorium; hundreds of spectators will each experience particular perceptions but the thing itself – be it a person, object, or, in our case, light – remains 'something real, here and now, not a tapestry of perceptions woven together from the outside' (Harman, 2011: 13).

Revisiting the light in the scenes described above in terms of sensual metaphor, provides a means of exploring the seemingly multiple status of light as, simultaneously, the means of making the stage world visible, a visible element with which the actors interact, and a kind of commentary on the emerging narrative. Here, the light seems to operate on both an immediate level – the thing that I am seeing and to which the actors are responding now, and on a more gradual level of inviting further questioning beyond the moment.

> *I find myself searching for meanings as the scenes flit between work and care, between office and care facility. Perhaps this space is somehow both the office Daniel can no longer face and the hospital in which he is recovering? But then it shifts again – Martin pulls out a drawer and with it comes a restaurant table, complete with red tablecloth and soft glowing lamp.*

This extract from my notes indicates something of the plasticity of the performance; elements like narrative, setting, and character which are important to Rebellato's

account of seeing a play are more fluid in this example. *Institute* invites multiple possible interpretations, mixing theatrical languages of theatre and dance, with major themes, like care, emerging slowly over time. Within this context, the light operates both diegetically and non-diegetically; it is an element within the world created and at the same time it seems to have an expressive function about this world. For instance, the red warning lights occupy a logical position within the scenes in which they are used. Over the course of the performance, however, the connotations of surveillance and alarm seem to elucidate the action in different ways. Is this place of care aiming to relieve the character's apparent trepidation, or the cause of it? How appropriate or how therapeutic might this care-giving be if it implies constant surveillance? As a kind of metaphor then, these warning lights invite the audience 'to see (or think about) one thing in terms of another' (Rebellato, 2009: 25). Yet, between the diegetic logic and the possible connotations, light is also an important sensual presence in itself, hence an explicitly sensual metaphor. At other times in the action, the light shifts from filling the whole space to focusing only on a small or specific area on the stage. Again, these moments seem to offer a commentary on the work, but are also affective at the level of experience. In the opening scene, for instance, as Martin walks across the stage to deposit the file, the surrounding light gradually fades with him so that when the searchlight flashes the light has already narrowed around him. This, more subtle shift registers through the senses – or at least it did in my experience of watching – creating an unsettling feeling that all is not right. The sensual, affective level of this kind of metaphorical shift in light cannot be glossed over. In the experience of watching this performance, the light seems to effect the behaviour of the characters while affecting the spectator's engagement with and interpretation of the action. In this way, the concept of sensual metaphor theatricalises the link between seeing and understanding.

Mediated vision

So, what I am describing in this example as a kind of double vision is this compounded visual and sensual experience that calls attention to the processes of watching as well as to the material being watched. In the scenes described here from *Institute* it is the light that guides this multifaceted visual experience. Naturally, there is a contingent relationship between light and vision. However, I argue that a problem with established ways of thinking about light lies in conflating light with vision entirely. Conceiving the illumination of performance light in terms of Rebellato's metaphorical seeing, inflected with Crowther's idea of the sensuous manifold, then, indicates a richness and a complexity in the relationships between created light and vision than is accounted for in subject literature. In practice, lighting designers do give serious thought to the conditions of visibility, and accordingly many of the handbooks that until recently dominated the available literature on performance light specify that the primary function of light is to provide sufficient visibility (McCandless, 1958; Bentham, 1976; Bergman, 1977; Pilbrow, 1979; Gillette, 1989; Pilbrow, 1997). The human eye perceives through light; the presence of some degree of light is a requisite condition in order for vision to take place. As Tim Ingold puts it seeing '*is* the experience of light, *what* you see is *in* the light' (2005: 101. Emphasis in original). In his work on the senses in performance Stephen Di Benedetto explores the physiological operation of sight in performance, examining the ways in which theatre makers exploit these processes to capture an audience's attention. By manipulating these physiological processes, he argues, light 'is used in the composition of a theatrical event to trigger a physiological reaction within the attendant's body' (ibid.: 35). In particular he recognises that lighting designers make implicit use of the physiological characteristics of vision to guide an audience's attention and affect the mood of a performance (2010: 37).

In practice, then, light is both a means and a material of vision in the theatre. As a medium, light enables vision, but light is also sometimes made present as a kind of object through the use of haze, shape, or colour. Or indeed through the presence of darkness, which frames an area, or a shape, of light as a discrete thing, as Welton argues darkness itself can become a medium enabling the viewer to see light (2012: 59), an idea to which I will return later in this chapter in discussion of *Political Mother,* and in Chapter Four.

In the opening scene of *Institute,* then, light is identifiable as a kind of presence as well as being the means of seeing the actor; it continues to work, simultaneously, as a medium inviting the audience to see the space and bodies in its path *in a certain way.* This invitation to see, in a certain way, is necessarily dramaturgical because it – at least partially – determines the seer's initial engagement with the work. Even if the audience are not made aware of the shifts in light, subtle emphases of selection can influence how the eye is drawn to one object over another, or changing how a body appears in relation to the space around it. Paying attention to the ways in which light mediates this performance is in some ways to assume a kind of productive negotiation between the light and everything else. In establishing light as a kind of mediation in performance I am following Matthew Causey and Herbert Blau's assertion that theatre and performance have always been virtual spaces (Causey, 2006: 55; Blau, 1982: 32). In contrast to Grotowski's famous dismissal of 'superfluous' elements in performance, Blau argues that technological components of total theatre can serve to intensify the presence of the actors. Causey takes this idea and uses it to critique and develop Auslander's famous argument on liveness in performance, demonstrating the falsity of the binary between the live and the mediated. Returning to Pearson and Shanks, this mediation is not exactly like a layer that sits in between the performance and the audience but rather is a constitutive

element that transforms both the other aspects of the work and the spectators' potential perceptions.

The mediation of the light, within the sensuous manifold of the performance of *Institute,* then, involves both a kind of multiplied seeing and a further sense of seeing the light as a kind of character. In the 'memory drawer' scene, for example, the light seems on one level to be a kind of visual index for the over spilling contents of the cabinet, and on another level to be a kind of manifestation of the recollection of those memories. Simultaneously, or perhaps even before these symbolic interpretations take hold, the light spilling from the drawer manifests as an immediate substance, its colourful glow changing the timbre of each moment within the scene. Given the established link between coloured light and emotion (R.H. Palmer, 1994: 100) this moment is likely to have operated differently on individual audience members. In my own experience of watching, I found the light closing in around the space of the drawer more emotionally affective than the changing colours on the actors' faces. In my subjective experience of this scene the surrounding darkness seemed a particularly potent metaphor for the character's isolation. The feeling of watching the darkness closing in around this point triggering in me a kind of proprioceptive sensation of claustrophobic entrapment. As Crowther observes, the sensuous manifold integrates sensuous material, symbolic content, and personal experience (2006: 6). While the personal experience that Crowther is describing here is specifically that of the artist, this tripartite composition of the sensuous manifold applies equally to the spectator who encounters the work.

Transformation and Interpretation – *Krapp's Last Tape*

Robert Wilson's production of Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* – directed, designed, and performed by Wilson – offers a bold use of light that seems to alter the

dramaturgical structure of the performance from that suggested in Beckett's original text. In the pre-set, the stage is hidden behind a flat black curtain, visible just in front of this, and away to one side, is a small bundle of papers, lit in a vaguely phosphorescent glow. When the stage is revealed there is a large black space, with high walls and small windows (perhaps a reference to Beckett's *Endgame*). Downstage centre is Krapp's table, complete with tape recorder and further shelves. As indicated in Beckett's stage directions there is a light hanging immediately above this table, fitting with Wilson's design this light is angular and chrome. On either side of this room are more tables with neat stacks of paper, with a chrome lampshade hanging over each table. The back of the stage is dominated by luminescent grid-like shelving, apparently housing Krapp's various recordings. Wilson's Krapp is a meticulous administrator.

'All this darkness around me'

James Knowlson writes that the dramaturgy of *Krapp's Last Tape* is intrinsically bound to its use of light, arguing that the incompatibility of sense and spirit at the core of the play is embodied in the frequent images of light and dark throughout the script (Knowlson, 1972: 22). A textual analysis of the play text provides much to support this view. As is typical of the author, Beckett provides explicit stage directions detailing the layout of the stage and the lighting conditions. 'Table and immediately adjacent area in strong white light. Rest of stage in darkness' (Beckett, 1990: 215). This 'zone of light' around the table is a central aspect of the stage image denoted in the text, one which Knowlson notes was present in the earliest draft of the script (Knowlson, 1972: 22). The stage directions describe Krapp's position on the stage in relation to this pool of light, sometimes walking to its edge, sometimes leaving it entirely to retrieve something from the dark recesses of the stage. The

spoken text too refers to the light: '[t]he new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness around me I feel less alone' (Beckett, 1990: 217). Stanton Garner notes that while the late plays (taken by Garner to mean 1972's *Not I* through to 1983's *What Where*) represent a thematic intermingling of light and dark, the fundamental visual motif of *Krapp's Last Tape,* first performed in 1958, is the dichotomy of light and dark (Garner, 1994: 67). Anna McMullan also reads *Krapp's Last Tape* as an early experiment in light, contrasting 'an area of light with a formless space of darkness' a theme that would be much developed in Beckett's later work (McMullan, 1993: 12).

Figure 4 – **Krapp's Last Tape.**
Image source: http://www.robertwilson.com/krapps-last-tape/

The light in Wilson's production is interesting for a number of reasons. It represents – along with the overall design of the production – a significant departure from the stage directions in the play text. The script stipulates one small table, at the front and centre of the stage, surrounded by darkness (Beckett, 1990: 215). Wilson's production includes additional tables along the sides, a formidable shelving unit upstage, and a clearly defined space with high walls and small windows. Figure 4

shows the tables, shelving, and windows, although it does not show the full detail of the stage space.

From script to stage

Wilson's departure from the stipulations of the script is significant in that it impacts on the dramaturgical and interpretational offer of the performance, and this shift in dramaturgy occurs largely through the light. In the script, Krapp is unusual among Beckett's characters in that the world he inhabits is recognisably domestic. In contrast to the purgatorial urns of *Play,* or to the inexplicably half-buried Winnie in *Happy Days,* for example*, Krapp's Last Tape* takes place in 'Krapp's den' (Beckett, 1990: 215) with recognisable trappings of a desk and cardboard boxes filled with recorded tapes. As it is written, the relative ordinariness of Krapp's den, seems to provide a sense that, outwardly at least, Krapp is a character in control of his own actions. The action of the play takes place on Krapp's birthday, as he prepares to record his annual tape of his reflections on his life. In preparing to do so he listens to previous recordings, pausing and replaying certain records over and over. The compulsion to record and to listen seems to come from Krapp himself – this is in contrast to some of Beckett's other plays in which the locus of control remains clearly outside of the characters' reach. The static light in the text also contributes to Krapp's sense of control over his actions and environments. When, in his recording, he notes the improvement of the new light it seems as though this is something he has implemented. Beyond being an aesthetic choice, – in the narrow sense – Wilson's inclusion of multiple shifts in the lighting provides a locus of control beyond Krapp's apparent actions. Watching the production I was almost constantly aware of the changing light – an awareness heightened by Wilson's phosphorescent

design and bold shifts in light – and continually questioned the relationship between these changes in light and the internal logic of the play.

 While I am certainly keen to avoid any sense of naïve intentionalism, privileging a 'correct' interpretation of the text, part of the interpretative tension I experienced in watching this performance lay in the difficulty reconciling my prior knowledge of the text with the scenographic experience of the production. The point I hope to raise with this example is not to do with the quality of Wilson's adaptation, but to observe that by changing the light, Wilson has altered the meaning of the play. This is an important claim in terms of the power of light to affect the dramaturgical construction of a piece of theatre. The light here is *scenographic* in that it inscribes in space and time the conditions in which meaning emerges. Whereas in Beckett's script the light is constant and change is produced by the actor moving *in relation* to the zone of light, Wilson's production features continual shifts in light throughout, beginning with a dramatic opening sequence, featuring a lengthy thunder storm in which rain falling is projected over the whole space of the stage. In a style typical of Wilson, when Krapp moves about the stage his face remains in light, with a small focused beam of light following his trajectory across the stage, allowing his face to be bright against the surrounding darkness. – A similar device is described by Abulafia in his analysis of Wilson's *Madama Butterfly*. – The sense, in the script, that the table represents the sole area of light is disrupted in Wilson's production where the light can move and follow Krapp throughout the stage. The following section details how I experienced this deviation in performance, and articulates the ways in which light worked on me to suggest particular new meanings.

Experiencing Wilson's *Krapp's Last Tape*

Watching the performance, the phosphorescent glow of the light, coupled with Wilson's whitened face and the smooth, white surfaces of the set provoked, in me, a sense of this space as sterile; an environment in which everything is controlled. This had a profound impact on my reading of the character of Krapp, and of his situation. In particular, I noticed throughout multiple shifts in light, as levels of light around the room would shift and change, and small pools of light would emerge to light Krapp at specific points on the stage. The heightened sense of control in Wilson's scenography amplified my awareness of each shift in light, such that I began to question the logic of the environment. In my notes, written immediately after seeing the performance, I have scrawled a series of questions about precisely this logic:

> *So many lighting cues: he's not in control. Or what are we seeing? Perhaps we're witnessing his mind? Why are the lights changing? Who is doing this?*

In the initial reflection on the piece my fixation on the question of control seems strangely literal. I find this personally surprising, both in terms of my own practice of spectatorship and my understanding of light in performance. In other performances, such as *Political Mother* which I discuss in detail below, it is the very *lack* of a recognisable, or realistic, logic that often triggers in me the most affective response to the material of light. Yet, in the case of this performance of *Krapp's Last Tape,* it seemed the continually shifting score of light was adding a layer of visual storytelling that I could not clearly decipher.

The opening moments of this production are filled with a storm; light is projected lashing rain across the space, accompanied by the extremely loud sounds of a thunder-storm. Some of the slats of angular, projected rain are visible on the

bookcase in Figure 4. The exaggerated length of this storm scene further amplifies Wilson's overtly theatricalised use of light, space, and sound, and seemed, to me, to be a provocation to the seer to recognise the complexity of the design in this staging. Underscoring the artifice still further, Wilson's own movements in this scene, jolt consciously from one gesture to the next, holding each position for an exaggerated length of time. The suddenness of the opening light and sound initially provokes a clear bodily response in me; my muscles tense, I lean forward in my seat watching intently. Yet, the extended length of this sequence[18] means that this response evolves over the course of the action, I become less aware of the bodily sensations of attending to the light and sound and more aware of the drawn-out nature of the scene. In my notes I make the, rather ungenerous, observation that '*I have time to get bored*'. The pivotal shift that I experience as a spectator in this sequence implants a sense of distance between my bodily experience of attending to the sculpted stage and my awareness of the highly constructed nature of the performance. As McKinney and Butterworth note 'Wilson's scenography brings about a sensitivity to space and shifts in space for the audience by extending or slowing down action' (2009: 76). In lieu of the 'non-rational combinations' of images that characterise some of Wilson's most famous works (ibid.: 79), however, the sequences of action and image in this production relate more concretely to the play. As a result, the heightened sensitivity to space and light occasioned by the stark, sculptural contrast between light and dark and the artificial timing of the opening scene shift my attention away from the sensations created and towards the createdness of the work.

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[18] I am unsure of the exact length but in my notes I write that it is approximately fifteen minutes.

This focus on the artifice of the performance is perhaps what causes me to question the locus of control so sharply. Amid the heightened attention to the manipulation of light it becomes impossible not to question the provenance and control of light. Within this environment of highly sculpted light and dark the points where Krapp mentions the 'new light' or the surrounding darkness (Beckett, 1990: 217) seem especially pointed. The sensitivity to light and dark that Wilson's work engenders renders shifts in light especially dominant within the visual experience. Yet, the meeting of this heightened visual experience with the themes of the play – which, as Knowlson points out resonate so strongly with ideas of light and darkness – and with the character's spoken dialogue referencing light and dark, seems to circumvent what Rebellato describes as the metaphorical experience of seeing in theatre. The strong and noticeable shifts in light – such as the appearance of small sharp boxes of light around Wilson as he stands to read from his notes – coupled with the character's acknowledgement of the conditions of light around him collapses any sense of distance between the stage and the fiction.

My understanding of Wilson's *Krapp's Last Tape* is wholly bound up in my perceptions of the production's scenography, as such my understanding of this performance is, inherently, an understanding that emerged through the use of space and light in this performance. Nevertheless, knowing the play opens up a certain gap for me in which the interventions made by light in the action become clear not only as actions *within* the performance but as actions that have been *added to* the play. Returning to Pearson and Shanks' formulation of layered performance, the light in this production is a novel layer applied to a famous play text. The disparity between the stage directions and the performed work points to some of the specific ways in which light operates as a dramaturgical force. Consequently, Wilson's use of light in this production can be understood in terms of a dramaturgical intervention to the

play. As a kind of intervention, then, or a kind of component layer within the performance, the light in this version of *Krapp's Last Tape* seems especially prominent as a kind of theatrical medium. In terms of this medium, the high contrast use of light and dark not only accentuates the presence of light but also accentuates the experience of seeing Wilson in the light. The phenomenon of seeing a performer in light is one that has, thus far, received very little attention in subject literature, which, as I have discussed, most typically focuses on the work of particular practitioners (Crisafulli, 2013; Palmer, 2015), or on the technological possibilities of making light for the stage (Bergmann, 1977; Baugh, 2013; Gröndahl, 2014). Still, the particular phenomenological experience of seeing an object, space, or body in light is worth examining in close detail because it demonstrates the complexity of the ways in which light mediates performance.

Seeing (in) light

While the phenomenon of seeing objects in light has been largely overlooked in performance studies, something like this phenomenon has been a topic of lively debate in philosophical aesthetics and the study of painting. Richard Wollheim coined the term 'seeing-in' to describe what he calls the kind of seeing appropriate to pictorial representations. This, he argues, is a twofold experience, involving a visual awareness of a surface and also an awareness of an object in that surface. It is the skill of seeing whereby one can look at a painting of, for instance, an ocean, and recognise its content at the same time as being aware of the surface of the painting. This theory isn't limited to art – it is the same experience as seeing a face in the clouds, or seeing a shape in a stain. The 'twofold' experience of painting hinges on this dual awareness of form and content and is what marks it as distinct from ordinary visual perception. In his early formulation of seeing-in (1980), Wollheim

conceived of the phenomenon as two separate experiences, one of the surface and another of the depiction. He later (1987) revised the theory as a single experience with two distinct aspects. The idea was originally presented as a retort to Ernst Gombrich's (1960) formulation of seeing pictorial representations, which holds one does not view the form and the content of a visual image simultaneously, but rather alternates between these separate visual experiences. Wollheim argues instead that rather than alternating perception between canvas and nature, the phenomenology of pictorial representations is the twofold experience of seeing the object in the medium (Wollheim, 1987: 143).

The emphasis on surface and depiction in Wollheim's theory may seem inimical to performance, which operates in the realm of the dimensional, and through the bodily co-presence of performers and spectators (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 76). However, this idea of a twofold experience begins to elaborate the richness at play in the phenomenon of objects being made visible by created light. The multidimensionality implied in this encounter offers further proof that the role of light in performance extends far beyond the provision, or even selection of visibility. There is a clear correspondence between Wollheim's twofold understanding of seeing paintings and Abulafia's two dimensions of performance light (2016: 102). For Wollheim, the dimensions of the twofold experience are the medium (such as painting or photography) and the content of that image. For Abulafia the two dimensions of light are its formal properties and its semiotic or poetic significations (2013: 102). Following Abulafia, then, it would be possible to transpose Wollheim's model immediately to performance light by considering the 'medium' to be the formal properties of light within which something can be seen, and the content to be the associations suggested by what Abulafia calls the 'light image'. I argue, however, that the phenomenon is not quite so neat. In discussing Abulafia's work I have

already critiqued this restrictive approach in terms of the wider experiential dimensions of attending to light in performance. Accordingly, the focus in this present research on the role of light within the complex, multimodal phenomenon of performance suggests some wrinkles in this 'twofold'. While Wollheim's is a purely visual theory, light in performance operates in more multiple ways. Naturally, the context of performance, too, complicates the notions of medium, surface, and depiction. There have been attempts within the field of aesthetics to revisit the dimensions of experience contained in Wollheim's twofold; Dominic Lopes writes that seeing-in admits of five different kinds, (Lopes, 2005) while Regina-Nino Kurg posits seeing-in as a threefold experience (Kurg, 2014). Rather than a strict numerical accountancy as to the divisions and dimensions of the phenomenology of seeing-in, it is the simultaneity of Wollheim's account that is significant here. Seeing something in or through performance light, then, is certainly a compound experience, extending beyond a twofold experience into an indeterminate manifold. There is, accordingly, an ontological reciprocity in performance between what is light and what is lit, recalling Crowther's theory of the fusing of the sensuous and conceptual in the experience of art, that sees him define the artwork as 'symbolically significant sensuous manifold' (1994: 7). Crucially, this leaves room for the experience of light as a dimension of the aesthetic experience, where notions of facilitative visibility would seem to subsume light wholly into the thing that it is lighting. Even work that highlights the importance of colour and texture in light (such as that of R. H. Palmer) does not go far enough in accounting for this as a dimensional, textural experience.

More recently, Michael Newall has posited a development of Wollheim's theory, arguing that seeing-in can sometimes be experienced as transparency and sometimes as imbrication. Specifically, Newall draws the concept of transparency perception

from the field of perceptual psychology, arguing that seeing-in is governed by the same laws of 'scission' as transparency perception is (Newall, 2015). He argues that some instances of seeing-in are characterised by seeing one object through another, a phenomenon in which the qualities of the surface, or medium, recede. In other instances, he claims, some of the qualities of the composite image are attributed to the medium and others to the thing depicted. Newall's extension of seeing-in is useful in examining the phenomenon of seeing performance objects in light because the dual ideas of scission and imbrication elaborate the complexity involved in light's making visible. Examples of scission, for Newall, include sepia photographs, where the characteristic colour tones are attributed to the medium, rather than to the people or objects captured in the photograph. This is analogous, I think, to instances of highly coloured light in performance when it is clear that light is filling the space with swathes of colour. However, as in a sepia photograph, this scission still does not allow a seer to fully divide the aesthetic properties presented. In viewing a sepia photograph I recognise the umber colouring to be a feature of the medium and yet, this recognition notwithstanding, the experience of viewing such an image remains closely bound to the tones in the image presented; I can simultaneously experience the colour as a filter applied to the image and encounter the image in virtue of the aesthetic experience of that colouring. On stage, washes of strong colour create a similar kind of disjuncture in which recognition of the colouration does not diminish my sensation of that colour experience. The instability that exceeds this recognition of scission leaves a kind of perceptual residue in which the colour remains at least partially indivisible from the objects it is colouring. Newall also specifically identifies instances of 'imbrication', where the textural features of the medium align with the textural features of the subject depicted, such as the technique of painting hair by utilising the texture of brushstrokes (ibid.: 46). In such cases, the textures of the

picture surface can be attributed to the depicted subject, rather than the physical picture (ibid.: 151). Applied to performance, such imbrication helps to reconcile the 'gap between stage and fiction' (Rebellato, 2009: 24), highlighting how light can be a constructive, rather than only facilitative layer. This also suggests another level of light's mediation of performance, that of an intermediary, negotiating between the fictional stage world and the audience's understanding. The line between seeing a character in a coloured beam of light and seeing the *effect* of the colour on the actor's face is necessarily blurred. Without further reference it is not always possible to fully see through the effect of a colour, it may be clear to an audience that a figure is illuminated in an unnatural hue without being clear as to what the figure might otherwise look like. This understanding of light as a kind of layer, or transformative medium, again complicates the relationship between light and vision and renders the link between seeing and understanding both an interpretational and phenomenological question. In this case the negotiation between constructed light and dramaturgical interpretation suggests a dynamic relationship between seeing through light and seeing the stage in light.

Light as dramaturgy

Wilson's production of *Krapp's Last Tape,* then, shows that light can alter the sense of a play and it is worth expanding on how this is the case. In outlining the relationship between the light in this production and the dramaturgy of the performance I have already begun to posit an answer to the research question but it is worth laying this out more specifically. In expanding on this example in greater detail I will first demonstrate how the light does mediate this performance, and then question the dramaturgical impact of such mediation.

The previous example demonstrated the complexity of the relationship between light and vision in performance, showing that light not only facilitates vision but engenders specific modes of seeing through its transformative actions. This production of *Krapp's Last Tape* also features a sculpted use of light that can be understood as transformative in terms of both the quality of the light and its progression through time. Accepting, of course, the difficulty in attempting to trace from what light may have transformed the stage, I am taking 'transformative' here in terms of the constructed nature of the light and attempting to think through the dramaturgical consequences of such provision. Visually, the style of the light here creates the impression of a monochrome stage world. All traces of natural colour have been eliminated – apart from Krapp's clownish red socks. Wilson's white painted face and hands seem to carry an unnatural glow in this light, as though he has become part of the phosphorescent shelves surrounding him. This visual tone seems to suggest both the style of silent movies and an unsettling futuristic site. Temporally, the light around the space shifts extensively – notably in the opening scene where tiny shafts of light seem to lash the stage to the soundtrack of a heavy thunderstorm, but also more subtly throughout. While the light may shift around Krapp, the figure himself remains consistently in light; wherever he moves about the stage he is followed by a beam of light focused to his face. The light following the actor is, on the one hand, a design trope recognisable from other examples of Wilson's work, as well as from traditions of European opera. This is a use of light that enables Wilson to preserve a sense of general darkness around Krapp without having the static pool of light stipulated in the text. Beyond the precedence or significance of this move in Wilson's work, this roving light also offers fecund possibilities for thinking through the nature of the light presented in this performance. In the case of my own, subjective, experience of this production this

use of light seemed to suggest that this Krapp was perhaps being held hostage, or at any rate, subject to some degree of external control, lending a very different kind of poignancy to the play.

In introducing this example I pointed to the light moving with Krapp as one of the most conspicuous deviances from the script in this production. As distinct from the stipulations of Beckett's text which indicate that Krapp moves in and out of a single, static pool of light. It is worth returning to this observance in more detail as a means of contemplating the dramaturgical impact of the light in this production.

Considering the theatrical gesture of light following the face of a character as a kind of 'action' (Barba, 1985) within the drama suggests questions about the nature of the fictive environment, and about the implied control (in every sense) present in such an environment. Comparably, dance scholar Nigel Stewart proposes the term 'dance photology' to describe a mode of analysing dance that pays attention to the interplay of movement and light, positing that such a view can demonstrate ways in which dance produces philosophical knowledge (2016: 51). He suggests that the partial, flickering, and changing glimpses of light in performance offer a paradigm shift away from Kantian notions of idealised vision and representation exemplified in 'colonial landscape painting' or the 'naturalistic drama of the proscenium arch theatre' (ibid.: 52). While Stewart draws from an example of contemporary dance[19] to elucidate his model, the thinking is equally applicable to other theatrical contexts, in spite of his protestations against the proscenium arch. In Stewart's essay examining the interplay of movement and light offers another track through the performance, and facilitates deeper analysis than would be possible in describing the choreography alone. So, in

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[19] Stewart's example is *Afterlight* (2010) by the Russell Maliphant Company. A different example of the same company's work will be discussed here in Chapter Five.

Stewart's rendering, while attention to the body in motion seems to suggest interiority – 'the body getting a grip of itself' (ibid.: 57) – analysis of the relationship between the turning body and the shifting light reveals a 'body in *ek-stasis,* tracing the elemental qualities of an anonymous other that always recedes beyond reach' (ibid). In Stewart's reading the light comes to form a kind of definite, external, consequential presence, but also a kind of internal splitting of the consciousness represented through the body. Dance, of course, provides a more abstract canvas for this kind of thinking but it is nevertheless helpful to extend Stewart's 'dance photology' into a kind of 'performance photology'. In the case of Wilson's production of *Krapp's Last Tape,* the interplay of the central performance with light and space yields more answers than analysis of Wilson's performance alone. Against this interplay, the references to the original script with which I began serve as a kind of control, highlighting the impact of light that is experienced as markedly different.

Unstable Light – *Political Mother*

While *Krapp's Last Tape* provides an example of performance dramaturgy that can be understood against an extant play text, and *Institute* includes some clear narrative framing, the idea of mediation that I am presenting is much more widely applicable. Thus, Hofesh Schecter's *Political Mother* is included here to elaborate on the role of light in constructing dramaturgical experience more broadly. *Political Mother* is a piece of dance theatre, blending contemporary dance, live music, and a continually shifting score of light. The specific performance I am discussing here is of a revival dubbed 'The Choreographer's Cut' performed in October 2015, although I had previously seen a version in 2010. This is one of a number of dance performances that I discuss throughout this thesis, and I do so in recognition that in dance lighting designers are often afforded greater artistic freedom than in dramatic theatre; both Aronson and

Moran observe that modern dance lighting inspires the development of performance lighting practices more generally (Aronson, 2005: 35; Moran, 2017: 131). And Moran notes that lighting designers for dance 'believe light is more free to be the thing itself on the dance stage than elsewhere' (2017: 27). In consequence, dance performances in the UK often feature bold uses of light that make plain its experience-making potential. *Political Mother* is a pertinent example of this as its action unfolds largely through the light. The space is darkened to the point that the edges of the stage become impossible to discern; there is a large tiered structure upstage housing the musicians who play live throughout, but the structure itself is never seen. When musicians do appear they seem to emerge out of the darkness, as though floating above the stage. In addition to the engineered darkness, the space is also filled with a thick cloud of haze, lending body to the beams of light that come and go.

Figure 5 – *Political Mother.*

Image source: http://www.hofesh.co.uk/productions/archive/political-mother-the-choreographers-cut/#myCarousel

Light motif

Throughout *Political Mother* there is a recurring visual theme of circles of light; soft edged circles are visible on the floor when dancers appear in various pools of light, and much of the choreography involves dancers turning in circles, or moving in collective circles. The appearance of these circles is perhaps another case of a manifold seeing-in that relates to Wollheim's concept of the twofold; seeing the circle in the light, seeing the dancers in the circle. The repeated gesture of the circle that is present throughout the performance seems to reach its ultimate fulfilment with the appearance of a clearly defined sharp circular track of light. The following extract from my notes emphasises my affective response to this motif.

> *The motif of the circle returns several times. Individuals and groups run in circles, or turn in close circuits on the stage. Later light forms the sharp track of a circle – a path around which the dancers chase, bodies heavy, arms flung upwards. The luminous circle cuts sharply against the darkness – the haze picking out the individual beams of the seven lanterns making it – so that the structure seems to extend upwards into the air. I found this segment (which recurs later) very moving. The overtones of militarism and nationalistic fervour the piece seems to evoke suggest a futility in the gesture. They are, literally, running in circles, urgently pursuing a path with no end. The route they are being shown leads nowhere but they follow with urgency. Then the light shifts around them and the circle dissolves.*

The appearance and disappearance of the circle points to the transience and ephemerality of scenographic light, but also to its consequential impact on performance. The appearing of the circle in the moment just described, also prescribes a space and a route for the dancers. In navigating this moment as a spectator, the subjective interpretation that I reached is rooted in the confluence of light, action, and sound. While another spectator may have reached a different interpretation, the point here is rather that the light itself prompted this kind of

association. The appearance of the light, and its provision of a track for the dancers, against the surrounding darkness, made the associations I reached possible. While I am not suggesting mine as a definitive interpretation of this moment, it is clear that it was the appearance of the light in this moment that produced the conditions in which those meanings became possible.

Revealing and concealing

The darkened stage of this performance elicits a continual tussle between light and dark as the light reveals some select area of the stage and then returns the space to darkness, before selecting another area. This theme is most evident with the wall of musicians. At the back of the stage there is a darkened platform, on which there are rows and rows of musicians; military drummers; a string quartet; a full rock band. The musicians are behind a gauze, rendering them invisible in the expanse of black space until light picks them out. Often, they will play in the dark, or continue to play after the light around them has faded.

For example, from the darkness of the beginning – a darkness that seems especially intense because it follows bright lights shining directly towards the audience in the pre-set – a row of musicians appear out of the darkness. They appear to be floating high above the stage, with just enough light around each one to light up their faces, hands, and the warm wood of their string instruments. Light does not appreciably spill around behind or below them, so I cannot yet see how they are positioned at such a height. (Although, from previous knowledge of the show I am aware of the structure that hosts all of the musicians at the back of the stage.) Above these musicians, projected in light, the words 'Political Mother' appear. Then the whole stage fades to black and we see nothing, although the music continues. Then, higher than the row of musicians previously seen there appears a rock band, of drums and

guitarists. Now the strings emerge from the darkness again, followed by another row of drummers beneath them. These lower drummers all wear military jackets; presumably full uniforms but their legs are immersed in darkness. These drummers each play a small snare drum with thin wooden sticks, and the light that reveals them catches just their upper bodies, their caps (casting shadows across their faces), the shiny metal buttons of their uniforms catching the light and the surface of their drums. Now, onstage, beneath these musicians a dancer appears, in a costume reminiscent of a samurai warrior, as he slowly moves in a soft amber light all but the top drummers fade to darkness. And then all the stage is dark again, while the drums play on. For a moment the strings reappear and then recede again into darkness. Then, downstage a strong light from above fades up, revealing two dancers, arms outstretched. They hold this supplicant position for what seems like a long time as the light around them builds in intensity and then their arms burst into life, propelling them around the soft circle made by the light above. They begin to run around the small space produced by this light, tracing its soft circular outline as they move. As this happens, light slowly picks out the string playing musicians above the dancers. On the stage, the movements of the dancers propels them upstage, out of the light and into the darkness. After some moments they return into the pool of light as if it has been waiting for them, and then, assuming the stance they began with, the whole stage plunges into darkness once again.

The repeated gesture of light and dark in this sequence encapsulates many foundational aspects of scenographic light. In plunging us into darkness we experience what Garner calls the 'perceptual unmooring' of darkness in performance (1994: 41). Garner is specifically speaking about the initial shift to darkness when the house lights fade out, but the phenomenon remains as potent when employed in repeated sequences as is the case here. The sensual experience of *Political Mother* plays

continually on the mutability of the stage image. That the music continues irrespective of the light would seem to grant an especial sense of weight to the moments in which the musicians are revealed by light. The dramaturgical content of this performance is generated not solely through the dancers' bodies but through the interrelationships between the body, space, light, and dark. In consequence we experience a kind of dialogic apprehension of the stage, in which the part is emphasised over the whole. The environment which holds the bodies of the dancers, and the shapes of the musicians is not directly shown to the audience but partially revealed. Alice Rayner describes this drama of partial revelation as fundamental to the phenomenon of theatre.

> If the pleasure of revelation belongs to the opening of a theatre curtain behind which are only more appearances (a chronic unveiling or unconcealing), then the technologies of light complicate such revelation in their capacity to create the dark. In other words, just as vital as its ability to create appearances is theatre's ability to make things disappear, to make an audience lose sight of things, and to incorporate blanks in visibility (2006: 157).

Rayner's use of the terms 'unveiling' and 'unconcealing' here has clear resonances with the Heideggerian notions of revealing discussed earlier in this chapter. And, indeed, Rayner draws from Heidegger in considering 'unconcealedness' as a particular kind of perception in which the familiar is made to seem 'strange and new or impossible' (ibid.: xix). In *Political Mother* it is the control imposed , the unnatural, repeated, rhythm of the descent into dark punctuated by an appearance of light, that forms the dramaturgical material. The vignettes seem to invite the audience to weave together multiple different moments and sensations, and the shifting light seems to reinvent the performance environment with every scene, making the stage appear different or unfamiliar at each turn. Thus, the story of light in this performance is also the story of darkness. The experiential, dramaturgical content of *Political Mother* resides, at least partially, in the sense of encounter; the way in which dance works on

its audience in an embodied, experiential way not easily paraphrased into language. By opening and closing the environment around alternately the musicians and the dancers, the light here generates the terms of the encounter. The musicians continue to play but only through the light do they become fully, manifestly, present before the audience. Light, in this example, operates analogously to Vessela Warner's description of dance dramaturgy; here it is the light that 'orchestrates a limitless production of meaning, paradoxically devising-while-determining the synergy of radically heterogeneous stage signs' (2016: 352).

Appearing (out of the dark)

The rhythm of repetition here emphasises not only the form of the stage image but also the context in which this moment occurs. The aesthetic experience is fundamentally a temporal one. This whole sequence provides a succinct model for Seel's theory of aesthetic perception. For Seel, aesthetic perception is characterised by an attentiveness to the process of appearing. Unlike general sensual perception – apprehending anything through the senses- aesthetic perception implies a 'specific polarity' of the senses (2005: 24). An aesthetic encounter is thus an encounter that heightens a certain kind of sensual attentiveness, through the process of its appearing. This model is a useful theoretical touchstone in considering scenographic light. In performance light becomes expressive through its form, however it ought not to be thought of as a solely – or even primarily – visual form. Crisafulli notes that such an assumption is a common and damaging misconception in the theatre (2013: 189) where the role of light is perhaps best explained as an assembly of relationships (ibid.: 199). Seel's theory of aesthetic perception then, opens up a productive space between form and encounter. For Seel, aesthetic experience is not particular to an object, or certain class of objects, but to the process of its appearing;

an object can elicit an aesthetic response through the *play of its appearances* (ibid.: 37). In these terms, an encounter with another's body is not truly aesthetic unless the play of appearances makes it so. Following Seel, the aesthetic encounter is marked as such through its sensual context. In managing these pockets of visibility light not only controls access to sensual experience but is an active constituent of that experience. The active, shifting play of appearances in this sequence makes apparent that the aesthetic experience is not what is seen but how it is experienced. The dramaturgical offer here is a contiguous perceptual game of appearing out of darkness. With this continued revealing and concealing, light is controlling the availability of the bodies on stage both in space and in time. The light is not directly revealing to the audience the musicians who happen to be playing at any given time, but is selecting on a more seemingly arbitrary basis, picking out the visual presence of the sonic score that we are already hearing.

Embodied responses to light

As a piece of dance theatre *Political Mother* presents a resolute focus on the body, and seems to further invite an especially bodily engagement from its audience. The music is so loud that it seems to reverberate palpably, so that I don't so much hear it as feel it. The frequent plunges into darkness have me straining to see so that I jolt when light does appear. My notes capture a sense of the bodily response I experienced:

> *It feels like there is tremendous weight to everything I am watching. Thick haze fills the air – making clear the sharp lines of light, while simultaneously lending a murky quality to the air. The sound washes over me; loud, percussive, and full of bass. The kind of music I feel as much as hear. The dancers movements seem earthy – they keep their knees bent as though there a heaviness rooting them to the ground.*

These notes hint at – without fully articulating – a proprioceptive response to the light. My felt experience of watching this performance was decidedly more muscular

than visual; I could feel myself leaning forward at points when the light receded, and sudden appearances of blazing light had me lurch in my seat. I recall my stomach muscles tightening and relaxing in a kind of kinaesthetic response to the light and music. The emphasis that is recorded here is on weight and substance, while watching I had this haptic sense that the light was not only tangible but substantial. The context of the work as a piece of dance and its emphasis on the bodies of its performers invites a bodily response from the audience, and the medium of dance itself serves to produce a heightened awareness of the physical; it is a form in which – as Heidi Gilpin reminds us – the physicality of the body becomes a performance text (1997: 84). However, in *Political Mother,* perhaps more acutely than many contemporary dance pieces, the dramaturgical emphasis seems to be on the embeddedness of these bodies in the space that seems to open and close around them at will. A spatial negotiation that is produced entirely through light.

Returning to the research question then, this example offers a kind of mediation that renders the dramaturgical encounter in vivid bodily terms. André Lepecki argues that in dance, 'dramaturgy derives from accepting how all elements (personal, corporeal, objectal, textual, atmospheric) may already be creating events' (2015: 58). By 'creating events' here Lepecki is referring to the capacity of all performance elements to act. In *Political Mother* the light might be said to act through its bodily insistence of presence, revelation, and concealing. Such an operation demonstrates convincingly that stage lighting exceeds R. H. Palmer's position that the practice of stage lighting might well be called 'stage seeing' since it is the lighting designer who controls what the audience sees (1994: 62). While it is my hope that the discussion in this chapter has already done much to enrich the apparent simplicity of such statements, it is worth revisiting what 'stage seeing' might mean in the light of contemporary scenographic research that conceives of the facility to direct the gaze in agential

terms, in which the scenographer becomes 'shower, doer, and agent operating within a broad social context' (Irwin, 2017: 111). Irwin's argument here is that the expansion of scenographic thinking has developed exponentially from conventional views of design as illustrative to an understanding of scenography as 'part of a complex network of creative actions' (ibid). Such development, she argues, reveals ways in which scenography can both show and do things in the world, highlighting the wider social and personal responsibilities of the scenographer in this expanded understanding of scenographic agency. In this vein, *Political Mother* demonstrates that the ability to manage where, and how, and when there is light is a powerful element in the construction of performance. Moreover, it is important to observe that this management of perception is not only a question of selection but of transformation, and that this transformation manifests as a palpable affectivity. The highly controlled lighting environment of *Political Mother* provides a rich example of the ways in which light generates perceptual conditions, through managing – and indeed, manipulating – the distribution, shape, colour, texture, angle, intensity and focus of light within a constructed performance. The multiplicity of ways that light constructs the conditions in which we see also point to a profound perceptual *instability* generated through light. This instability relates, in part, to the mutability of light, its status as a created thing means that it can be continually manipulated and changed. Beyond this mutability, and extending from it, the instability of light in a performance such as *Political Mother* is, in many ways, generated through its dialogue with darkness. In fact the relationship with vision that I have discussed here comes about as a consequence of the possibilities of the dark. The imbrication here of light and dark recalling once again Baugh's assertion that the theatre is fundamentally a place of darkness (2013: 134). In the darkened space of the theatre light is (or can be)

controlled, sculpted and manipulated and, in so doing generates the possible conditions of perception and understanding.

Mediation and Medium

The exploration presented here of the ways light manipulates seeing in performance began with an assertion that ideas of facilitating visibility or selecting the visible are inadequate summaries of the role of light in performance. In questioning the – seemingly prosaic – relationship between (performance) light and vision the examples above have shown the formative role of artificially manipulated light in the experiential dimension of vision. In other areas of performance theory there has been considerable development in understanding the complex processes that occur under the auspices of 'watching' a performance (Bleeker, 2008; Ranciere, 2009; Johnson, 2012; Fischer-Lichte, 2016; McKinney, 2018). As Bleeker argues, seeing a performance is not a neutral process of receiving but relates instead to a practice of visuality; vision does not simply occur but is, rather, a practice happening within distinct historical and cultural contexts. 'Vision' she says, 'appears to be irrational, inconsistent and undependable', and that visuality can seem 'to alter the thing seen and to transform the one seeing' (2008: 2). Fischer-Lichte understands spectatorship as 'an activity that potentially transfers the spectator into a liminal stage and thereby enables transformations' (2016: 176). However, this deepening of understanding about the nature of attending to performance has rarely been applied to light research. I argue that, as a force of mediation, light has much to offer expanded ideas of what is at stake in the constructed, relational, and embodied experience of watching a performance in which appearing is manipulated through light. Perhaps one of the defining features of contemporary performance is the effect of continually changing levels of light, or this is certainly a defining feature of the three

examples cited here. Shifting levels of light are often specifically deployed in performance to conduct an audience's vision and to manage the attention of those watching. As Baugh notes, the

> process of revelation achieved by the existence (or otherwise) of light has presented theatre as a distinctive phenomenon of perception, a thing apart and, most importantly, quite distinct from the realisation of dramatic literature, and so has presented a radical alternative to the role of literary interpretation as being the presiding rationale for theatre (2013: 94).

The question of performance as a distinct phenomenon of perception, is an important one, in which light plays a crucial role not only in physiological perception but also in interpretative seeing. Advancing from this more nuanced account of practices of seeing in performance it becomes clear that light is not only a medium through which vision takes place but an agent defining the possible conditions of reception at any given moment. Crucially, the kind of seeing that occurs through controlled light is not only visual, but is bodily too. There is a proprioceptive dimension to light in performance, as it fades and changes it can be experienced as much as movement and rhythm as of a means of visibility.

This proprioceptive dimension of vision recalls psychologist James Gibson's ecological understanding of the senses as interlocking perceptual systems rooted in the body. As Gibson explains, 'the eye is not a camera that forms and delivers an image' (1979: 55) rather, vision concerns a flow of information that implicates the viewer's tactile understandings too. The theatre offers a particularly rich perceptual situation because of the manifold nature of the aesthetic offer. Thus, the eyes are not cameras, but even if they were, transformative shifts of light would temper the veracity of what is seen and felt. Thus performance, through the action of light, becomes a fecund meeting point of embodied, relational seeing, and a slippery constructed visual offer which morphs and changes over time. Interestingly, Gibson

identifies an experiential trinity within his ecological thinking; dividing the perceptible world into medium, substances, and surfaces (1979: 16-32). Within this thinking, Gibson defines light as the medium of vision, arguing that we cannot see light, only the surfaces of things that are illuminated. Transposing this frame onto a theatrical setting however, poses a challenge to the idea that we cannot see light. Welton argues, for instance, that in many examples of theatre that utilise the dark, it is the darkness itself that becomes the medium enabling us to see light (2012: 59). Troubling the status of light as a medium for vision enables a deeper conception of the material of light as an artistic element that extends beyond being merely a medium in which vision takes place.

The status of light as a medium is perhaps best related not to conditions of visibility but to the constructed nature of performance itself. In this vein light might be thought of as an artistic medium, rather than a physiological one. As lighting designer, Jean Rosenthal put it, '[d]ancers live in light as fish live in water' (Rosenthal and Wertenbaker, 1972: 117). In this sense, light is a medium not only of vision, but a creative medium in which the performance is able to emerge. Moran has extended Rosenthal's statement, broadening it to account for further accounts of performance saying 'light is the water that the production swims in' (2017: 169). For Moran, this analogy encompasses manifold ways that light works to hold a production together:

> Sometimes it is still and transparent, hardly noticed at all. Sometimes it is full of darkness that creates perceptions of threat and foreboding. Sometimes the production glides easily in a steady current, or moves rhythmically in gentle waves. Sometimes it swims aggressively against the current. Sometimes the water is restful and soothing, sometimes it threatens to disrupt, overwhelm or worse (ibid.: 169-170).

The idea of water, it seems, is a common metaphor in discussions of light and performance. Fisher cites a conversation with the lighting designer John Bishop who likened a production to an aquarium (2015: 177). In Bishop's analogy, the set

designer decides what shape the aquarium will be, the director decides what will happen within it, and the lighting designer fills the aquarium with water (ibid). This usage points to the cohesive properties of light in performance; rather than being merely facilitative it is the thread that binds a performance together. This conception of light aligns neatly with the kinds of metaphors used in discussing dramaturgy, such as architecture, (Turner, 2015; 2010); fabric, (Turner and Behrndt, 2008); matrix, (Eckersall, 2006); and weave, (Barba, 1975). There is, perhaps, also a connection between the dramaturgical role of light and another sense of the word 'medium'; that of connection with a spiritual realm. Rayner considers theatre as a phenomenon combining presence and absence in a ghostly doubling (Rayner, 2006). In this context light might be considered as conduit of experience, but also the intermediary force between the inhabited fictional world of the characters and the overarching themes or ideas contained in a play. Or, beyond the narrow dramatic frame, light is the force that links the immediate experience with the deeper associations, motifs, and concepts; the ghostly presence of Rayner's theatre, or the ineffable 'something else' in Heidegger's experience of art (1978: 145).

As a medium, then, light does not simply facilitate the seeing of a performance because there can be no neutral in a medium that is artificially created and controlled. The very fact that qualities of light can be manipulated in performance means that light, to greater or lesser degrees, generates the conditions in which a work is experienced. The flexibility of light in this way aligns with Blau and Causey's arguments about the virtuality of theatrical space (Causey, 2006), and with Brejzek's idea that performance design processes can 'inscribe a virtual space onto a physical one' (Brejzek, 2006). Perhaps the most striking aspect of light uncovered through these examples is its role in concealing, or in deceiving the eye. By implication, this discovery shifts emphasis away from the role of light in enabling visibility, and posits

that the creative, dramaturgical role of light in performance is as much a case of attenuated vision than facilitated vision – in any case, a manipulated kind of seeing. Or as Baugh puts it: 'in a world of post truth and post fact, light has become the great playful deceiver' (2017 n.p.). As this force of deception, light – as both a perceptual and an aesthetic medium – mediates performance as a constructive component of a performance's dramaturgy.

Reflections – Mediation as Dramaturgy

Taken together, the three examples discussed in this chapter indicate an expanded sense of the action of light, and by extension an expanded view of the kind of visibility that can be created by light. Mediation, therefore, exceeds the idea of selective visibility, offering a more nuanced account of the ways in which light constructs the possibilities of vision in performance. Attending to the ways that light constructs vision further demonstrates the dramaturgical construction underpinning the structure of a performance. A reminder of the opposing view:

> A very obvious note of warning here: the designer should use strong color only with the greatest care, remembering that the first function of lighting is selective visibility. Under normal circumstances an actor cannot be considered truly visible if he has a bright green face. Only in exceptional circumstances can there be any justification for using anything but the subtlest color on the acting area, except as an underlying deep-color wash to affect the overall tone of the stage. When the designer comes to lighting the setting or background, he [*sic*] can obviously take more licence, provided that he is enhancing the work of the set designer and not simply trying to "improve" it without reference to the original intention. Designers have every right to expect to see their scenery and costumes the way they intended them to appear (Pilbrow, 1997: 85).

The attitude presented in this extract is somewhat dated, as understandings of the role of scenographic elements have moved on significantly from the illustrative mode outlined here. Nevertheless, while this conception is in opposition to the expanded view that my research aims to take, Pilbrow's warning here is significant

because it demonstrates the kind of thinking that is, or can be, bound up in lighting conventions. Pilbrow's 'visiblity' in this context is, quite clearly, a loaded term, implying not only the possibility of being apprehended by vision but a very particular mode of visibility. An actor with a bright green face, would, of course, be visible in the normal sense. What Pilbrow means here is that an actor's face requires the *specific mode* of visibility that makes facial expressions as clear as possible, and that this can be compromised by the use of strong colour. While Pilbrow's words should be understood in their own context – that of disseminating knowledge about how to design light, rather than reflections about light – his reservations here further assert the transformative power of light. Issued as a warning, he nevertheless demonstrates that light does have the power to radically transform the appearance of set and costume. In an expanded, analytical view of light as scenographic, such transformations do not represent failed visibility but active modes of transformation, leading to a broader, more inclusive conception of theatrical seeing.

Returning to the question of the dramaturgical effect of this phenomenon of mediation, I am suggesting that by managing what can be seen – and more crucially, how elements of performance are seen – light plays a pivotal role in the dramaturgical construction of a performance. My argument is that, in determining an audience's access to what may be seen, light is further affecting sensory, proprioceptive, and intellectual engagement with a performance. Accordingly, the effect of light on performance can be examined in terms of its dramaturgical impact, by considering the broader implications of its selection, transformation and organisation of what can be seen. This sense of light's mediation as principally dramaturgical, rather than principally perceptual, proceeds from an understanding of dramaturgy as the 'underpinning principles of theatrical construction' (Turner, 2015: 2), thinking of construction here specifically in terms of the experiential structure of

a performance. Brejzek describes this as the ability of light to 'modulate' stage space (2013), this idea of modulation – with its dual meaning of musical tone and modifying regulation – captures a sense of how light can hold a whole performance in its influence.

In seeking to develop understanding of the link between light and vision this chapter has drawn from a number of disparate views on the processes of seeing performance, or the experience of art more broadly. The breadth implied in these divergent reference points may seem to indicate a lack of focus but is intended as a means of both identifying and reconciling the diffuse character of light as an entity in performance. To this end, the combination of Rebellato's work on metaphor in the theatre (2009) and Crowther's concept of the sensuous metaphor (2006) shows the operation of light on multiple sensual, artistic, and hermeneutic levels in performance. There is some precedent in the application of Crowther's sensuous manifold to a performance of light; Palmer and Sita Popat's public art project, *Dancing in the Streets,* presented participants with an interactive kinetic light installation that Palmer and Popat analyse as an example of the sensuous manifold (2007). The use of light as the main medium for this work – with the heat from participants' bodies directing the projection of digital images through a thermal imaging camera – meant that users reported a 'transparent' or 'magical' engagement with the piece (ibid.: 297). Palmer and Popat posit that within the sensuous manifold this transparency is 'a fundamentally presence-making experience, operating at the pre-reflective level of 'body-hold' where the viewer or participant is arrested by the aesthetic effect' (ibid.: 302). It is the sensual experience of the immediate moment that engages the viewer; add to this the metaphorical dimension of theatrical framing and it becomes clear that light is always working in excess of making visible, and is instead creating the experiential and dramaturgical conditions in which meanings can

emerge. A different kind of 'transparency' is advocated for by Newall in his examination of phenomena of seeing-in (2015). Applied to performance, this kind of transparency would seem to align with instances where the viewer is less conscious of the light than of the object that is lit. Newall's ideas of imbrication and scission, however, demonstrate something of the transformative nature of the medium (in this case, light). Seel's theory of aesthetic appearing puts forward an understanding of aesthetic that is founded on the processes of appearing, rather than semblances (2005). This is a valuable framing for performance, which specifically tends to the play of appearances in the careful unfolding of actions through time. The processes of appearing are further accentuated in performance by the play of light, through which the space of appearing shifts around that which is appearing. Light, too, can be the aesthetic object 'perceived in its sensuous particularity and for the sake of its particularity' (ibid.: 138).

The observations of this chapter have sought to demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between created light and vision in the theatre. In showing the myriad constructed possibilities of vision, and in demonstrating the ways in which light not only illuminates but obscures objects, this research joins the voices of Vasseleu (1998) and Bolt (2004) in demonstrating that light is not necessarily synonymous with vision. More specifically, this chapter argues that within the context of performance, this ability of light to disrupt visual acuity points to its dramaturgical potential. Given the distance between created light and invited seeing then, the value of light as a performance material revolves not only around its ability to reveal an object against the darkness but also, crucially, in its ability to disrupt, obscure, or destabilise vision. The findings here point to a wider conception of the relationship between performance light and vision, one that is closer to embodied affective experience than it is to idealised vision. In consequence, the analysis here

demonstrates the potential of light as a constructive constituent element in performance that not only facilitates the possibility of vision but can work to construct the conditions of visual and sensory engagement within performance.

Chapter 4 **: Light as a 'Physical' Presence**

The previous chapter explored questions of mediation, of how light influences and destabilises perception in performance, creating or manipulating the conditions in which the whole performance is encountered. Building on this, the current chapter will examine more closely the role of light itself within performance, turning to the presence of light as a kind of material. This chapter specifically explores the research question: to what extent can light be considered a physical presence on the stage? An enquiry – as outlined in the Introduction – that connects to questions of how light manifests a presence or is made to seem present in performance, and whether and how light can be understood to perform? Through this line of questioning this chapter aims to address the ontological particularity of performance light as a distinct kind of entity, or, indeed, performer, and further addresses the issue of how light contributes independently to performance. Tied to the underpinning enquiry of this research of examining the meaning-making capacity of light, this chapter will necessarily also engage with ideas of the dramaturgical impact of light.

Following the perceptual instability explored in the previous chapter, the examples here show light as a kind of volatile object, not only something that alters the presence (or appearance) of other things but as something that appears present in itself. That is, not only is light a performance material that generates instability, but it is also a kind of unstable thing. This chapter will focus on what light is doing, in itself, by examining the extent to which it can be considered a kind of physical presence in performance. It will proceed in these terms by examining light as a kind of performing object, investigating both the kind of object that light is, or might be, and the philosophical implications attendant to understanding light in these terms.

Materiality and light

The focus on the substantive qualities of light in this chapter facilitates an understanding of the nature of light as a material for and in performance. There is a dual meaning at play here: as a performance material, light is both a substance that can be manipulated and transformed in the service of constructing a performance and a material of that performance. Such a conception of light progresses the possible understandings of the ways in which light can work to inscribe meaning in space and time. Questions of materiality are also important in situating this research within the broader context of performance studies; in both practice and scholarship, performance is concerned with the modes and materialities of its production. This is especially important within the current context of a 'scenographic turn' (Collins and Aronson, 2015) but also connects with a broad arc of performance scholarship that seeks to investigate the significance of performance in ways beyond literary focus on text alone. Theatre, as Lehmann observes, is distinguished by the materiality of its communication (2006: 16). Or, as Ric Knowles notes, meanings produced in theatre 'depend, in part, on the material conditions, both theatrical and cultural, within and through which it is produced and received' (2004: 10). Approaches to materiality in performance studies comprise the corporeality and phenomenal presence of the (human) performer's body – or the co-presence of performers and spectators (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 76), the spatial reality of the live performance (Oddey and White, 2006), and experiential accounts of spectatorship (Heddon et al., 2012). Contemporary scholarship includes significant consideration of the role of objects in performance and of the kind of agency that they might have (McKinney, 2015b). Ideas of new materialism – as in the work of Jane Bennett (2010) – are often brought to bear on examples of contemporary practice as a means of redistributing questions of agency in performance. As a lens through which to examine

performance practices, new materialism raises questions about the agency of matter, comparable to the way Bolt follows Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* to frame her materials as being co-responsible for the art she makes (2004). Rebecca Schneider observes that while new materialism demands that 'all matter is agential and that agency is distributed across and among materials in relation' (2015: 7), the implications for this kind thinking on performance studies raise significant and salient questions about critical relationships between language and matter (ibid.: 8 – 9), about the distribution of agency (ibid.: 9), and about the limits or extensions of ideas of liveness and the 'live' (ibid.: 11). Applied to performance, this thinking enables reconsideration of the heterogeneous composition of performance, expanding perceptions of agency to non-human entities. And Schneider further argues that the perspectives of performance studies can enrich the discourse of new materialism; given the blurring of distinctions between subject and object, and between animate and inanimate that are fundamental to ideas of 'theatricality', which suggest that 'not everything in the world is real – or not *only* real' (ibid.: 14. Emphasis in original). Contemporary research at the juncture of performance studies and new materialism tends to consider the role of objects themselves as compositional elements, independent from or alongside other – human – actors (Kirkkopelto, 2016), or as reflecting traces of previous action (Jones, 2015: 23). This focus on objects has resulted in a concentration within the literature on particular *artists* who work prominently with objects. In particular, scholars of performance materials draw on the work of the German composer and theatre maker, Heiner Goebbels (Ridout, 2012; McKinney, 2015b; Abulafia, 2016), and the Belgian artist and theatre maker, Kris Verdonck (Van Baarle, 2015; Grehan, 2015; McKinney, 2015a). Both these artists foreground objects as dynamic materials, often completely excluding human

actors, meaning that their work provides fertile ground for the consideration of the potency of objects in performance.

Nevertheless, even within this increased focus on the power of objects in performance, there has been little scholarly attention paid to the nature of light as an object in performance. In part, this may be symptomatic of the still limited research directly focused on light in performance, but a paucity of understanding about what light offers to performance practice may also be a factor. Beyond performance, light art – such as in the work of Dan Flavin, James Turrell and Olafur Eliasson – seeks to capitalise on the potency of light as an aesthetic, affective, and expressive material. Palmer reports that light has been widely used as a material in contemporary art, and that such work often presents light as sculptural or material (2013: 171-172). Edensor argues that in light art installations, it becomes readily apparent that 'light glows and radiates, it transcends the cognitive and moves into the non-representational, the realm of the affective and sensual' and, significantly, that this can demonstrate the impact of light on perceptions and comprehensions of the world more broadly (2015a: 139). Cynthia Freeland observes that light art can challenge visual acuity and invite the seer to reconsider the nature of physical reality and of perceiving space (2017: 246). Such potencies of light, I stress, are not limited to light art but are equally at play within performance. Indeed, much as Edensor notes that the particular ability of light art to demonstrate the power of light lies in its aesthetic exceptionalism – 'we are stirred to awareness only when we confront an unusual form or quality of light, or are plunged into an unfamiliar darkness' (2015a: 139) – performance, too, presents a kind of light that is, or can be, markedly different from everyday experiences of light. There is a further parallel between Edensor's description of the aesthetic experience of light art in terms of a confrontation with unusual forms and Seel's examination of the moment of aesthetic

appearing, which I have already discussed in terms of performance. Additionally, considering light within performance also offers a means of examining light in terms that blur Edensor's suggested binary between representation and sensation. Schneider's discussion of theatrical mimesis in which 'matter regularly *becomes other matter*' (2015: 14. Emphasis in original) points to both this instability of material objects and to the elision between the representational and the sensual. These processes of what Schneider calls 'becoming and unbecoming' (ibid) are yet rooted in sensual apprehension. As States describes, performance provides examples of 'things that resist being either signs or images' (1985: 29) where, with the presence of sensual objects, 'something indisputably real leaks out of the illusion' (ibid.: 31). Thus, performance provides a space in which the affective, sensual apprehension that Edensor and Freeland recognise in light art, combines with literal, metaphorical, or abstract forms of presentation. Such a confluence provides a rich opportunity to examine the potency of light as a material that interacts and combines with other aesthetic, theatrical, and representational elements. I suggest that light artists enjoy a freedom in their work – and in particular in its reception – because as independent artists their work foregrounds the presence of light as the primary substance of their work. In the collaborative and multi-modal context of performance, however, light is not usually granted this kind of analysis, with the primary substance of the work being attributed to other elements, such as text, acting, or space. The multi-layered context of performance, I argue, makes scenographic light a manifestly different kind of object than is the case in the work of installation based light-art, even while the forms share core aesthetic and formal attributes of the material. The power of performance light, as scenographic, I argue is most interesting in the context of performance where light works in tandem with other elements towards an expressive theatrical end.

An immaterial material?

It is an often-stated fact that light is, in itself, immaterial; that it cannot be felt and that it can only be seen when it hits a surface or when there is some medium in the air (Ingold, 2005: 97). While this may hold true in terms of physics, it is my contention that the theatre offers light as a substantive medium in itself. Crisafulli notes that the advent of electricity in theatre lighting also established the 'presence of an *object* characteristic of light' (2013: 30. Emphasis in original), citing in particular Loïe Fuller's innovative work in giving form to light (ibid.: 31). The examples in this chapter demonstrate a variety of object characteristics in light, indicating that there can be a significant sensual experience of light itself. Attending to light is an experience of seeing and feeling light in itself. This discussion will, accordingly, seek to reconcile perspectives of *experiencing* light with the particular material conditions of performance. The use, for example, of haze in performance – a technique pioneered by Svoboda, originally to replicate the effect produced by the presence of dust in the air, (Svoboda and Burian, 1993: 59-60) and extremely common today, makes individual beams of light discernible, and often prominent. While the technical explanation holds that one is still not seeing the light but seeing the particles in its path the immediate experience is of seeing the light.[20] This experience also applies beyond the theatre; everyday experiences where a medium in the air (such as fog, mist, or cloud cover) enables the seeing of light can trigger what Seel terms 'aesthetic perception', in attending to the moment of light's appearing. This kind of distinctive

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[20] Interestingly, if apocryphally, there is a common maxim among lighting designers of 'no haze, no Tony', implying that haze is a vital element in drawing the attention of critics to the detail of a lighting design. Or, as more succinctly phrased in the *New York Times* 'where there's smoke, there's stagecraft' https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/theater/where-theres-smoke-theres-stagecraft.html?_r=0.

appearing of light has been widely explored in fine art, in the work of such painters as Turner, Monet, and Caravaggio. Or, as Rosenthal succinctly puts it '[a]rtists *see* the air they see through' (1972: 4. Emphasis in original). More recently, Böhme has argued that, while it is technically the case that we do not see light, there are some instances in which light becomes visible (2017: 196). These instances include the perception of sources of light, as I will discuss in more detail further on. However, Böhme's conception of seeing light is deeply mired in concepts of natural daylight. He favours the term 'lightness' over light, as a means of indicating that light does not have the character of a thing but of a 'freely floating quality', and primarily a quality of space[21] (ibid.: 198). For Böhme, this quality is at play, primarily, in daylight, where light creates space and distance, but is devoid of qualities in itself (ibid.: 198-199). Forms of artificial light he terms 'mere illuminations' (ibid.: 200), arguing that artificial light adds to and transforms the appearance of the 'intrinsic' colour of the object (ibid.: 201). Through such management of colour he describes the ability of manipulated light to create atmospheres, but claims that such illuminations no longer have the character of natural daylight. While I concur with Böhme's observations about the ability of manipulated light to create and transform atmospheres, I think that there is more at play in both artificial and natural light than he accounts for. While there are *qualities* of light that create and transform space, light can also be phenomenologically apprehended as a presence, or manifestation in excess of its quality. I argue that this apprehension of manifestation is phenomenologically equivalent in instances of seeing rays of sunshine through partial clouds and seeing a beam of light etched against the surrounding dark of a theatre stage. Light, then, is

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[21] I will discuss the relationship between light and theatrical space in greater detail in Chapter Five.

both a quality and a kind of thing, and scenographic light can harness this mutability expressively across representational and sensual forms.

It is not only through the use of haze – or the presence of dust – that the materiality of light comes to the fore in performance. Stark contrasts of light and dark also render the light itself visible, as was the case in *Krapp's Last Tape*. The same is true of the haptic experience of light: anyone who has felt the glare of a theatre lantern can attest to feeling the heat of the light – again, this is *technically* inaccurate. The incandescent light sources used in theatre lanterns, work by heating a filament to such an intensity that it emits light, meaning that light is, in fact, a by-product of this heat. Nevertheless, actors often learn to gauge whether they are sufficiently in the light by feel, suggesting that there is a notably physical relationship involved with being in the light (see Palmer, 2013: 143). One of the examples that I discuss in this chapter, *Hidden* offers the audience a glimpse of this experience, as does *All That Fall* which I will discuss in Chapter Five. Questions of medium, as discussed in the previous chapter, may offer a means of understanding light as having a kind of materiality.

Beyond the theatre, too, there are rich examples of light configured in terms of its materiality. Vasseleu, for instance, extends the work of the French feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray, in presenting an account of light in terms of texture, arguing that '[r]ather than founding a disembodied or objective visual stance, in its texture light has a corporeality which constitutes the dawning of the field of vision' (1998: 13). Principally, Vasseleu's work serves to reconfigure light in terms of touch, rather than in terms of vision, and while she holds that it is not appropriate to think of light entirely as a thing (ibid.: 12) the *textural* sense of light in her thinking, provides a framework for thinking of light as a substantive force. Vasseleu's essential point to reconfigure philosophical ideas of light in terms of texture, thus

problematising the separation of the senses in the Western philosophical tradition. In imbuing light with textural qualities Vasseleu seeks to limit conceptual distinctions between the sensual and the intelligible, between body and mind. She uses the idea of a texture to unite metaphoric and metaphysical aspects of light, noting that 'in its texture, light is a fabrication, a surface of a depth that also spills over and passes through the interstices of the fabric' (ibid). Interestingly, 'texture' is also the metaphor chosen by Barba in discussing dramaturgy (1985). Although Vasseleu is not writing about artistic practice, specifically, her ideas about the imbrication of concepts of light with the bodily experience of light can be readily applied to performance. Indeed, Dempster draws on Vasseleu's work in discussing the kinaesthetics of dance, and Welton draws on the emphasis on the sensuality of encounter in Vasseleu's exegesis of light as a configuration of touch and feeling in performance (Welton, 2012: 62). Vasseleu's philosophical thinking through light, then, provides another theoretical avenue through which to explore the blurring of representational and sensual encounters with theatrical light.

Examples in this chapter

This chapter explores the question of what light is doing, in itself, by thinking through the light in three examples of performance: *17 Border Crossings* (2013)*, Plexus* (2012)*,* and *Hidden* (2016). Individually and cumulatively, these examples foreground the presence of light as a performance material, although they are strikingly different to each other in terms of performance style. Grouped together these examples present a multifaceted view of the ways in which light can become, or can operate as, a performing object. In particular, these examples throw into relief the ontological status of light in itself, in relation to the objects that produce light, and to other tangible presences on the stage. It is interesting to note the emphasis given to

lighting instruments within the action, (particularly in the examples of *17 Border Crossings* and *Hidden*) and how this emphasis makes arbitrary the division between lighting and stage design. Furthermore, considering the presence of objects that produce light alongside light itself demonstrates the complexity of scenographic light as a performance material that encompasses both process and product without wholly subsuming one into the other. The diversity of relationships between performers and performing light indicates the plasticity of light as a performance material, and the myriad dramaturgical possibilities of light's manifest presence. While not exhaustive, the range of relationships indicated in these examples is significant in solidifying, not only the creative role of scenographic light, but its myriad possibilities.

The progression of examples here also presents a sense of rising autonomy of light, moving from the visible operation of light, to light operating in concert with space and the body, to light as the chief performer present in the space. Within this progression there is a sense of multiple ways in which light might manifest as a kind of object; ranging from the objects that make light (*17 Border Crossings*); to beams of light that appear to compel human behaviour (*Plexus*); to light as a principal, (seemingly) autonomous performer (*Hidden*). Along the way I hope to show mutual conversant levels of autonomy within each of these stages; rather than presenting dichotomous degrees of expressivity I will argue that the performance of light is fluid and synergetic. The first example, *17 Border Crossings,* is principally a storytelling piece in which various lighting instruments are deployed in service of narrative. Ostensibly, this example presents a work where the light is visibly operated by the actor. However, as the performance progresses it becomes clear that light is working in this performance in a way that other materials could not. In contrast to the other two examples in this chapter – and indeed to most of the other examples in this

thesis – this production is relatively unsophisticated in terms of its technical production. There is an apparently rough-hewn style at play here in which the formal qualities of light seem less significant than its use in the action. The next example, *Plexus* is a piece of dance theatre that seems to present a meditation on the power of the body. On stage is a huge rectangular structure, with 5,000 chords strung from ceiling to floor; a sort of floating cage for the dancer. Throughout the performance these dense rows of ropes shape her movement, forcing her to pull her way through them. This setting makes the lighting highly prominent, as the chords shimmer and appear to change colour with the light. Finally, where *Plexus* presents a performer completely engulfed by the stage environment, *Hidden* works to theatricalise an 'offstage' environment without performers present. In so doing, this piece casts both lanterns and light as actors in a performance.

Controlled Light – *17 Border Crossings*

17 Border Crossings (2013) is a solo performance, created, performed, and designed by Thaddeus Phillips who takes a role akin to a storyteller, recounting travel experiences of various kinds. As the title suggests, the piece recounts a series of border crossings; from Hungary to Serbia, by train; from Italy to Croatia by boat; from East Mostar to West Mostar, by sound; from Austria to Germany, by ski lift and so on. The stories range from comedic travel anecdotes – a confrontation with a disdainful ticket inspector – to threatening encounters at border control – being detained and drugged – to poignant reflections on the human cost of imposed borders – a refugee who sneaks into the wheelhouse of an airplane in a desperate, and ultimately fatal, bid to enter the UK. The performance space is almost entirely bare, save for a table and chair, a desk lamp and a microphone. Above this is a bar festooned with different lighting instruments, appositely counterweighted with a

heavy suitcase. On this bar, there is a row of short white fluorescent tubes (and some coloured fluorescent tubes that are not immediately obvious) with some decorative tungsten light bulbs placed in between them. At the centre of the bar there are two small flood lights, the kind that might be used as a domestic security light, with flexible reading lamps and two white speakers at either end. There are also a number of smaller fixtures attached to the bar that become apparent when they are used. Throughout the performance, Phillips adjusts the height of this bar to different levels, re-angling the lanterns, and switching lights on and off in the service of the stories.

The nature of Phillips' performance, part raconteur, part multi-role playing actor, foregrounds his interactions with props and objects on the stage. Although there are other objects manipulated in service of the storytelling (the table and chair) the principal stage objects are lighting instruments. Throughout the performance Phillips continually readjusts and reconfigures the onstage lamps to align with the details in his stories, or to light his face from different angles as he embodies different characters. There is an emphasis here on the manipulation of recognisable instruments that make light; while this is clearly a theatrical device, most of the instruments used are mundane, everyday lamps, rather than specialised theatrical equipment. There is a dual presence at play within the light, of both light produced and of the instruments that make it. Often, the light directly corresponds to the descriptions we hear, a tiny reading lamp becomes an overhead reading light on an airplane as Phillips sits beneath it and describes watching movies at 40,000 feet. At other times the correlation is more flexible; a wash of blue light from above – as seen in Figure 6 – returning at several points, indicating sometimes water, sometimes night. At several points the fluorescent strips along the bar serve to provide an

analogous sense of the locations suggested, as when they serve to suggest an airport, or the central aisle of a bus.

Turning to the performance in action, I will now briefly describe a selection of the scenes in order to demonstrate the role of the light within the action and the range of relationships implied between the light, the story, and the performer.

Figure 6 – *17 Border Crossings*.
Ed Lefkowicz (2015) Image source:
https://edlefkowicz.photoshelter.com/image/I00006IAJvmufMGE

Light as train carriage

The first of the eponymous seventeen episodes is the story of a journey in 1991, from Hungary to Serbia by train, by whom we are not told. The preceding introductory segment concluded with an account of microwaving a passport, as a means of disabling its internal tracking chip. Phillips places a passport on the table and pulls the desk lamp down towards it, creating a focused circle of light around the passport, and begins spinning the passport in this pool of light, counting down slowly from ten. He uses this microwaving as a framing device, using each of the counts to draw the audience in to the story. 'When I say five you close your eyes,

five. When I say four you will no longer be here, four. When I say three you will be in the main train station in Prague, travelling to Belgrade' and so on, all the way down to one.[22] Each number is thus accompanied by a rich verbal description, encompassing the route and the empty train, complete with its 'ugly green communist fluorescent light'. Having thus described the scene, Phillips begins to swiftly reorganise the stage, lowering the lighting bar to just above head height while the bulbs flicker in staccato. He whispers into the microphone to announce 'your' arrival on the empty train, as three rectangles of light appear below the bar. The bulbs stop flickering as he enters the train, miming at each of the rectangle edges that he is opening a compartment door before settling in the third one. Arriving at this compartment he flicks a switch above him, operating a green fluorescent tube; the aforementioned 'ugly green communist fluorescent light'. Embodying the character of the traveller trying to get some sleep, he moves to switch it off. Then, slipping away to the microphone, back in the character of the narrator figure, again with the bulbs flickering, he announces the arrival of a 'drunk Hungarian ticket inspector'. This time he inhabits the character of the ticket inspector, switching on the light as he addresses the empty chair, we take to contain his previous character. When the ticket inspector leaves, Phillips returns to the character of the traveller, reaching up again to switch off the green light. Once again, he goes to the microphone as the bulbs flicker, this time announcing the arrival of another passenger, who enters the same compartment and switches on the light. This cycle is repeated once more, until we hear that the train is arriving in Belgrade, at which

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[22] The portion of text quoted here, and all other quotations listed in this section are taken from the notes I made after the second viewing. To my knowledge they are verbatim recordings of the text as it was spoken when I saw the show, but may be approximate recollections.

point the boxes of light fade out, leaving only the green fluorescent strip. Phillips then turns it off to end the story.

Elements of the light in this sequence seem positioned to provide a certain kind of veracity in the storytelling; first there is the description of a green fluorescent light, and then this appears on the stage. Similarly, the boxes of focused light suggest a kind of proxy for the train compartments in the narrative. There is a level of correspondence here, or a kind of playful representation of elements of narrative details. Yet, beyond these diegetic suggestions, there is also another, more affective dimension to the light here. The flickering of the bulbs seems to suggest a certain energy and pace, as well as marking the set-up process as transitional, that is, outside of the story while remaining within the storytelling action. In addition, this sequence establishes Phillip's control over the light, as he sets the height of the bar, and manages the recurrent on/off cycle of the green strip light. The rectangles of focused light, however, are not controlled by Phillips. Nor are they signalled by him, these are presumably triggered by a stage manager or operator at pre-determined points in the action. Interestingly, then, this performance interweaves the actor's visible manipulation of light as a stage prop, with rather more conventional externally controlled lighting cues. The resulting juxtaposition of different levels of control seems to expose the flexibility and artifice of performance light; using this plasticity in diverse ways in the action. In contrast to an example like *Krapp's Last Tape* in the previous chapter, in which the light continually shifted without apparent comment on the control involved, here the manipulation of light slides in and out of focus as part of the action.

Light as car

Another scene in which the light constructs a clear proxy for the content of a story is the final scene, though there are many more in between. In this, Phillips recounts the story of someone attempting to cross from Mexico into Texas by foot.[23] In the telling of this story, he narrates the perspective of a US border patrol officer, watching the man's efforts. As he describes the officer sitting in his car, he lowers the bar, turns on a short red fluorescent strip at one end, a blue fluorescent strip at the other, and in the centre turns two glowing flood lights towards the front, creating a striking image of an American police car.

> *The final image of the police car at the Mexican border felt exciting – even though we had seen the component pieces before it felt surprising. The red (actually pretty pink) fluorescent tube had been the red light district in Amsterdam, the blue on the other side had been the UV bathroom lighting in a bus station. Now that they were both on together, with headlights in the centre it presented a clear image of an American police car. Objectively it doesn't much look like a car but the image gives us that components – headlights, red and blue strips, a chair for the driver's seat, and a mimed door, and it's absolutely enough to 'see' the car.*

Now deployed as car headlights, floodlights have been used multiple times to light Phillips' face from different angles. So although all the elements are familiar, the appearance of the police car is suddenly striking. Throughout the narration of this scene too, other aspects of light coalesce around the details of the story. The officer calls for the flood lights along the border to be switched on, and a row of lanterns rigged at the rear of the stage flash into action. Later, having a change of heart, and

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[23] In the story preceding this one, Phillips tells essentially the opposite story; of driving in El Paso Texas, and seeing a sign for a car park that read "'Park here and walk to Mexico.' I obeyed the sign.'

deciding to let the man continue his efforts, he calls for the border lights to switch off, and the theatrical lanterns oblige. Again, this sequence demonstrates the narrative use of the light – with Phillips using light to illustrate the story, almost as a kind of object puppetry.

The kind of correspondence at play in conjuring the suggestion of a police car from a bar of lamps reveals interesting elements about the nature of light as a performance material. In contrast to the assumptions that light facilitates mood, or atmosphere, or enhances performance work in other similarly abstract modes, here the light provides a clear allusion to quite a concrete referent. Yet – troubling Kennedy's classification of 'metonymic design' (Kennedy, 2001: 13) – there remains a considerable aesthetic distance between this suggestion and the car to which it refers. Like, metonymic design, the light here does coalesce into an image that stands in for the police car, corresponding to the absence it represents with the lamps on the bar clearly deputising for the headlights of a car, and the red and blue siren lights atop its roof. Yet, these elements seem to assemble rather than resemble the appearance of an American police car. The gap that remains, between the straight bar of lanterns casting coloured light around the space and the solid car suggested by this image, seems to elide the sense of design objects as a clear, uncomplicated representation. A crucial factor in this gap is the fluidity of light. The elements that together in this scene assemble the patrol car, have all been used previously in the service of different images, lending them a sense of flux that defies this stable referent, even given the clarity of the image. Again, the power of light here seems to reside in this fluidity, this sense of impermanence. Given the content of this particular show, this impermanence is, perhaps, especially apt. In the performance the show wears its politics lightly; Phillips is an engaging performer and many of the stories are, in his telling, extremely funny. And yet, the poignancy of these stories is not far from the

surface; in providing, for example, the contrapuntal stories of a North American citizen casually day-tripping across the border, and that of a Mexican citizen risking life and limb to cross in the night, the piece hints at the inherent inequalities of such geopolitical boundaries. Within the broader sense of the production's potential political commentary then, the use of light to create these kinds of suggestive images attains a metaphorical quality too. For Kennedy, metaphorical design involves more symbolic uses of materials than metonymic design, prompting unexpected or ambiguous pairings that require the spectator to consider deeper implications. The metaphorical quality of the use of light in *17 Border Crossings* invites the audience to reflect on the associations between the instability of the light and the political imposition of border crossings. The image of the police car, then, or the 'carriages' suggested by light in the opening sequence, appear distinct but are nonetheless completely porous, disappearing at the flick of a switch, or bearing the always-present possibility of morphing into something else entirely.

Light as feeling

While the forms light takes in these sequences correspond logically to the scenes described, there are other points where the relationship between the light and the narrative is more oblique. One such point occurs in a scene in which he recounts being given a coffee laced with some kind of hallucinogenic drug, in which the light seems to shift to portray something of the traveller's inner state. As Phillips describes feeling transfixed by the cockroaches he manipulates light to make a shadow play of scale on the back wall. Describing his mounting disorientation, he takes a torch and rapidly flashes it while moving it round and round his face at speed, throwing warped shadows on the back wall of the theatre. The resulting effect is like that of a strobe light, and the moment culminates in his thrusting the torch

into his mouth so that his face glows grotesquely from the inside for a moment before he switches the torch off, leaving the stage in darkness.

Watching this scene I was struck by the rapidity, and what seemed to me to be the violence of the moment. The stark, flashing lighting seemed to quicken my pulse, although looking back I am uncertain if this was the bodily experience at the time or the sense of the scene as I recall it. In any case, the light here seems less about suggesting the context of the scene than it does about inviting the spectator to affectively imagine the experience described. In Susanne Langer's view of art, she notes the importance of a symbol as a 'highly articulated sensuous object, which by virtue of its dynamic structure can express the forms of vital experience which language is peculiarly unfit to convey' (2008: 321). Langer is specifically writing here about music, however her observations are equally applicable to scenographic light. Much like Langer's description of music as an articulate form that yet lacks the fixed association in the way that language does, (ibid) light too can be experienced as significant form, that can be felt as a quality to which the viewer is free to attach meaning that fits. In performance, Welton has argued that comparable overlaps between the feel of a work and sensual and emotional feelings reflect the elisions between thought, affect and sensation (2012). Indeed, in my experience of watching *17 Border Crossings*, the meaning that emerged was this palpable sense of disorientation that otherwise resisted translation into spoken language. The sensation of pulsing, disfiguring light and the sense that I made of this moment of performance were wholly imbricated.

The manipulation of light here is less about suggesting a recognisable image and more about bringing the sense of the affective experience to the fore through the light. The playfulness of this sequence foregrounds a trait that has been central to

the whole performance: the imbrication of the light produced and the performer's processes of controlling or manipulating that light.

Performer/operator

Although there are certain lighting states or cues in this performance that are triggered by an operator, for the most part the centrality of the lighting control within the action affords a particular view of light as a kind of physical presence within the performance. As Böhme argues, sources of light themselves are 'luminous objects' that enable us to see light (Böhme, 2017: 195-196). The example of this performance enables thinking about light to go one step further, not only to see light but to examine the processes and dramaturgical implications of its manipulation in performance. Additionally, foregrounding the relationship between Phillips and the light – as he continually changes it and is changed by it – means that the action of this performance is extended to the light. Elsewhere, there has been research into the implications for performance of an increased creative relationship between the operator and light, but less has been written, to date, about the dramaturgical potential of this interface as a component of performance. In particular, Nick Hunt's work on an 'exosomatic light organ' critiques the static (and standard) use of a 'go' button to trigger predefined lighting cues, in favour of a more reflective model that positions the lighting operator as a creative partner within performance (Hunt, 2013). In this project, Hunt's custom-built lighting control unit was framed as an 'expressive instrument' with enhanced 'playability' (ibid.: 297), enabling the lighting operator to make responsive and reflexive changes to the sequence of lighting cues in the moment of performance with greater freedom than a fully predetermined cue stack would allow. Hunt argues that the enhanced ability to control the flow of light in the performance is a significant creative improvement on the more typical model

that utilises predetermined timing values based on previous rehearsals. With enhanced control within the moment of performance, by contrast, the lighting artist can respond to the complex web of shifting performance elements in the moment. He further argues that the fluidity of this model affords greater expressivity of light in performance. Interestingly, in the research project described Hunt seems to principally position the actors as the principal creative interlocutors, viewing the creative power of light in terms of its ability to respond appropriately in the moment. *17 Border Crossings,* by contrast, encompasses two models of lighting control; the static cue model that Hunt opposes and a more flexible mode in which the control of the light is integrated into the unfolding dramatic action.

Elsewhere, Palmer and Popat have examined the possibilities of technological interfaces in extending the kinaesthetic and bodily awareness of the 'performer-operator' (Popat and Palmer, 2008). Their experiment invited participants to control the shifting appearance of projected images, which they term digital 'sprites', through the use of an intuitive graphics pad. Participants' manipulation of the pen and graphics pad would control the shape and appearance of projected digital shapes, that would seemingly interact with dancers through a gauze. Popat and Palmer report that many of their participants described feelings of dislocation, or translocation as they felt that there were somehow within the images they were creating. The interface, it seems, afforded the performer-operators a kind of bodily extension, which the authors liken to Heidegger's hammer (ibid.: 128). Through this bodily extension, they argue, the participants were able to experience performing through the material, as equal partners to the performer-dancers on stage (ibid.: 130) while simultaneously engaging with the aesthetic experience of viewing the unfolding performance of dancer and sprite. For participants, the sense of extension through the technological control of the projections afforded a kind of aesthetic duality

between visual and kinaesthetic engagement (ibid.: 135). While *17 Border Crossings* also includes the actions of another kind of performer-operator, the result is rather different. The audience does not experience the changes in light through their own participation, yet in utilising such a relationship as part of the dramatic fibre of the performance *17 Border Crossings* exposes the manipulation – and the manipulability – of light in a way that encompasses both stagecraft and dramaturgy.

Types of light

The foregrounding of the lighting bar here reveals another fascinating aspect of theatrical light; its broad range of types and qualities. Created light is enormously variable in terms of its character and tone, the mix of instruments here presents a considerable selection of kinds of light. While this research is concerned with the phenomenon of light rather than with the particularities of its production, it is worth dwelling on this point as it relates to the capabilities and mutability of light as a performance material. Chapter Three demonstrated the ability of light to transform the appearance of other elements in performance, in so doing the discussion in that chapter emphasised the mutability of performance light in terms of colour, angle, and intensity. In addition to this, the instruments through which light is produced each dictate a certain quality. At present, many theatrical lantern manufacturers are slowly transitioning away from their traditional reliance on tungsten sources and towards more energy efficient sources, such as LED. Among lighting designers, this move is being met with some resistance, as evidenced in the campaign to 'Save Tungsten' being spearheaded by the Association of Lighting Designers in the UK, in an effort to 'preserve a particularly beautiful species that seems under threat' (Hulls, et al, 2013). The premise of this campaign is that there are capabilities associated with tungsten sources that are not otherwise achievable, and so to lose this kind of

bulb would be tantamount to the loss of a particular theatrical language. Interestingly, shifts in means of production have often resulted in similar tension, for instance in the transition from gas to electric lighting, when the new electric lighting was considered more harsh in tone than gas (see Palmer, 2013: 197). What these resistances make clear is that specific qualities of light can impact significantly on the construction, and reception, of performance.

The light and the lights

The use of light in this production is somewhat unusual in terms of its mix of actor controlled and remotely triggered lighting cues, and because of the extent to which it highlights the relationship between the actor and the light. A key factor here is that light is made through tangible objects and becomes a kind of tangible object in itself. The relationship between light and lighting equipment is, therefore, an important one to address. Thus far in this thesis I have drawn a distinction between light – the material produced – and lighting equipment – the means of production. This distinction is important to recognise – as is the terminological distinction between light, as specific performance material, and lighting as the processes involved in the creation and production of light (Palmer, 2013: xiii- xiv). Yet, *17 Border Crossings* also shows that there can be a complex, interdependent, relationship between the two. The dominance of the equipment here in some ways calls more attention to the lighting than might otherwise be the case. I saw this production performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where, the majority of the thousands of performances shown every day are performed on bare or rudimentary stages, with little in the way of specific lighting. In this context it is particularly unusual for a performance to involve lighting so closely in its storytelling, making the use of light here especially

notable. The duality presented between light and lighting equipment shows the manifold relationships occasioned by light in performance.

Despite the synergetic relationship between light and its production, the equipment used to make light generally remains separate from its dramaturgy. As a performance material, light, and not lighting equipment, is that which reveals and mediates the stage space, enhancing and affecting the audience's experience. When considered directly, this division is readily apparent; lighting equipment is the hardware, light produced is the material substance on stage. This distinction is evident in western theatre practice, in the professional separation between lighting designer and lighting technician. Yet, this difference is far from universally acknowledged, and many theatre professionals, audiences and critics will conflate the terms 'light' and 'lighting', and in so doing relegate all of performance light to the domain of the facilitative. The problem with this confusion is that it becomes difficult to assess light as a dramatic material when the language around it conjures images of the technical. In order to understand the wider issue of what light is doing – what light is achieving dramatically – it needs to be considered as an actor, not simply a product of a technical process.

Equipment

A clear point of entry into thinking about the light in *17 Border Crossings*, then, is the foregrounding of both lighting equipment, and the processes of operating that equipment. There is also, of course, an extent to which the material of light is itself equipment. Equipment, fundamentally, is a tool, or tools, needed to achieve something, and light is dramaturgical equipment in much the same way that language might be equipment for a playwright. For example, a set of lanterns may be the equipment used to create a wash of blue light, but that blue light in turn may be the

equipment used to evoke night. Lighting instruments are tools to create light but light itself can also be a tool of expression or suggestion. There is a kind of relational chain between light and equipment, which turns back on itself as light is equipment of a different order. The equipmentality of light itself is a dramaturgical tool, light achieves a change of state that can affect the performers, and influence an audience's perception. This tension between light from equipment and light as equipment can perhaps be used to clarify the nature of light as a material in itself. This usefulness of light in theatre is in part what distinguishes performance light from the light art mentioned previously. In a performance context, light has an explicitly useful relationship with other elements. It does something *to* other objects, and thus has a different kind of being than light that is isolated as an art object. This requires a deeper or philosophical interrogation of these levels of equipmentality, fuel for which can be found in Heidegger's account of the being of things in *Being and Time*.

Heidegger's revelation about equipment is that it withdraws from consciousness, that, in being consumed by an object's usefulness we are not fully aware of its being, until it breaks or fails. These two states Heidegger terms the 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhandenheit*) and the 'ready-to-hand' (*Zuhandenheit*). An object becomes present at hand when I can consciously observe its properties, but remains ready to hand when I'm using it and that use is referring me to something else. While using a hammer, to adopt his famous example, one is not directly conscious of the hammer *qua* hammer, but is instead focused on the activity in which it is being used; i.e. driving a nail into a piece of wood. Some interpretations of this classify *zuhanden* as specific things that are inherently 'handy', (as in, for example, Mulhall, 2005: 41) but these modes of being are to do with our relationship with them, not an inherent property within the objects themselves. Thus, it is the relationship rather than the mode which ought to be considered when evaluating the – as Harman (2002) puts it – 'tool-being' of light.

To tease out the implication of these myriad relationships in terms of performance light, let's imagine three figures: a lighting designer, a lighting technician, and an audience member. For a lighting designer, – aiming, perhaps, to paint with light as Wilson does (Holmberg, 1996: 121) – the ultimate goal will be to sculpt light to create an aesthetic language on the stage. They may concern themselves with the colour and shape of the light produced, and will pay particular attention to the relationships between light and the bodies on stage. In this process, our imagined lighting designer will be consumed by the light produced, its usefulness being directed toward the resulting stage image. A sort of ready-to-hand relationship emerges between the light and their conceived design, and they will seek to tweak the light in pursuit of the design, in much the same way as Heidegger's hammerer seeks to drive the nail. For the lighting technician, the ready-to-hand relationship is more immediate. A skilled technician will focus a lantern with near total concentration on what the light produced should be doing, rather than attending to the mechanics of the lamp. Finally, our imagined audience member may not be conscious of any of these processes. For them, their consciousness may be directed towards the performance of an actor, meaning that the light withdraws into usefulness almost totally. Of course, these relationships may not be nearly so separate as they are described among this imagined trio. Lighting designers will be conscious of the processes involved in producing light, and will often negotiate between using the light as a tool to fulfil their design, and a need to engage with lanterns and technical equipment as tools. Furthermore, part of the power of performance light often lies in the shift from one mode of being to another. A sudden shift in light might, for instance, cause our imagined audience member, – previously so engrossed by an actor's performance as to be unaware of the light in any specific sense – to take sudden stock of the quality and tone of the light, shifting

their mode of attention to something more like the present at hand. The lighting designer, too, may seek out moments where the light seems suddenly present at hand, when the light exceeds their expectations or somehow spills out towards them as something particularly striking. I described this in terms of *punctum* (Barthes, 1981) when recounting my experience of watching *Kings of War,* but the moment would be equally well described in terms of this shift between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. These potential shifts of attention are especially important in the context of this research, where the use value of light is so strongly rooted in the moment of performance, and from the perspective of the spectator.

This power to negotiate between these disparate modes of being is a feature of the aesthetic experience. In *The Origin of the Work of Art,* Heidegger draws on this disclosive power of art in his account of a Van Gogh painting of shoes. In this he argues that the painting uncovers the 'truth' in the shoes, by which he means the painting reveals something of the essential nature of the shoes which would be obscured from view in the course of their normal use. What Heidegger identifies as the 'truth' in the painting is the equipmental being of the shoes in question; through the painting he traces the reliability of the shoes in the life he imagines for their owner, claiming that the painting reveals a deep truth about their use and reliability in the world than could be accessed through contact with them. 'This painting spoke. In the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be' (Heidegger, 1978: 161). The substance of the 'truth' that Heidegger gleans from this painting is deeply inflected by Heidegger's personal world view, and his fevered valorisation of the struggle and toil of his imagined peasant woman is at best distasteful and at worst a glimpse of his troubling politics. However, while the content of this example of 'truth' may be dismissed, the real insight here is that the work of art displays this capacity to disclose things that might

be otherwise obscured. Applied to the aesthetic experience of light, then, moments of performance in which the light is somehow rendered vivid, or sparks the attention of the spectator, can be viewed as moments in which deeper 'truths' about the nature of light – or indeed, the nature of the object being lit – can come into view. With 'truth' here understood in terms of unconcealment, that is 'bringing things to awareness, but also creating the context within which things can be what they are' (Wrathall, 2011: 2). The potential shifting of modes of being (or of awareness) of performance light, articulate a possibility for light to be both something that aids in the unconcealment of something else and something that is itself unconcealed in aesthetic experience.

The sustained use of lighting instruments in the lighting and performing of *17 Border Crossings,* then, provides examples of each of these kinds of relationships. Throughout the course of the performance, Phillips navigates multiple relationships to light, providing in the context of this one performance a kind of microcosm of ways of working with and in light. He manoeuvres the light in order to create specific images, as in, for example, the case of the police car. He also manipulates the *instruments* fluidly, often tweaking the position of a renegade lamp while he is speaking. In addition, he is also a subject in the light, whom we see lit by the light of his own control and by the theatrical lighting rig that is externally controlled. Within each of these modes of Phillips' engagement with the light around him, there are likely to be further shifts in the ways in which individual audience members attend to the light, implying a continual navigation of light as a withdrawn or imposing material. As Harman describes, beings themselves are 'caught up in a continual exchange between presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand' (2002: 4). In consequence, this sense of exchange can be understood as a key language of light in performance. If the examples of light art alluded to earlier present notably unusual

forms or qualities of light that mark it as a specific artistic material (Edesnsor, 2015a: 139), performance light plays with this distinction, alternately presenting light as an aesthetically distinct material and deferring into usefulness.

Forceful Light – *Plexus*

Plexus is a piece of contemporary dance, created by Campagnie III and performed at Sadler's Wells as part of the London International Mime Festival in January 2015. Aurélien Bory was both choreographer and scenographer for the production, a fact which may, in part, account for the foregrounding of the scenographic materials. A result of this foregrounding is that light, space, and the body seem to coalesce within the aesthetic offer of the performance. Where *17 Border Crossings* foregrounds the artificial nature of performance light, and the stage-craft inherent in its manipulation, *Plexus* focuses instead on the 'sensuous givenness' (Seel, 2005: 22) of light as an aesthetic substance.

Figure 7 – *Plexus*.

Image source: http://www.cie111.com/spectacles/plexus/

Trick of the light

The rich aesthetic experience of this performance in fact begins with deception. When the house lights fade, the audience is left in nearly complete darkness. That is to say that the space is in total darkness apart from the green emergency exit lights at the rear and sides of the auditorium.[24] Out of this darkness, three beams of light gradually fade up, appearing murky as though through dense haze or fog. These beams appear to float above the stage, reaching about halfway to the stage floor from the ceiling. These then fade out, and are replaced by footlights, revealing the dancer, Kaori Ito, at the front of the stage. Behind her there is a surface, or structure of some kind, covered entirely in a piece of black silk, and it was this that lent the sense of fog to the previous moment. Ito stands in front of the structure, with the silk at her back and is lit by two visible lanterns at her feet. She uses a microphone, apparently to amplify the sound of her heartbeat and her breath, although it was unclear if this sound was being produced live or recorded. Next, she starts to lean back against the silk, causing it to billow around her in the light, like waves. Finally, she begins to push back into the silk, wedging her body and the fabric through the chords. She continues to burrow backwards like this until the whole silk drops down around her and she pulls it back into the darkness of the structure.

The opening gambit of the light here – the appearance of the three oddly truncated beams – seems to announce the presence of light as something to be attended to in itself. The moment is fleeting; there was not enough time to clearly discern the silk,

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[24] These may have been less obtrusive to some audience members, but from where I was sitting, in the centre of the stalls, exit lights indicating the side doors were very noticeable in the darkness. I cupped my hands around the sides of my face to counteract their glare

so the floating, hazy beams of light emerge as faint objects without immediate purpose, or usefulness. Although the light is directed towards the silk, it does not illuminate the fabric such that it becomes clearly visible. In this moment my attention was completely held by the appearing of the light beams, and the uncertainty in the murky quality of the image. I had just begun to doubt whether what I was seeing was haze when the beams began to fade away as the dancer appeared in front of the silk. This change, from hazily present beams of light, hanging high in the space, to footlights directed toward the dancer immediately sets up a kind of dialogue between the light and the dancer's body. The first gesture of light is not to make visible, but to *be* visible, only afterwards does it reveal the presence of the dancer. First there is light, then there is a dancer in light. It is, of course, most likely that Ito entered the stage and arrived at her position, undetected, during the first lighting state, while the three beams of light distracted the eye upward. In this way the initial arrival of light may have been a ploy to distract the audience, but in any case it reinforces the argument from Chapter Three about scenographic light being a force for concealing as much as for revealing. Whatever the practical application of the sequence of light may have been from the perspective of the artists involved, reflecting on my experience of watching it I am struck by the initial equivalence of light and the dancer. Both are given as aspects of the production to be experienced in themselves. Aronson observes that this degree of force is a prominent feature of light in modern dance, where:

> It is no longer tied to motivational sources but has taken on a physical force, making it a performer within the dance. Light is a force that draws dancers toward it; it is a force that pushes dancers across a stage; a wall of light may act as resistance against a dancer or create a sort of curtain through which the audience must struggle to see (2005: 35).

Aronson's discussion here of light's power in modern dance is tied to a conception of it as an active material agent within the unfolding dance. The language Aronson employs here is explicitly physical; light can push, resist, and form walls, or block

visibility. Such an understanding provides a productive frame for light as a *scenographic* power. Discussing light as a material with the power to compel a dancer to move frames it as a material element, and enables consideration of light as a bodily element in performance. Thinking of light in bodily terms aligns with Reynolds' idea of kinaesthetic empathy in dance, in which it is not purely a dancer's body that triggers an affective response but the 'dance's body' (in Reynolds and Reason, 2011: 123). Borrowing from film scholar Vivian Sobchack's term 'the film's body' Reynolds uses the idea of the dance's body to convey the 'shared materiality and affective flow' of movement (ibid). Through this kind of kinaesthetic engagement with the emerging choreographed movement, the experience of watching dance blurs distinctions between individual bodies or movements such that, rather than seeing individual bodies move away from or towards each other on the stage, one instead sees the dance spread and gather. The dance's body in *Plexus*, then, encompasses Ito's body, the shimmering space of the chords, and the material shifting of the light, together with the affective responses and engagements of the spectator. Figure 7, above, shows a moment from the piece in which Ito was suspended among the chords, while this moment is not discussed in this chapter the image provides a sense of the scale of body and structure in the performance.

Interactive light

Later in the action, after she had discarded the length of black silk and was moving in the structure on her own, she would pull herself through the chords, meeting with resistance all the while. She would, at times, lean to one side and appear suspended, supported by the strings. Moving herself with this apparent difficulty, she reached a position in the corner with a pronounced stamp. With the impact of her foot, a rectangular strip of light covered the segment of the structure into which she had

stepped. This strip covered the strings almost to the top, and was just wider than her stance. The box of light extending upwards along the chords and outwards along the floor behind her. Turning in this light she took another judicious step in the direction from which she came. Her step into the next space triggered the appearance of another rectangle of light, this one higher than before. She progressed across the whole structure in this manner, so that when she arrived at the opposite corner the whole front of the set was covered with rectangles of irregular height. At this point she turned around and repeated her walk in the opposite direction, this time extinguishing the light behind her with every forward step.

The interaction between performer and light is clear in this sequence. We are invited to believe that there is some connection between her movements and the shifting light; perhaps that her steps are controlling the light, or that the light is responding to her movements. Whether she stamps her foot to trigger the light or the light appears in response to her steps may seem a naive question when there is, most likely, a lighting operator triggering the sequence, but my aim in this analysis is to question the action of the light as a means of exploring the potential of light as an affective performance material. In this I am taking the progression of light through the performance as a series of actions, recalling Barba's conception of dramaturgy as 'the work of the actions'. For Barba actions in performance are not limited to what the actors do but encompass lights and sounds, space and props, and, most especially, the changes between these things (1985: 75). Examining light in terms of its actions through performance opens up a view of light as a dramaturgical agent in performance, possessing what Christina Righi terms 'actorial force' (2010: 7). In this sequence the actions of the dancer and the actions of the light are intricately bound together, her action of parting the chords and stamping through the space is

transformed by the light's imposition of rectangular strips in tandem with her progression.

At the end of this sequence, the apparent game between dancer and light seemed to shift on its axis. As Ito reached a corner, and was standing in the last box, (having extinguished the others) the light morphed around her, fading from the box stretching towards upstage to a narrow strip along the front edge of the box from the sides. She then walked across the stage, with this light appearing to shimmer and move around her. At the time my impression was that the light was moving with some effect, in my notes written immediately after I question whether the sources might have been projectors, casting animated digitised light onto the strings. Another possibility is that it may simply have been the movement in the strings generating the effect. However it was achieved, the dominant aesthetic sense that I had of the light in this sequence was of a shimmering, moving light, rippling along the chords. Now she moved across the stage, in the light, before 'disappearing' by slipping through the strings to the darkened area behind. She would reappear sometime later by parting some strings and pushing her face into the light. The repetition of this sequence is in some ways reminiscent of the continual appearances and disappearances created by the light throughout *Political Mother.* Themes of appearance and disappearance abound throughout performance practice; as States notes the theatre 'is the paradigmatic place for the display of the drama of presence and absence' (States, 2007: 28). There is an important distinction in the mode of appearance and disappearance in *Plexus,* or at least in this scene*:* rather than plucking figures out of an otherwise indeterminate void, here the light maintains a constant path and it is the dancer who slides in and out of its path. What emerges here is a sense of kinaesthetic dialogue between the body and light; both are presented as aesthetic materials – or aesthetic presences – in a continual state of appearing. While

the light appears constant in its path, its sensual character is altered by the presence and movement of the dancer. Equally, Ito's movements and the shapes that her body makes are accentuated by the light.

Light as aesthetic material

While the scenography of *17 Border Crossings* works principally through the performer's visible navigation of scenic construction and kinds of correlation between those constructions and an imagined fictional setting, the structure of *Plexus* is more abstract. Perhaps inherent in the form of contemporary dance is an emphasis on more dispersed structures of meaning (Bleeker, 2015: 67). Recent scholarship on dramaturgy in dance (as in, for example Hansen and Callison, 2015; Warner, 2016) speaks to the increasingly collaborative status of dance dramaturgy – both among collaborators in the rehearsal process, and among multiple elements in the event of performance. There is a parallel here with Lehmann's discussion of 'parataxis' in postdramatic performance (2006: 86). This is conceived as a kind of rebellion against the classical hierarchies of meaning in traditional theatre, and as a means of liberating multiple elements in performance to contribute individually and collectively, without presenting immediate logical connections, and thus inviting the spectator to 'connections, correspondences and clues at completely unexpected moments' (ibid.: 87). Through this kind of attending, meaning is 'postponed', emerging over time rather than linearly or explicitly. Thus the light here manifests as one element within a multifaceted aesthetic experience, and its role within that experience shifts and changes throughout. At times the light works to direct attention, or to pick Ito out against the large structure; at other times the light seems to modify the available space of the chord strung structure; at others times it seems to present a kind of force in the space, with an apparently haptic relationship to the dancer and the

structure. Through this kind of manifold operation the light here asserts that it is doing something in this aesthetic experience in excess of its formal properties of light and dark.

Thinking through this example, then, demonstrates something of the plasticity of scenographic light, but also its status as a kind of aesthetic material, distinct from other forms or appearances of light. There is a parallel here between the aesthetic operation of light that exceeds its formal qualities here and Crowther's analysis of the structures of abstract art, in which he notes that abstract works of art engage 'virtual factors in excess of what they are as merely physical and/or formal visual configurations' (2009: 101). This sense of excess, is, of course, a core theme of this research, which began, theoretically, with Heidegger's phenomenological insight that the essences of things lie beyond their immediate, apparent presence. An aesthetic experience of light within the context of performance occasions a certain kind of excess, in which the light invokes a kind of consciousness or a particular kind of engagement with the choreographed material, beyond what would be possible otherwise. An aesthetic experience of light, then, is a product of an affective encounter with light. In phenomenological terms, the aesthetic experience accounts for the way light appears (or causes other elements to appear) to consciousness, rather than merely to the senses. This further understanding is not necessarily an explicit process, as Fischer-Lichte attests light in performance is often received on the very 'threshold of consciousness' (2008: 119). Yet many contemporary works of performance, including, of course *Plexus*, foreground light. This experience, in which the viewer's attention is directed towards an element not typically seen as a material in itself is an example of what Crowther terms the 'wondrous apprehension of thinghood' (2006: 41). The aesthetic experience of attending to light in performance is, in some ways, related to the specific characteristics of performance as event. This

is especially evident in work such as *Plexus* where the material seems to embrace its sheer theatricality; there is no sense of mimesis here, or of direct representation, instead the work unfolds within its own reality, like what Lehmann calls a 'scenic poem' (2006: 111). Seel argues that aesthetic experience 'has to *happen* and can happen only if subjects become involved with the sensuous making present of phenomena and situations that alter in an entirely unforeseen manner the subjects' sense of what is real and what is possible' (2008: 100. Emphasis added). The ways in which light works to shape understandings of what is real and what is possible underscores the extent to which the theatrical language of light relies on a symbiosis between form and content. In *Plexus,* we might recognise this symbiosis in the imbrication of body, space and light. Thus the content of the light involves what is in the light, but also the form of the light itself, as visible beam. Furthermore, through this morass, and this parataxical coincidence of space, light, and body, further kinds of content emerge; that of the affective or interpretational impressions experienced by the seer. For Crowther, this disruption of a dichotomy between form and content is fundamental to understanding the aesthetic domain. Critiquing the kind of formalism advocated by Bell – which would reduce aesthetic objects to pure form of line and colour – Crowther proposes a kind of 'aspect theory' that encompasses multiple levels of formal relations. Defining 'infra-structural' and 'super-structural' formal relations, he describes how aesthetic experience involves engagement with both infra-structural relations – such as colour, texture, shape – and super-structural relations that account for the aesthetic dimensions of content, plot, or representation (2006: 18-20). In Crowther's formulation, aesthetic experience involves engagement with both infra-structural formal qualities, and the super-structural aspects that emerge through them. Or, as Seel has it, aesthetic perception involves attentiveness to the appearing of what is appearing (2005). The materiality

of light in *Plexus,* especially, emerges not only in its formal characteristics but in light's interrelationships with everything else on stage. Central to this performance are the serial relationships between light and the body, between the body and the space, between the space and light.

Haptic light

The abstraction in *Plexus* is in many ways emblematic of what Aronson describes as 'postmodern lighting' – a style especially evident in contemporary dance (2005: 35). This is characterised by

> high-contrast lighting and selected visibility. A performer may be illuminated in the midst of total or partial darkness; details are selected out and highlighted while all else is concealed. Backlight no longer purely functional has become an end in itself, a visible element of the stage picture (ibid).

I would contend that in examples such as this one, light appears as not only a visible element, but as a tangible one too. The foregrounding of the physicality here seems to suggest that light is not only illuminating the chords but *touching* them. This might be considered in terms of what Dempster describes as a 'haptic apprehension of space', noting that 'haptic perception fosters an intimate relationship with environment. The haptically attuned dancer is preoccupied with stage space; so too is the spectator' (2003: 49). Dempster reasons that this sense of tangibility is acutely evident in dance spectatorship, where the kinaesthetic experience of watching entwines vision and touch (ibid.: 46). In this framework she draws on Gibson's ecological optics, noting how, in his work, processes of 'looking and seeing implicate us in the sensuous structure of the world' (ibid.: 47). As Gibson argues, the overlap between looking and feeling is profound, as is the link between sensuous apprehension and action: 'the equipment for *feeling* is anatomically the same as the equipment for *doing'* (1968: 99. Emphasis in original.). While Gibson's work, much

like Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, is primarily concerned with processes of perception, and the position of the perceiving subject, his approach, and the language he employs around light, are useful reference points in approaching what light, in itself, is doing. He notes that, in addition to providing 'a stimulus for vision' and 'information for perception', light can also be conceived as 'a physical energy' (1979: 47). The sense of light as a physical energy seems crucial in *Plexus,* where the interplay of body, space, and light lies at the heart of the action. This bodily conception of light – or what Aronson terms its 'physical force' (2005: 35), is crucial in terms of understanding what light itself is doing in this performance. The physicality implied in these descriptions of light counters traditional assumptions in Western philosophical thought that light is 'an invisible medium that opens up a knowable world (Vasseleu, 1998: 1). As Vasseleu attests, 'in its texture light has a corporeality which constitutes the dawning of the field of vision' (ibid.: 13). Or as Stewart puts it in his essay on dance photology 'the medium of light makes visible the medium of touch to reveal the body as tactile, and the medium of touch makes tactile the visible quality of light' (2016: 61).

Certainly, light displays a kind of haptic presence in this performance. While its status as a substantive, physical material may be questionable from a scientific standpoint, light is, undoubtedly, *there*. As an example, the sequence in which the dancer's steps are coordinated with the appearance of boxes of light demonstrates this presence quite clearly. The interplay between the body and light is the content of this scene. It may be in some sense illusory – her steps are not directly triggering the appearance of the strips of light (other than through the intermediary of an operator), nor is the light prompting her movements – but, as audience we are presented with a kind of interactive dialogue between body and light. In my notes I emphasise the physicality of this sequence, dwelling on the sound of the decisive

'stomp' of her feet, and the labour of pulling herself through the strings, the contrast of the edges of light against the chords. In much the same way that haze makes beams of light prominent in space, the 5,000 chords in the central structure catch the light, making its every shift perceptible. Additionally, the movement in both the chords and the light create a sense of light as a palpable, shimmering thing. Through its continual shifts and changes, light draws attention to itself. Filling the stage space with the chords means that every change in light is accentuated and every shaft of light is made distinct. To this end, the dominance of the light in *Plexus* seems to gain a material reality, and can be read in terms of its physical presence.

The shimmering of the light on the chords seems to suggest a kind of vitality to the light, or perhaps what Robert Edmond Jones calls the 'overwhelming sense of the livingness of the light' (Jones, 2004: 36). Gaston Bachelard's account of the kinds of poetic reverie induced by candlelight is perhaps an appropriate example of this intangible power of seemingly living light. In particular, Bachelard notes the unpredictability of the candle as an invitation to a unique kind of dreaming. He finds that the faint and flickering light of the candle generates a poetic reverie unattainable with electric light.

> There is a relationship between the burning pilot light and the soul that dreams. Time is as slow for one as for the other. The same patience appears in the dream and in the glimmer of light. Time is deepened; images and memories reunite. He who dreams about a flame unites what he sees and what he has seen. He recognises the fusion of imagination and memory […] reverie inspired by a flame, so much a unit in its origin, becomes an abundant multiplicity (1988: 8).

For Bachelard, the light of the candle is intricately linked with the imagination, partially because of an atavistic connection with flame, but also because of the aesthetic quality of the light produced. The flame, he says, produces a light that appears alive, which has a quality and a rhythm of its own. Although he finds this poetic reverie exclusive to the flame, there is a clear correlation here with light in

performance. The examples cited in this thesis certainly attest that in performance, as with the candle, there is an unpredictability to the light that emerges. The continual tussle between light and dark in *Political Mother,* for example disrupts any discernible logic, allowing the progression of light to be its own kind of language within the piece. The shimmering of light on the chords of *Plexus'* stage in some ways mimics the flickering of candlelight and certainly seems to operate in a comparably dreamlike way. Furthermore, the specificity of Bachelard's candlelight – as a particular manifestation of light – is mirrored in *Plexus* by the foregrounding of light as an aesthetic material, distinct from other forms of light.

Light as Actor – *Hidden*

In June of 2016 Sadler's Wells hosted *No Body*; a series of works without dancers, or the presence of (human) performers of any kind. While this piece involved multiple installations in various forms by a number of artists, I am going to focus on Lucy Carter's work, *Hidden,* as the mixed installations she created are in many ways emblematic of light's myriad possibilities as a force in itself. *Hidden* is a triptych of installations that are relatively small in scale but nonetheless provocative meditations on the performative properties of light. Scattered throughout the building they can be experienced by the audience in any order, depending on the individual's path around the spaces, but I will describe them, briefly, in numerical order, as they are titled *Hidden One*, *Two*, and *Three,* before focusing my analysis on *Hidden Three*.

Hidden One takes its audience through the wigs and wardrobe department, allowing us first to peek through a barely open door to see a dressing room and then to move through the costume and laundry rooms. There is a demonstrable sense of the costume room as a busy workspace, even in the absence of the workers who would ordinarily labour here. There are clothes rails stacked with costumes from various

productions – pleasingly, I spy a costume from *Political Mother* on the left. A clothes steamer is running, rhythmically sending puffs of steam up into the air. A mannequin is dressed in a black satin dress. On the right there is a sewing machine, mid-seam, its internal light switched on as if drawing the eye towards the industry it represents. A light is trained on each of these exhibits, highlighting this unseen, or as the title would have it, hidden, area of work. In a corner behind the door leading to the laundry room there is a white lace dress hanging by the wall, with its seams lit up from inside. Moving through to the laundry room I find multiple washing machines and clothes dryers, empty of their usual loads of costumes but filled with light. From somewhere in the room there is the sound of running washing machines as light pulses and churns inside the drums.

Accessed after a significant hike up bare concrete stairs *Hidden Two* takes place in the control room at the back of the main auditorium. Looking out through the glass panes over the empty auditorium towards the stage, a visitor to this space hears the recording of a deputy stage manager calling the various cues in a performance, and sees her commands trigger changes on both the sound and the lighting control desks in front of them. There is a ghostly effect at play here as the replies of the lighting and sound operator are not heard and the control desks shift from one cue to another seemingly autonomously. As the sound desk triggers cues or effects its faders snap into new formations, while the screen attached to the lighting desk display the shifting levels and cue titles associated with each progression, but we do not hear the sound cues or see the lighting states themselves.

An invitation to see

It is quite clear, thus far, that *Hidden One* and *Hidden Two* are thematically close in that both invite the audience to consider aspects of the creative engine that might not be

immediately apparent during the 'normal' experience of attending a show. Light in these pieces offers an invitation to see certain details or processes that might otherwise go unnoticed. Each of these pieces asks its audience to contemplate the scale and variety of creative and technical labour involved in mounting a performance. The occlusion of the voices and bodies of the costume supervisors in the wardrobe department and of the lighting and sound operators in the control room, further compounds this sense of a glimpse into the unknown. For those without direct experience of the processes of theatre production these jobs are, perhaps, rarely considered. The space of the control room is gently lit; with the small dim sources operators use to do their jobs now being used to highlight their spaces. The apparent simplicity of the gesture here belies the sophistication of the ability of manipulated light to conduct attention. Here, the light seems to operate principally as a reminder of the expansive processes at work in a venue of the scale of Sadler's Wells. The somatic experience reflects this too, *Hidden* brings its audience down into the basement as well as up into the high reaches of the upper circle. The paths in between these spaces seem to have received limited treatment for the experience, except for the occasional guiding dot on the floor or helpful sign. The backstage corridors are, like backstage corridors everywhere, functional spaces, that are mostly starkly lit (although some coloured light has been added to many of the corridors). The warmth created in these installations then seems particularly welcome, and seems to mark these workspaces as particularly appealing. This, the light seems to say, is where the magic happens. This sense is heightened by the presence, at each of the sites of *Hidden,* of glowing rocks. They seem to be a kind of ghostly stand-in for the human workers who usually occupy these spaces, or, more fancifully, a kind of mystic marker, announcing this a site of otherworldly energy. In terms of what light is doing in these first two pieces of *Hidden* then, it seems that light is both informing

the audience about the kinds of processes present, and lauding the work involved. Neither of these actions are unique to light; a textual reminder in a programme note, for example, might serve as a similarly strong reminder of the unseen backstage labour. Equally, a promenade tour through the building could have allowed an audience to encounter these spaces in their usual lighting conditions, and this would likely have provided a similarly satisfying glimpse behind the curtain. Nevertheless, in animating these spaces through light Carter prompts a specific kind of engagement that might not as easily translate to other media. This is perhaps an important point in contemporary scenographic scholarship; arguments about the potent creative, affective, social or political impact of scenography are not universally applicable – and other areas within theatre studies provide excellent examples of performance practice that negates, or seems to negate, the role of scenography. Yet, where scenography does become a central component of performance, it can occasion specific modes of engagement and generate new possible meanings and experiences. In this case, the light makes possible a kind of thinking about the selected aspects of production in terms beyond mere acknowledgement or educational reflections on the existence of these jobs and spaces. In theatricalising these spaces, enveloping the spaces of the absent subjects in a warm and inviting glow, the light exhibits that central dramatic principle of 'show don't tell'. Inviting an aesthetic experience of what might be termed purely practical spaces the light invites us to see beauty in the function, and to reconsider the significance of these 'hidden' roles. *Hidden Three,* however, represents an altogether different kind of doing in light, and this is the piece of the trio on which I will focus.

Figure 8 – *Hidden.*

Chantal Guevara (2016). Image source:
http://londondance.com/articles/features/sadlers-wells-in-light-and-sound-no-body/

Hidden Three

Leaving the stage after the opening piece, *Light Space* by Michael Hulls, a small group

of us are directed to leave via another door. I have already been advised to make sure

that I don't miss the limited capacity installation under the stage so I am hoping this

is why such a small group have been pulled aside. I am correct, and fifteen of us are

led around a corridor, down some stairs and through to a distinctly 'back-of-house'

feeling corridor. Warned to watch our step and mind our heads (taller members of

the group have to stoop) we climb up some bare metal steps, through a small door

to find a long narrow room with a neat row of folding chairs facing a variety of

theatrical lamps. There are rows of lanterns sitting on shelves, their lenses facing

towards us, as well as a row beneath hanging from a rail. In one corner there are a

pair of large lamps on stands and to the other side there is a rail with a large metal

lampshade hanging above a cluster of festooned bulbs sitting on low dollies. In this

densely packed collection of lanterns there is an array of type and shape, with each

subgroup displaying its own unique qualities. I recognise that these are mostly old lamps that are not likely to be in the venue's current rotation very often. We each take a seat, and have a moment to look around the room, there is a workbench to one side, with a lantern open as if for servicing. One of the glowing rocks sits on the seat in front of it, as though standing in for the technician servicing the lamp.

We hear the sound of footsteps passing overhead, then a door closing, followed by the click of a light switch. We are left for a moment in complete darkness. The sense produced, for me at least, is of having heard someone above power down and leave for the night. Moments later, like dolls in a fairy tale toyshop, the lanterns begin to flicker into life. It seems there is a gentle burst of energy as light ripples along the row of lanterns, with each one glowing for an instant before fading out as the light 'passes' to the next. With this movement a surge of light seems to pass from one side of the room to the other. The performance lasts for roughly ten minutes, over the course of which a kind of dialogue emerges with the lanterns glowing and fading in tandem. In every sense of the term, light is acting here in concert. The sound that accompanies the piece seems to emerge from the lanterns themselves, there is an electric crackle associated with each lantern.

While the presence – or more accurately, the staging – of the workbench might indicate that this piece is also primarily concerned with the *people* who work in this space, this is quickly dispelled as the focus is given over to the lighting instruments themselves. Accordingly, the structure of this piece is markedly different to the others in the series. The audience are relatively free to move around in the other sections of *Hidden,* where, like in a museum exhibit, visitors can dwell as long as they like, and focus on whatever might appeal to them. *Hidden: Three,* however, is perhaps much more like a conventional theatre piece than an installation. The audience sit in a row of seats, and watch as the action progresses through a sequence with a defined

beginning, middle, and end. The absence of human actors notwithstanding, there seems to be a clear dramaturgical arc to the performance, in rhythms of the shifting light building and developing over time. Stylistically, this piece represents a celebration of the quality of the tungsten light from the older lanterns, but at a deeper level the lanterns emerge as *characters* in the action. There is marked variety among them; each individual lantern, or each group of identical lanterns seems to display its own unique characteristics. The photography in Figure 8 seems to indicate a relatively uniform colour tone from each of the lanterns, in fact there was a variety of hues, from pale yellowish tones to deep murky orange, and these colours changed throughout the piece as the lanterns glowed at different intensities. Looking directly at them, the audience are offered a privileged view of the multiple kinds and sizes of glass lenses, and the shape, tone, and intensity of the light that emerges from each. As the piece builds, there is a growing sense of dialogue between these lanterns, a kind of call and response between them. This might be considered another kind of manifestation of what Jones terms 'the *livingness* of light' (Jones, 2004: 113. Emphasis in orignial.) that is, a certain presence of elemental energies (ibid.: 114).

Light as object

In presenting these lanterns as the primary focus in the piece, Carter seems to position this collection as a cast of characters. Analogous to dramatic theatre, these lanterns present a kind of ensemble; some of these characters work together, some alone, and distinct relationships seem to emerge between them. Unlike dramatic theatre, their message, if they can be said to have one, is not clearly decipherable. The structure of this piece, and its implicit invitation to view the assembled collection of stored lanterns as characters of a kind, exemplifies Jirí Veltřuský's assertion that 'even a lifeless object may be perceived as the performing subject' (in

Garvin, 1964: 84). Other examples of performance pieces without human actors seem to strengthen a sense of the possibility of light as an actor. Palmer notes that, for example, Giacomo Balla's staging of Stravinsky's *Feu d'Artifice,* explored the dynamism of light as its principal dramatic interlocutor (Palmer, 2013: 166-167). In this vein, the theatrical setting of *Hidden* is significant. While this installation bears some resemblance to examples of contemporary light art, the theatrical frame serves as a reminder of the –often underestimated – role of light within performance. As such the theatrical frame both invites consideration of the role of light within other examples of the genre, and plays on theatrical structure in positioning the bank of instruments as a cast of characters. Historically, banks of lighting instruments were largely hidden from view, until the early twentieth century when Brecht argued that the lighting apparatus should be exposed to disrupt the illusion of theatrical performance as spontaneous (Brecht and Willett, 1992: 141). By contrast, the exposure of the lanterns in *Hidden Three* forms the content of the work, rather than the exposure of its mechanisms. Thus, it is not only the human labour in these spaces that Carter seems to identify as 'hidden'; this piece reveals the usually obscured individual qualities of the lanterns that produce theatre light. As Van Baarle asserts '[r]endering objects performative – or unveiling the object's performativity – is to a certain extent a play with theatre's rules and the spectator's expectations', and that 'explicitly placing the object in the performative setting of the theatre already implies a basic anthropomorphization' (2015: 40).

The above discussion of light in terms of character may seem an excessive claim to autonomy for light itself, and for the individual lanterns, when they have so clearly been assembled and controlled by a human artist. Within the context of performance, however, light can be considered a kind of object, and one that exerts a particular kind of power. McKinney observes that a problem with attributing

agency to objects 'is that the term object tends to implicate the artist-maker and lead us back to the idea of an active human agent exerting one's intention on passive materials' and that a better option in theorising performing objects may be to 'focus on their capacity to become active participants, incomplete potentialities' (2015b: 126). Clearly, in the case of *Hidden,* Carter's role as the artist who has created the work is significant. The dialogue that emerges (or appears to emerge) among the lanterns has, of course, been designed and implemented by Carter and her team. Accordingly, this installation can be read in terms of external creative labour manifesting through light, but at the level of experience, the content of the work – or, in Crowther's terms the *super-structural* emergence of its formal relations – emerges through the quality of the light itself. This quality may be set in motion by an artist but it nonetheless exploits an inherent timbre in the material of light itself as an active participant of the action.

Reflections – Towards an Ontology of Light

The discussion of light as a material here frames light as a kind of object in the action, and argues the case for this kind of material consideration of a classically ephemeral substance. Additionally, the perspective of the relatively new philosophical school of object oriented ontology invites reconsideration of the perceived human centrality in western philosophical thought. In particular, Harman, whom I have already discussed, and Ian Bogost present theories of objects that open up new analytical avenues for the consideration of light. The discourse of Harman and Bogost's object oriented ontology attests that objects themselves hold a fundamental reality – or in Harman's case, that objects *are* the fundamental level of reality: 'the ultimate stuff of the cosmos' that are 'never exhausted by any of their relations' (Harman, 2013: 7). Bogost describes his take on this philosophical school

as an ontology in which '*all things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally*' (Bogost, 2012: 11. Emphasis in original.).

Discussion of the performance examples in this chapter have proceeded along two crucial axes: one charting the materiality of light in respect of its apparent immateriality, and the other tracing the relationship between light as an object and the objects that make light. Firstly, in addressing the tension around light as a material, it is interesting to note that, implicit in the discussions about light as a medium to which I referred in Chapter Three, there is some sense of a metaphorical rendering of light as a substance. The frequent analogies between light and water in the literature serve to reconcile the definitive, concrete relationship lighting designers may feel to light with the wider cultural and scientific understanding that light is wholly immaterial in itself. As Joanne Zerdy and Marlis Schweitzer have recently argued, light is 'an animating performer in its own right' (2016: 5). They draw productively on metaphors relating to light in order to argue that light produces provocative atmospheres with the power to 'affect humans and all other beings, entities, and forces that come within its seemingly limitless reach' (ibid.: 17). In understanding the material reality of light as a performing entity, it is significant to note that, as Kirkkopelto argues, theatrical performance generates its own kind of reality, distinct from the everyday world. For Kirkkopelto the phenomenological experience of theatre and theatricality is supported by 'a structure and a set of dynamics that can be analysed, an essence that cannot be reduced to other forms of experience or deducted from them' (Kirkkopelto, 2009: 230), which may be termed the 'scene'. His argument centres around the anthropocentrism of the theatrical experience, dealing with the presence of the human figure as central. Elsewhere, drawing on Bogost's concept of flat ontology, he argues that the compositional equality between elements is limited in the performing arts because they concern

'living and speaking human bodies' (Kirkkopelto, 2016: 49). The exploration of the examples here has sought to extend this compositional equality to light, to explore how it contributes dramaturgically and affectively through its status as a kind of liminal object.

What the examples in this chapter show is that light can be considered in material terms, that light can have a distinct kind of material presence in performance. Furthermore, it is not only possible to view light in these terms, but productive as doing so opens up rich possibilities in considering the nature of theatrical phenomena. Crucially, light's materiality does not directly correlate with that of other objects, at the heart of the apparent tangibility of light is its resolute ephemerality. The materiality of light is fundamentally mutable, shifting, inconstant. This is perhaps what lends it power, as seemingly solid objects can melt away, barriers dissolve and continually transform. This mutability, however, does not mean that light is lacking materiality, but suggests, rather, that the materiality of light is uniquely ephemeral. As Fischer-Lichte argues, '[m]eaning cannot be separated from materiality or subsumed under a single concept. Rather meaning is coterminous with the object's material appearance' (2008: 156). The granting of *apparent* physical substance to light may be thought of as dramaturgically equivalent to the presence of tangible physical substances. In, for example, *17 Border Crossings,* there is little distinction between how solid objects (like the table) and immaterial objects (like the projected boxes) are treated. In using the examples in this chapter to think through the question of whether and how light can be considered a material presence in performance I have produced a language for describing light as a kind of independent actor, with discrete actions, discernible characteristics, and consequential progression through space and time.

It is also interesting to note the range of relationships between performers and light. *17 Border Crossings* and *Plexus* are both solo performances with distinct relationships to the environments around them, while *Hidden* presents a cast of lights with relationships to each other. These examples present a kind of journey for light: in *17 Border Crossings* the objects that make light are manipulated by an actor, in *Plexus* the light continually modulates the space, manipulating both the environment around the dancer and her movements within the space, and finally, in *Hidden* we are presented with both the objects that make light and light itself as an object in the space. There is a notable contrast in the relationship between light and the solo performers in each of *17 Border Crossings* and *Plexus*. This contrast – recalling the previous discussion of *Krapp's Last Tape* – seems to revolve largely around questions of agency and control. Naturally, these are also questions of genre; as a storyteller one assumes that Phillips is more at liberty to initiate change in the performance than Ito would be as she performs a highly choreographed dance work accompanied by exacting light and music cues. Nevertheless, even within these obvious differences it is interesting to consider what is afforded or suggested by the light. In *17 Border Crossings* the light, and its manipulability, lend a kind of playful exposure to the processes of performing, but also demonstrate the multiple levels of relationships at play in the light, emphasising its status as a kind of philosophical object. In *Plexus,* the light seems to act *on* the stage, and on the performer, touching the set at various points and alternately revealing and concealing points of the stage.

Thinking through the apparent haptic interrelationships between light and other stage elements also enables an extension of the revealing and concealing of light discussed in the previous chapter. The textural presence of light, as a kind of touch, demonstrates that light does not only *uncover* (in Heidegger's sense, of opening up a world) but can also cover an object with light. Similarly, considering the glare of the

antipodean sun in contrast to the heliocentric concepts of enlightenment tethered to the European experience of sun, Bolt observes that 'Heidegger fails to take into account the role of light as actor' (Bolt, 2004: 129). Through exploring the tangibility of light the multiplicity of its relations becomes clear. Recognising such multiplicity, it becomes possible to posit a more nuanced understanding of light as a kind of equipment, than is present in other sources that define the equipmentality of light in a more limiting, facilitative way. My interpretation of this philosophy of equipment follows Harman's reading of Heidegger, from which he derives the term 'tool-being' (2002). Harman extends Heidegger's understanding of tools as 'ready-to-hand' entities, arguing that this kind of being, the exchange between tool and broken tool can be applied to all entities. While Heidegger accounts for equipment through his well-known analogy of the hammer, Harman's account of the bridge as equipment is perhaps more readily applied to light.

> The reality of the bridge is not to be found in its amalgam of asphalt and cable, but in the geographical fact of "traversable gorge". The bridge is a bridge-effect; the tool is a force that generates a world, one in which the canyon is no longer an obstacle. It is crucial to note that this is not restricted to tools of human origin: there are also dependable earth-formations that provide useful caravan routes or hold back the sea. At each moment, the world is a geography of objects, whether these objects are made of the latest plastics or were born at the dawn of time (Harman, 2002: 21).

Thinking of equipment in this way, as a force that generates a world, begins to demonstrate the significance of light as dramaturgical equipment. In this sense, equipment *is* what equipment *does*. As dramaturgical equipment – as has been evident throughout this chapter – light impacts substantially on the structure and experience of performance. Heidegger describes equipment as having an affinity with the artwork because of its status as a made thing, produced through human activity (Heidegger and Krell, 2011: 154). Yet, equipment is, for Heidegger, *less* than an artwork because it is not self-sufficient in the way an artwork would be (ibid.: 155).

Looking however, to more contemporary understandings of objects and equipment, we find a view of things that are 'independent from their constituent parts while remaining dependent on them' (Bogost, 2012: 23). Such a conception aligns with the parataxis and simultaneity in Lehmann's concept of the postdramatic, and accounts for the ways in which light can be an independent contributor to performance while remaining a constituent part of a larger aesthetic complex.

Chapter 5 : **Light as a Generative Force**

The interdisciplinary scope of performance studies, and the extension of critical concepts from both within and without of the discipline, frame performance as a fecund means of understanding wider questions about social, political, and personal issues.[25] As such, performance is understood – in terms beyond representation or hollow re-enactment – as an important means of generating and understanding the world, or in Hamera's pithy summary of Victor Turner's concept of social drama, performance is about 'making, not faking' (Hamera, 2006: 46). Increasingly, researchers and practitioners of scenography are seeking to articulate how this generative dimension of performance manifests through scenography and scenographic materials (Hannah and Harsløf, 2008; McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 189-197; Trimingham, 2013). Less has been written that tackles how light, specifically, might be thought of in generative terms, and this is precisely the question I turn to in this chapter. The previous two chapters have both focused on the *action* of light within performance, framing the scenographic capacity of light as a kind of doing. Chapter Three argued that light can have a transformative impact on other aspects of performance, through its capacity to mediate the perceptual availability, and appearance of any given element across time and space. Chapter Four then argued that in addition to transforming other elements, light also performs as a kind of object in its own right, examining the substantive and material presences of light in performance. Following these threads, I will now seek to demonstrate how, in respect of both of these features, light can become a generative

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[25] As in, for example, Turner (1982); Butler (1997; 2006); Balme (1999); Bharucha (2000).

force in performance, making present what would not otherwise be so. As such, this chapter delves deeper into the generative capacity of light, suggested in Dorn's statement, quoted earlier, that stage light works to create new realities (in Keller, 1999: 10), asking what kind of realities can be created by light, and how light works to create these new realities?

Productive light

In framing light as a generative force, it must be acknowledged that there are, in fact, multiple levels on which light could be so considered. On an immediate level, light produces a number of practical or formal elements in performance, such as: the possibility of vision; shadow; contrast; colour; focus; and space. Yet, there is also a deeper, more conceptual, level at which light can be considered generative; in performance, this is the dramaturgical level at which light can generate meanings and affects in excess of its formal properties. There is a link here between this sense of light as a generative force and concepts of performativity (Austin et al., 1975; Butler, 1997), and also with what Palmer calls 'creative light' (2013). I explore the question of the generative capacity of light using a framework drawn from Heidegger's understanding of *poiesis* as a bringing forth. In separating the essence of technology from the technological, Heidegger connects technology to *techne,* – 'the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts' (1977: 13) – as well as to *episteme, poiesis,* and *alethuein* – modes of knowing and revealing the world. In making this connection, Heidegger is departing from the Aristotelian understanding in which *poiesis* and *episteme* are separate branches of knowledge, the former relating to practical know-how and the latter to theoretical knowledge. Applied to performance Heidegger's framing of *techne* as a way of revealing truth – or bringing into being – enables a consideration of light as a

generative, creative practice; not passively displaying the presence of what is on stage but actively constructing the means of its presence. It is important to emphasise the point that *techne* and technology are not synonymous, but that rather, as Kozel observes, *techne* refers to 'the broad human activity of bringing things into being' (2005: 34). Heidegger holds that the question of *techne* is not sufficiently contained in an opposition or comparison between art and craft because *techne* does not correspond directly to either art or craft, but encompasses both as modes of bringing forth. Through Heidegger's account of the essence of technology comes the understanding that technology – or in the case of the present research, light – can 'render, rather than efface, presence – be it a theatrical presence, or a more existential being-in-the-world' (Albright, 2012: 22). Implicitly, too, this kind of consideration furthers the aim of this research to articulate the role of light beyond the means of its production, and in terms of its structural, dramaturgical impact on the event of performance. In this vein, Stewart's concept of 'dance photology' describes dance lighting as a kind of philosophical practice, a kind of embodied showing of knowing (2016). The kind of philosophical knowledge generated by light, I argue, is not limited to the associations between light and Enlightenment philosophy, in which light is the means to truth, but also includes the occlusive practices of light.

Bringing forth

My aim in seeking to align my understanding of scenographic light here with Heidegger's account of *poiesis* is to go beyond conceiving of artificial performance lighting only as something that has been produced, and to examine what it, in turn, brings into being. In this way Heidegger's conception of *poiesis* as a phenomenon that produces something beyond itself (1977: 13) is instructive in viewing the light

produced in performance not only as the end point in an artistic and technical process, but as the beginning of another process. As Langer writes about aesthetics, while art may consist in an arrangement of forms; '[s]omething emerges from the arrangement of tones or colors, which was not there before, and this rather than the arranged material, is the symbol of sentience' (2008: 325). This sense of something emerging through aesthetic experience not only aligns with Heidegger's understanding of art, but also represents a pivotal shift in thinking about light. Moving beyond thinking about how light is produced in performance (Pilbrow, 1997; Fraser, 1999; Reid, 2001; Essig, 2005; Moran, 2007; Mort, 2015) to questioning the nature of the experience created by and through light in performance reveals light as a dramaturgically consequential component of performance.

Moving towards a sense of light as a *poietic* element in performance, then, achieves a number of important tasks in developing a more rigorous understanding of the role of light in performance. Firstly, following Heidegger in making space between the (technological) manifestations of performance light and its essential role as a performance material, and secondly understanding *poiesis* as a particularly creative phenomenon of production. *Poiesis* is a creative force in the sense that it indicates the opening up of a world; while *techne* means 'to cause to appear', *poiesis* means 'to produce into presence' (Whitehead, 2003). Or in Heidegger's terms, *techne* belongs to *poiesis* because it 'reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us' (1977: 13). Wrathall charts this theme of unconcealment as *aletheia* through Heidegger's work, noting that there is a 'productive ambiguity' at its centre: 'unconcealment consists in bringing things to awareness, but also creating the context within which things can be what they are' (2011: 2). This sense of creating the context in which things come to be is particularly relevant in the constructed environments of performance. Elsewhere in performance studies Fischer-Lichte has

also applied concepts of *poiesis* to examine performance, defining performance as an 'autopoietic feedback loop' (2008). Although she draws the term 'poiesis' from Maturana and Varela's work in cognitive biology – where they use the term to describe self-sustaining, or self-generating biological systems (1980) – Fischer-Lichte's account of performativity is infused with the idea of *bringing-forth,* which is so important in Heidegger's understanding of *poiesis* in *The Question Concerning Technology*. Fisher-Lichte uses the frame of the autopoietic feedback loop to lay out the kinds of conditions through which concepts and emotions are brought forth in performance. Her analysis is focused on the performer and on the reciprocal hermeneutic connection between performer and spectator. This work frames performance as a dynamic process of bringing forth. Regarding the position of the actor after the performative turn of the 1960s Fischer-Lichte notes that the 'performative turn also affected the art of acting, conceived now as a physical and simultaneously creative activity that brought forth new meanings on its own' (ibid.: 80). This research aims to isolate light for consideration, in much the same way that Fischer-Lichte does with acting, to demonstrate ways in which scenographic light can be considered a creative activity, bringing forth meanings in performance.

It is worth noting that Heidegger distinguishes between the modes of revealing occasioned by ancient and modern technology, claiming that ancient technology, that of the craftsperson, reveals in the sense of *bringing forth* while modern technology reveals by *challenging forth.* In Heidegger's terms this challenging forth is more destructive, reducing the earth to 'standing reserve' (1977: 17). There is a romanticism in Heidegger's depiction of ancient technology, a mirror to his assumption that only *modern* technology could operate in a mode of challenging forth. This assumption, that challenging forth and bringing forth belong to fundamentally different sets of technological development can be easily challenged

(Waddington, 2005: 572). It is more productive to consider bringing forth and challenging forth as different approaches to technology. It is, for instance, possible to consider the perceived position of light within performance hierarchies through this tension between bringing forth and challenging forth. Prevailing assumptions that light is a facilitative, rather than creative, force in performance, align with conceptions of challenging forth and standing reserve. Analogous to the way a hydroelectric dam (to use Heidegger's example) reduces a river to a source of electricity, thus reducing its presence as a river in itself, considering light as merely a means to make a performance visible reduces its force as an element in itself. 'Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object' (Heidegger, 1977: 17). Considering light, instead, in terms of *poiesis* of 'the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself' (ibid.: 10) shows the constructive, generative revealing at play in an aesthetic casting of light onto a subject. Curiously, the terminology with which light is sometimes dismissed does not map cleanly onto Heidegger's distinctions. Debates around the creative status of light within performance tend to question whether light is an art *or* a craft (Moran, 2017: 150 – 155; Caird, 2016). Within lighting, the term 'craft' seems to be used in opposition to the sense of artistry, or creativity. In theatrical circles 'craft' and the 'technical' are viewed as similar aspects of work, while for Heidegger craft and modern technology are opposed. Drawing from Heidegger establishes the fragility of this binary, showing that art and craft are not either-or, but both-and, as both as aspects of the bringing-forth that belongs to *techne* and *poiesis*. Hunt and Melrose also turn to terms of *techne* and *poiesis* to argue for the reconsideration of traditional hierarchies in performance production (2005). They aim to reconcile views of art and craft through arguing for the recognition of the creative practices of the technician as '*mastercraftsperson*' (ibid.: 70), I am instead

aiming this reconciliation in the material of light itself, rather than in the creative practices attendant to it.

The nature of light

Before advancing to a discussion of the generative power of light in this chapter's performance examples it is worth dwelling on the nature of light, both ontologically and conceptually, that makes it such a powerful material in generating meanings. The potential power of light in performance has, in the preceding chapters been partially explained through its impact on other elements in performance, and through its own peculiar materiality, but neither of these dimensions can entirely capture the theatrical and creative power of designed light. Further to the aspects of light explored in Chapters Three and Four, there is an evocative power unique to light, in part due to the particular nature of light, both ontologically and conceptually. The idea of light is a founding metaphor of western philosophy (Blumenberg, 1993) and is used broadly as a potent metaphor for life, and truth, and love, across poetry and literature. And it is this metaphorical lineage to which Zerdy and Schweitzer attribute at least some of light's affective, generative potency (2016). Blumenberg's evocative description of light captures something of the mutable quality at the root of its metaphoric use in literature and philosophy:

> Light can be a directed beam, a guiding beacon in the dark, an advancing dethronement of darkness, but also a dazzling superabundance, as well as an indefinite, omnipresent brightness containing all: the 'letting-appear' that does not itself appear, the inaccessible accessibility of things. Light and darkness represent the absolute metaphysical counterforces that exclude each other and yet bring the world constellation into existence. Or, light is the absolute power of Being, which reveals the paltriness of the dark, which can no longer exist once light has come into existence. Light is intrusive; in its abundance, it creates the overwhelming, conspicuous clarity with which the true "comes forth"; it forcibly acquires the irrevocability of Spirit's consent. Light remains what it is while letting the infinite participate in it; it is consumption without loss. Light produces space, distance, orientation, calm

> contemplation; it is the gift that makes no demands, the illumination
> capable of conquering without force (1993: 31).

This passage from Blumenberg encompasses ideas of light as both a material and a concept. The idea of light as a 'letting-appear' that does not itself appear relates to the idea that light itself is invisible; it can be seen only by virtue of the contact it makes with other elements. Crucially, Blumenberg's discussion of light in this passage as a 'letting appear', chimes closely with observations about performance light's capacity to create the visible worlds of performance, or in Loïe Fuller's words 'render into the visible realm that which we dream of' (in Albright, 2007: 141). Blumenberg's statement that light creates the clarity in which the 'true "comes forth"' further provides a clear parallel to Heidegger's understanding of *aletheia* as a 'bringing-forth'.

From poetics to *poiesis*

Thinking of light in terms of poetry or the poetic provides a way of accounting for its ineffable, mysterious qualities. As a means of progressing an understanding of light as a dynamic and creatively important performance force, however, this language remains rather vague. Indeed, ideas of the poetic quality of light are often used as a by-word for the facets of light that remain difficult to articulate. Arguably, part of the value of light as an evocative material within performance stems from the fact that it seems to operate at a level not immediately translatable into language, or other means. Light is complex and abstruse, subject to the vagaries of human perception, and this intangibility perhaps grants it some of its power. Barthes discusses this kind of indeterminate quality of images in his essay *The Third Meaning,* terming it 'obtuse meaning' (1978: 62). For Barthes this is the level of meaning that carries strong emotions and yet eludes definition. It 'can be seen as an *accent*, the very form of an emergence, [...] marking the heavy layer of informations and

significations' (ibid. Emphasis in original.). Interpreting the obtuse and poetic dimensions of light as an active bringing forth positions light more strongly as an independently generative force in performance. The concept of *poiesis,* particularly as it is used by Heidegger in *The Question Concerning Technology,* provides a framework for analysing the expressive power of light in performance as an active process of making. The sense of light as a poetic force is integral to an understanding of the significance of light beyond the merely sensory. Abulafia considers the 'poetics of light' to be the realm where light becomes meaningful, beyond its formal appearance (2016: 3). While this division between, what he terms, the poetic and the aesthetic creates a productive dialogue around the possibility of expression through light, the term 'poetics of light' remains somewhat problematic, not least because the amalgamation of 'aesthetic' with 'formal properties' negates the depth of experience contained in a broader conception of the aesthetic. The word 'poetic' often refers to the abstract or obtuse meanings produced in works of art, and it therefore encapsulates the imaginative associations generated through the ephemeral medium of light. However, as a word which, in a general sense, aligns with the ephemerality of light 'poetic' also obscures the precise nature of light's activity. I consider scenographic light to be an active process involving the spatial and temporal inscription of meaning. This is certainly not incompatible with an understanding of light as poetic, although it requires a more exhaustive exploration of what, precisely, is implied by such poetics. In addition to its obvious reference to poets and poetry, 'poetic' also means creative, formative, and productive. This understanding is implicit in Abulafia's account, but it is nonetheless worthwhile to trace the exact meaning in relation to light. Etymologically, the word 'poetic' is derived from *poiein* in Ancient Greek, meaning to act, to do, or to make. From this same root came *poiesis*, a philosophy of action. *Poiesis* refers to the process of making or producing;

for Aristotle this process is a making with an end beyond itself, in contrast to *praxis*, which is action with value in itself (Bunnin and Yu, 2004: 534). The fact that this production implies something beyond itself is significant in terms of how light operates within the multimodal experience of performance. Examining light as a process of *poiesis* makes explicit not just that light can be expressive, but that light is expressive of something. In this vein, the role of light in the production of meaning becomes apparent. At the heart of the poetics of light, then, is a concept of *poiesis*, an active making or production. Additionally, examining light through a lens of *poiesis* facilitates a more specific language for the affective power of light than emerges in the more common description of light as 'poetic'. While, etymologically, these words share the same root, discussions of 'poetic' light tend to use poetry as a proxy for an expressive quality that is difficult to articulate. Because a core objective of this thesis is to posit a theoretical account of the power of performance light, a generative understanding of *poiesis* offers a more robust frame with which to discuss ephemerally affective scenographic light. In consequence, I hope, the concept of scenographic light, buttressed by an understanding of *poiesis* as a generative force, provides a more thorough critical lens with which to understand the role of light in performance.

Examples in this chapter

Turning now to performance examples, this chapter extends the thinking in Chapters Three and Four by exploring the performative capabilities of scenographic light as a result of its mediation and transformation of other performance elements and its presence as a performing entity in its own right. As has been the case throughout, there is a mix of performance styles and genres among the three examples explored; Enda Walsh's *Ballyturk* (2014)*,* staged by Landmark Productions;

Piece No. 43 (2015)*,* by the Russell Maliphant Company; and Pan Pan Theatre's adaptation of *All That Fall* (2011). As outlined in Chapter Two, this range of examples is an important principle of the research, and aims to focus attention on the extent to which light, as a material for and of performance, can come to be a generative presence in live performance, rather than emphasising any particularly effective instance of this. In terms of the focus of this chapter, moreover, this particular combination of examples is indicative of the multiplicity of ways in which light can make a generative contribution to performance; in each case producing something that would not otherwise be present in the dramaturgy. The first example, *Ballyturk,* is a play with an explicit focus on character and language. Yet, within this frame the light – designed by Adam Silverman – not only enhances the moods of the play but actively constitutes changes in the action. As a piece of contemporary dance *Piece No. 43* exemplifies some of the traits of dance lighting that have already been discussed in relation to *Political Mother* and *Plexus,* namely the emphasis on light as a thing in itself (Moran, 2017: 27) and on the presence of light as a kind of physical force (Aronson, 2005: 35). Moreover, the central structure of this piece's dramaturgy is produced through light, creating both dynamic aesthetic structures and impetus for the dancers' actions. Formally, the production of *All That Fall* examined here bears some similarity with *Hidden Three* discussed in the previous chapter. Both position their audience opposite banks of theatrical lanterns, and both present light as the foremost performing presence within the space. In spite of these outward similarities, there are significant and substantial differences to the role of light in each, differences that are accentuated in *All That Fall*'s interrelationships between text, voice, space, story, and light.

Lighting a Play and the Play of Light – *Ballyturk*

Up to this point, the examples of performance that I have presented, while diverse, have each involved a demonstrably prominent use of light. *Ballyturk,* however, is a production that might, ostensibly, appear to break this pattern. Written and directed by Walsh himself, the play is built around language and around an intense focus on its two central characters and the strange, hermetic world they live in. While there are key moments in which light plays an important part, this production is not an immediate exemplar of scenographic light in performance, however, as I will demonstrate, the light is in fact a more powerful agent than might be initially expected. For much of the action lighting seems to recede into the background, present without being dominant. It is, however, important to note that light in performance can be an affective force in performance without being overly foregrounded, and in this regard *Ballyturk* demonstrates important ways that light works generatively in more conventional theatrical settings than I have previously discussed here. This example is more narratively dense than the other examples included thus far, and while some narrative detail is essential in understanding the significance of light, the discussion here will focus on the progression of light through three distinct fragments of the play. Taken together these segments provide a synchronic view of the action of light at pivotal moments in the play, and demonstrate the expression of mounting tension through light in similar but distinct configurations. I will first describe each of these segments, highlighting the ways in which light works within each scene, before elaborating more fully on the aspects of light revealed by this example.

Figure 9 – *Ballyturk.*

Image source: http://stageandscreendesignireland.ie/designers/jamie-vartan/

Fragment One: The Routine

A cuckoo clock chimes in a large, grubby room. The space is enclosed by high walls, covered in rough charcoal drawings, indistinct stains and peeling wallpaper. Pushed against the edges of this space is a collection of mismatched melamine furniture; wardrobes, large cupboards, and drawers, some mounted at varying heights on the walls. In the rear corner on one side is a small kitchenette, with a fridge and a microwave, in the opposite corner there is a tiled shower cubicle, next to which, somewhat incongruously, is a pink-basketed bicycle on a stand. The rear wall, between these domestic corners, is partially covered by a mustard-brown curtain. The central floor space of the room is mostly clear, a vast expanse of stained grey carpet tiles. Above, instead of a flat ceiling, there are large (seemingly) concrete beams, bridged by metal bars. Light streams in from above this space, leaving dark

shadows across the walls and floor as the light catches on the beams and bars.[26]

Hearing the sound of the cuckoo clock, the two occupants of the room – both shabbily-dressed men, one approximately in his thirties, and the other in his forties – burst into action. The younger of the two men runs to the back wall and hurriedly draws the curtains, revealing a neon red sign, spelling 'Ballyturk' in glowing capital letters, and a collage of hand drawn faces. As the curtains open the light in the room begins to flicker. Meanwhile, the other man stands centre stage, facing this newly revealed wall and throwing darts at the drawings. As each dart lands, the younger man, now holding a microphone, announces the name of the character it has landed on. After all three darts have been thrown, the younger man leaves down the microphone and cranks a lever, triggering the appearance of a sharp rectangle of light around the other man and plunging the rest of the stage into darkness, bar the neon sign. This new central box of light covers a central strip of the floor and reaches up the back wall, cutting off sharply just below the 'Ballyturk' sign. Standing in this central strip of light, the older man embodies the character of 'Cody Finnington', the last name to have been called out. He begins to narrate his actions: stepping out in a new yellow jumper and feeling the judgement of the other characters in the town. After some time, this fictional character encounters another in the story – the younger man now appears in a spotlight to the side of the stage.

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[26] Figure 9, above, provides a clear view of the stage, and of the shadows cast across it, but appears to be an image composed specifically for publicity purposes. The position of the characters in this photograph is drawn from the play – from an early sequence in which they run through a series of exercises and morning ablutions to the strains of 'The Look of Love' by ABC. In that scene however, the rear curtains have yet to be opened. This kind of conflating of scenes for the purposes of getting good photographs is commonplace in theatre practice, and is one of the reasons (discussed in Chapter One) why photographs make unreliable sources of documentation if taken in isolation.

There is a sense that they are performing for each other, telling the story to each other. This character disappears and the younger man slips into the dark of the other side of the stage. Again the story continues, with 'Cody' now entering the local shop. The younger man now appears perched high up on the wall, in a small circular spotlight, embodying the character of 'Joyce Drench' the local shopkeeper. They speak, with 'Joyce' making disparaging comments about Cody's yellow jumper. As they speak, 'Cody' asks for low-fat milk – again, a choice poorly looked upon by the cantankerous shop keeper – and crosses to pick up a bottle (one they have previously placed on the floor in preparation). As he crosses outside the bounds of the central strip, the light changes with him, switching to form another sharply defined passage across the downstage edge of the stage, this time stretching left to right instead of front to back. He crosses back to the centre, and the light returns to the central box of light, this time with 'Joyce' appearing at the edge of the box, kneeling on a pair of slippers. 'Cody' continues with mounting discomfort feeling the eyes of the town watching him. Now he encounters a new character, 'Larry Aspen', the younger man taking on this role in a spotlight to the left of the stage, that is almost, but not quite the same as the previous spotlight in that position. The exchange between the two characters becomes increasingly hostile, and 'Cody' leaves his central spot, describing how he escapes to the woods. Now, as the two characters speak they are each in a separate shape defined by light, The younger man on the left, in a circular spot light and 'Cody' on the opposite side of the stage in a small rectangle of light. There is a clear stretch of dark between the characters, and the glowing red letters of Ballyturk, on the wall behind them.

At this point, crucially, there appears to be a kind of rupture in the light. The story stalls momentarily, they appear to have run out of things to stay. The two men stare at each other, slightly breathless from their frenetic activity of the preceding scene,

one of them pulls an empty packet of crisps out of his pocket and begins to fiddle with it. During this stall, the light of the room begins to bleed back in over the sharp shapes of the storytelling light. And, then, suddenly, the older man finds a way back in to the story, 'and that's when it starts' (Walsh, 2014: 239). As if banished by this stroke of inspiration, the stark light of the room recedes and the stage returns to the isolated spots of the storytelling state. Now the story progresses more, and 'Cody' crosses, along the shaft of light back to the central space, the light following him to return to the central rectangle with which this sequence started. Until, reaching a resolution, the story comes to a close and the light returns to the full stage. Unlike before the light does not now come from above, but from the front, meaning that in place of the diagonal and vertical shadows there is a solid line of darkness across the stage.

This sequence occurs roughly half an hour into the play, and forms the first full view into the ritualised story-telling routine that seems central to the characters' lives. Crucially, in terms of understanding the dramaturgical significance of the light, this sequence also clearly demonstrates the link between light and the characters' storytelling, and reveals both the diegetic an the non-diegetic operation of light in the world of this play. Given the thematic importance of storytelling in the play, the link established here between enacted story and shifting light is vital in understanding the position of light within the world of the play.[27] This section establishes that there are two distinct 'worlds' created through light in this play – the light of the room and the

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[27] Interestingly, the motif of characters controlling light on stage in the service of storytelling is also notably evident in an earlier Walsh play, *The Walworth Farce* (2006), the original production of which was directed by Michael Murfi, the actor who here plays the older character in *Ballyturk*.

light of the storytelling. The light of the room broadly covers the full stage, but features some subtle shifts in colour tone and in the line of shadows on the floors and walls. The theatricalised storytelling light, by contrast, is defined by sharp distinct pools of light, surrounded by darkness; first the corridor apparently controlled by the lever, and then the additional spots and shafts of light that appear to meet the cast of invented characters as they are embodied onstage. The lever indicates a level of control that the characters exert over the lighting, that they have incorporated this use of light into their rituals of impersonation. Initially controlled by the characters, through the use of the lever, the storytelling light also responds to their changing positions on the stage as the story progresses, a feature that becomes even more striking in later sequences. Also established in this scene is the urgency with which the characters recount and enact the stories of their invented world, this is a core theme in *Ballyturk* but is also a recurring motif throughout Walsh's work, where characters frequently occupy isolated, hermetic worlds where they are confined both spatially and through their entrapment in stories (see Pilny, 2016: 84 – 85).

Another important feature established in this sequence is the advancing and retreating line of shadow across the walls. Most of the light in the space seems to come from above, through bars in the ceiling of their room. Some of these shadows can be seen above in Figure 9, where they appear as vertical lines, with the broken light shining straight down on the carpet. During the action the light seems to shift dramatically, with a menacing line of shadow appearing lower and lower down the grey cluttered walls of their home, echoing, perhaps, the sense of 'foreboding' established in the dialogue:

> One: So to finish what I started earlier –
> Two: Right.

One:	– there was a terrible – whatyacallit – a terrible?
Two:	Wind?
One:	No a terrible – it's a feeling – a sensation –
Two:	A draft?
One:	It's like a draft but more overriding.
Two:	A breeze?
One:	Less of a breeze and even more invisible.
Two:	A waft?
One:	Tell me something of no importance and the word will come to me guaranteed.
Two:	Francie Lyon's head was twenty inches wider than his neck – from a distance he looked like a wandering yield sign.
One:	Forebodance!
Two:	Foreboding.
One:	Foreboding?
Two:	Foreboding.
One:	A terrible foreboding!

<div align="right">(Walsh, 2014: 226)</div>

This advancing shadow is a subtle presence throughout the play, and seems to operate as both a kind of visual metaphor (Rebellato, 2009: 25) and a silent presence in itself. Of the shadows created in this piece it is possible to discern two different kinds of shadows; shadows, cast by the bars in the roof, throwing angled lines over the stage, and harder solid shadows that seems to cleave the set in two. This harder shadow seems the more menacing in part because it presents such a limiting ceiling of darkness, actively closing in the space of the room, and in part because it seems to advance as a kind of presence in itself, rather than as a clear shadow *of* something else. Roberto Casati holds that shadows are both lesser entities, diminutions of the objects that make them, and, fundamentally, negative things (2004: 6). This kind of oxymoronic quality of the shadow as a kind of negative thing provides a kind of visual/spatial correlative to the sense of foreboding hinted at in the dialogue. Casati's further elaboration of shadows as a lack of light, or a *hole* in the light (ibid.: 51) speaks to this sense of portentous absence. At the same time, the quality of this

particular shadow, as a line of darkness pushing down on the walls of the set seems not only negative, but destructive.[28] The other shadows in this performance, such as the softer shadows cast by the visible bars in the ceiling, or the shadows cast by the actors themselves as they move about the room, have clearly discernible subjects. As an example, each of the appearances of the line across the back walls, the light also casts softer diagonal shadows of the men themselves, so that each has a pair of shadows protruding from his feet towards the upper corners of the stage. These shadows feel substantively different to the growing darkness overhead because they are whole and complete, each is, in Casati's terms, a hole in the light in the shape of the person to whom it is attached. The looming band of darkness across the stage in this instance, by contrast, does not have as clear a subject.

The entry recorded in my notebook seems to emphasise an interpretation of this shadow as somehow oppressive:

> *Blackout. When the light returns (suddenly) it is entirely from the front; it is harsh, cold, flattening. It feels as though all the warmth has been sucked out of the room and there is a dark, sharp, and menacing shadow sitting above the room, pressing down on the space.*

Victor Stoichita argues that uncanny distortions of this kind represent the 'externalization of the person's inner self' (1997: 150). One prominent example in Soitchita's account is in a still image from the 1920 film *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* in

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[28] Interestingly, when I saw this piece in The Abbey Theatre in Dublin, Olwen Fouéré, in the role of Three, had her head partially in the dark during her first monologue, because she was standing so close to the boundary of the light. As the performance in question was a preview it is quite likely that this was a simple error, rather than an intentional change. Nevertheless, this detail helps to demonstrate how low the line of darkness was at this point in the play.

which a distorted shadow of the eponymous doctor looms large and menacing, hinting at the evil underneath the character's surface. Here, instead of a figure looming, it seems that the structure of the room has broken loose like the doctor's shadow does in the film. The room itself is distorting, or seems to be, closing in around them, it may be a showing of the foreboding that the characters feel, or, perhaps, an aspect of the threat made manifest.

Fragment Two: A Crisis

Later, following a scene of mental and emotional distress where the younger character seems to break down, the cuckoo clock chimes again. As before, the two characters respond by opening the rear curtains, and throwing darts at the back wall. This time the roles are reversed – suggesting they take turns in these parts – now it is the younger man who throws the darts and the other who announces names at the microphone. Or we are led to assume that he is doing so; loud instrumental music is playing over this scene so that their voices cannot be heard. Once again the lever is pulled to trigger the storytelling light in the centre, only this time the rectangle stretches up along the back wall, floor to ceiling. The younger character dons a pair of large, lensless glasses, ready to embody a new character, 'Marnie Reynolds'. Still visibly upset, he attempts to start the story but breaks down in tears, the second character goes to comfort him, offering to do the central role himself. The younger man retreats to the side, to reprise his role as the shopkeeper, Joyce, crouched on a ledge high on the wall. The characters exchange some humorous dialogue, as if returning to a familiar routine. Once again the light obliges, providing sharp pools of light in the positions the men occupy to embody their characters. Again, the sense is that they are on familiar ground here, working from an established script, although Marnie's dialogue does include some phrases they have just overheard through the

wall, suggesting this is not a fully formed script but one they playfully revisit each time. This time though, with the younger man still visibly upset problems emerge, he has to be prompted to remember a customary prop ('no, no, get the box'[29]) and he struggles to keep the façade going. As the younger character's distress mounts, with him doubled over and crying to a point where he can no longer speak, the older character embodies both roles, swivelling on the spot and removing and returning the glasses on each alternate line of dialogue. Moving downstage, the older man stands in a strip of light across the front of the stage, the younger, no longer participating remains in the spotlight to the left of the space. With mounting panic, the older character attempts to continue the story, but his efforts are in vain, the light of the room begins to fade back in, and the red letters of the 'Ballyturk' sign stutter into darkness. The mania of this scene raises dramaturgical questions about the nature of the character's relationship to the light, and to the regular chiming of the cuckoo clock. In the first rendition of the story, the men seem in control of their environment, they trigger the storytelling light through the use of the lever, and it seems to respond to their positions on the stage. In this second iteration of the routine however, there seems a palpable compulsion to keep the story going when the light is shining on them. The younger man is now violently banging his head against the wall, leaving a trail of blood. There is a loud sound, like a crash or a collision, and the stage plunges into darkness. The back wall tears open and light floods in from the crack in the middle as the upper section of the wall lifts up and the lower portion hinges dramatically to the ground, revealing another character

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[29] This line is recorded in my notebook, but does not appear it the published version of the script.

standing on a grassy verge. This third character then steps over the fallen wall, into the room and as they[30] do, a cold unforgiving light floods into the room, from the front, leaving a harsh shadow along the walls. This is the same line of shadow that has already appeared, only this time it sits much lower than before, casting more of the upper walls into darkness.

Dramatically, this is a pivotal scene, containing, as it does the kind of *deus ex machina* appearance of the unexpected third character, and with this appearance the literal and metaphorical shattering of the confinement of the room. This third character, ominously describing themselves as a 'collector' explains that they have come to offer the men a choice: one of them will remain in this room while the other must leave, to die. As they speak, the younger character realises – as if for the first time – that there is a life beyond the walls of their room, and that indistinct scenes that have come to his mind are, in fact, memories and not inventions. This moment also points to an allegorical reading of the play; the third character can be interpreted as an embodiment of death, the stories the men have been harbouring as a means of negating the reality of mortality.[31] Viewed in this way there is also a certain parallel with Plato's famous allegory of the cave – the characters learn that their known world is a distortion of the truth. In Plato's account this incomplete, partial knowledge of the world is represented through shadows on the wall in front of the unfortunate prisoners, shadows deliberately manipulated externally. In *Ballyturk,* the metaphorical shadows are not physical shadows manipulated by their captors but are created by the men themselves. They have constructed the fictional town of

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[30] I am using a singular 'they' here as a gender-neutral pronoun, to allow for the fact that this role was first played by a male actor – Stephen Rea – but later played by a female actor –Olwyn Fouéré.

[31] This is an interpretation also given in Pilny, (2016: 92-94).

'Ballyturk' through words and ritual, here light does not (as it does in Plato) facilitate the corruption of reality, but forms part of the fabric of their imaginative constructions.

'Mood lighting'

Pervasive in this section is an oppressive, claustrophobic atmosphere, in part triggered by the mounting distress of the younger man, whose earlier prediction of foreboding seems ever more prescient as the play continues, but also, crucially produced by the light. 'Atmosphere' – like 'aesthetics' – is a term much used and abused, especially in relation to light. I have already (in the Introduction to this thesis) critiqued the generalised and unthinking uses of words like 'atmospheric' that proliferate in descriptions of performance light. At this point, however, having established the potential of light to actively transform the appearance of other spaces, bodies and objects in performance, (Chapter Three), and the potential of light to be viewed as a kind of material in itself, (Chapter Four) it may be useful to rehabilitate the idea of atmosphere as a critical term in the understanding of scenographic light. In so doing, I will draw on Böhme's work on the aesthetics of atmospheres to elaborate on the role of light in producing atmosphere, aiming to position the creation of atmosphere as a generative act, and to show how this works within the example of a narrative play. The sense that light generates an atmosphere is both an inherent quality of the medium, and a convention applied through standard practice. Yet, the explication of light's role in producing atmosphere is often understood in shallow terms, focussed around enhancing the mood already presented and defined in a performance text. Essig, for example, states:

> the atmosphere created by the lighting compositions may be designed to work in parallel or in contrast to the emotions of the actors. Light cannot "act" the way a human being can, but lighting can act upon an environment and be used to create an atmosphere that can be, for

example, mysterious, cheerful, or romantic. It is up to the actors then to play with or against that visual atmosphere to heighten the impact of the overall emotional mood of the scene (2005: 25).

I am arguing for a more expanded understanding of light's ability to act than is described in Essig, and I have already categorised the action of light in preceding examples as a kind of acting. Beyond the theatre, Edensor notes that the sensorial experience of light and dark profoundly alters the atmosphere of an environment (Edensor, 2015b: 331). While Edensor argues that light and darkness are powerful and affective elements within atmospheres, he cautions that atmospheres are not wholly formed by light, because it is just one element among many in the construction of atmospheres (ibid.: 347). In the context of performance, however, light can work to advance the production of atmosphere, shifting the mood to hint at future developments, as in the use of shadow in these scenes.

Böhme considers atmospheres through two avenues: production and reception, highlighting the dichotomy at the core of atmospheres as an object of study. On the one hand, atmospheres are entirely subjective, needing to be experienced in terms of the seer's own emotional state (2013: 2). Yet, simultaneously, viewed through production, atmospheres are something 'out there', something 'quasi-objective' that can be produced, as is so often the case in the theatre (ibid.: 3). It is in part through the dominance of light and sound design, Böhme argues, that the making of atmospheres becomes clear. This making does not relate the concrete qualities of things or spaces, but to the kind of *ekstases* of things; the expressive forms of things radiating out into 'tuned' spaces (ibid.: 7). Thus, the 'ecstasies of the thing' provides a way of thinking of the thing, not as something closed or finite, but something that 'exerts an external life. It radiates as it were into the environment, takes away the homogeneity of the surrounding space and fills it with tensions and suggestions of movement' (1993: 121) Böhme's characterisation of the making of atmospheres

bears striking similarities to Heidegger's bringing forth; things like light and sound act as generators, 'making possible the appearance of a phenomenon by establishing conditions' (2013: 5).

The light in *Ballyturk* certainly seems to fill the space in this manner, radiating out a sense of feeling beyond the established logic of the stage world, and beyond the information spoken by the characters. Crucially, the light also contributes significantly to the darkening mood in the action. As Edensor argues, the capacity of light to shift across space, and in to and out of darkness is an essential ingredient in the creation of atmosphere (2015: 347). Atmosphere is included among Abulafia's six 'grounds of representation' where he defines it as a type of 'light-image' that 'not only intensifies the atmosphere of the text or represent[s] the emotion of a character, but also casts its impact upon us – the addressees – directly' (2016: 110). While, Abulafia argues that the production of atmosphere or emotion represents greater autonomy for light than do the grounds of theme, character, or narrative (ibid.: 111) his language here about intensifying the atmosphere present in the text still suggests a responsive, rather than generative, role for light. R. H. Palmer defines atmosphere, or mood, as one of the nine central functions of stage lighting, stating that audiences respond emotionally to light – but that the subjective nature of this response makes it difficult to quantify (1994: 6). Considering the light in *Ballyturk* as scenographic implies a more active role of inscribing atmosphere – or what Zerdy and Schweitzer term 'productive atmosphere' (2016: 5) – into the space and time of the performance. Furthermore, considering this inscription or production of atmosphere as *poietic* positions light as a generative force within the event of this play.

Fragment Three: Reconstruction

After the visitor described in the previous scene leaves, the rear wall sealing again behind them, the two characters are left alone in their room again, given time to decide who will stay and who will 'walk the twelve seconds to death'. The cuckoo chimes again, and the older character pulls the lever, returning the stage to the storytelling light. Now though, the younger man does not enact any of the characters from Ballyturk but instead speaks directly from memory before switching the lever back, returning the light to the full room. This time they have refused the light, exerting their apparent power to revert to the normal state of the room. In lieu of playing out the stories they begin to explain to each other the origins of the fictional town they created. The older man tells how he began to make the world of Ballyturk, to fill the time in this captive space, and recalls the first sentence he spoke:

> Two: There was nothing to start with – and out of that me and you pushed words. (*Slight pause.*) "Above and there's large clouds looking like islands and through them sunlight shines down – and down on a small town lying by these woods on a hill." Twenty-seven words I used first.
>
> *A pause.*
>
> One: "And in the woods birds caw all manner of noise and drown out the stream that runs through the trees – […] and out slowly the stream moves through the town as Ballyturk wakes".
>
> (Walsh, 2014: 265)

He details how they began to construct their image of the town and its inhabitants with language, recalling the first words they spoke and how their fiction grew from that. This admission, or perhaps a familiarity with these original words seem to rouse the younger man, who then joins in. The emphasis here is on language, on the power of words to construct both the imaginary town of their story and the emotional sustenance on which they have heretofore lived. Yet, as they speak, slowly the light of the storytelling state bleeds in over the light in the room. Gradually, through this telling, the light of the room recedes entirely, leaving all of the previously used

storytelling spots of light overlapping on the stage. This is a reverse of the earlier moment when the room began to fade back in during a pause in the storytelling, and indicates the powerful link between the storytelling and the light in this production.

Atmosphere and rupture

In each of these fragments, there is a clear sense that the small, sharp shapes of light are tethered to the storytelling world, or perhaps to their ritualised *telling* of the stories, while the wider light across the whole room is that of their usual existence. The sense of rupture between these two states is made acutely significant in the exchanges between the men; the appearance early on in the play of a buzzing fly – an unfamiliar and seemingly miraculous presence in the eyes of the younger man (later swatted at and killed by the other) is a kind of thematic catalyst for the increasing calamity in the action. The action of light, in the three sequences described, operates on a number of levels. I mean to show how it works both in support of the dramaturgical structure of the piece and with a generative, agentic force of its own. On one level, the light is working here to accentuate the themes of the play, as seen in the fundamental thematic shifts between the generalised light of the room and the specific light of the storytelling action. Creating a heightened atmosphere, one that works in service of and to support the work of the written play, is often included as a core principal of lighting for theatre (R.H. Palmer, 1994: 37; Pilbrow, 1997: 5). I would argue, that rather than merely strengthening the themes of the text, the light here is one of a number of elements working to create the atmosphere in which the many possible meanings of the play become possible. Speaking about the play, Walsh has stated that it should 'bypass the intellect and go straight to the bones' bones' (in Lynch, 2017 n.p.) and the lighting is crucial to this visceral impact. It is interesting to ask, too, about the functioning of atmosphere in the context of a

proscenium theatre. One might reasonably ask whether the implied 'sphere' includes or excludes the audience. In my experience of watching the play, I was struck by a kind of alternate experience of inclusion. Emotionally, and affectively, the play worked on me, feelings of empathy for the characters seeping into me in my comfortable seat. Yet, at the same time, part of the power of the light in this piece seemed to stem from the fact that I was outside looking in. In that sense I had the impression that I was watching the light happen *to* these characters, as a malign force that they were powerless against. The atmosphere, then, seemed to affect me while containing the actors. The idea of light as a provider of 'atmosphere' is, as I have already established, common but problematic without further analysis. As Fisher observes, such terms are meaningless if you cannot articulate what kind of atmosphere is produced (2015: 179). Aside from the nebulous uses of the term, a further problem in critical understandings of light is the implication that the provision of atmosphere is supportive, or dramaturgically and creatively inferior to the provision of content or narrative. To be sure, the atmosphere that is created here is not made solely through the light. This is a performance in which multiple elements are working in concert to create the mood and tone. As Edensor and Sumartojo observe, atmospheres are phenomena that blur the boundaries between the affects, sensations, materialities, emotions, and, meanings which are all 'enrolled within the force-field of an atmosphere' (Edensor and Sumartojo, 2015: 253). Nevertheless, the subtle dominance of the light does produce specific spatial and tonal gestures that operate as discrete forms of expression. Böhme's sense of atmospheres as, 'affective powers of feeling, spatial bearers of mood' (1993: 119) hints at ways that atmospheres created through light can operate in a way not reproducible elsewhere. Put in another way, the light brings forth meanings and

emotions not otherwise present in the play. This kind of bringing forth is at the core of theatrical *techne*.

On another level, the shifting between diegetic and non-diegetic modes of light here demonstrates the fundamental constructed-ness of the performance. This construction is clear both within the fictional world of the play; the first two men construct stories and routines for themselves, and live in a world constructed for them and in the theatrical construct of *Ballyturk* as a piece of theatre. For example, what I am calling here the 'storytelling light' – the focused shafts of light that accompany the ritualised enacting of the 'Ballyturk' stories – makes liberal use of sharp, clearly defined spotlights. There is an overt theatricalisation to the use of light here, through the reliance on the stark and sharp spotlights that 'have become a part of the language of the theatre' (Jones, 2004: 35). The shifts in light that exceed the established logic of the fictional world, use the theatricality of light itself as a bearer of meaning. The shaping of the play through recognisably theatrical interventions of light (and of sound) here highlights the presence of an external eye – the director, or creator – making these scenes for the benefit of an audience. The light, in this way:

> behaves like the mind. It drowns in darkness what it wishes to forget
> and bathes in light what it wishes to recall. Thus the entire stage
> becomes a universe of the mind, and the individual scenes are not
> replicas of three-dimensional reality, but visualized stages of thought
> (Sokel in Palmer, 2013: 127).

The visualised thought here, grants certain traces of sentience to the light within the theatrical frame. While the light clearly manifests as something that is controlled from outside the stage, the operation of light as a kind of temporal and thematic score marking the meanings and character arcs of the play, mean that it appears as a kind of embodied mind. Like Fischer-Lichte's 'radical concept of presence' the light here suggests a 'transformative and vital energy' (2008: 99). While Fischer-Lichte argues that objects cannot attain this kind of presence, referring instead to Böhme's

idea of the 'ecstacy of things' (ibid.: 100), the operation of light here as a proxy for the theatrical consciousness in which the whole production comes forth seems to lend a kind of agency to light that might be comparable to the idea of the embodied mind Fischer-Lichte views as integral to the radical concept of presence. This behaving like a mind, then, renders light as a kind of actor in the drama. The kind of agency demonstrated by light in these sequences is dramaturgical; themes in the text are given an alternative, spatial presentation through light. We, the audience, know that the characters apprehend changes in light but the hermeneutic possibilities created in these fluctuations in light extend beyond the characters treating light as a tool. Connecting light to the story-telling through the lever and the rhythm of performance –and the inclusion of the strong signifier of the spotlight— connects the fictional world of the characters with the experience of theatrical presentation. Speaking about the artwork, Heidegger notes that 'it says something other than what the mere thing itself is, *allo agoreuei*. The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory' (Heidegger, 1956: 145). This is, of course, equally applicable to performance generally, and to light specifically. In this case, light is initially something they use to aid their ritual, but it is also something more, something intangible that they cannot control, and in this way it becomes an additional language in the play. In an accompanying programme note Colm Tóibín observes that for Walsh's characters the imagination is a dangerous place, where they are trapped by a story of their own creation (Tóibín, 2014). Within this understanding, the increasing volatility of the light allows us to encounter the actions of the characters as an unstable psychic space. Or, as one of the characters says 'everything's eaten by the now – by what we build, by what we've become – all this life where Ballyturk appears out of the darkness and we enter that town as other people shaped from half ideas' (Walsh, 2014: 269). The alternation between diegetic

and non-diegetic control is interesting, not in terms of verisimilitude, but in terms of expressivity. That the light morphs and changes around the whole space becomes a sensuous metaphor for the fact that the characters feel consumed by their imagined worlds.

Light and text

I have been making extensive reference to the dramatic script here to demonstrate the important relationship in this case between the text and the light. While this is, in many ways, a more conventional dramatic play than other examples in this thesis, and more narratively driven than performances that might be more readily considered 'postdramatic', elements of Lehmann's 'stage poetry' can be seen in the particular kind of connection between the light and text here.

> By regarding the theatre text as an independent poetic dimension and simultaneously considering the 'poetry' of space and light, a new theatrical disposition becomes possible. In it, the automatic unity of text and stage is superseded by their separation and subsequently in turn by their free (liberated) combination, and eventually the free combinatorics of all theatrical signs (Lehmann, 2006: 59).

The point here is that working with the text is not always an indication of poorly considered light, or of light that does not contribute artistically. Instead, autonomy from the text can, as in the case of this production, mean that light is working not only to emphasise elements of the text but creating vital aspects of meaning that work in tandem with the text. Although some limiting views of the position of design elements within theatrical hierarchies do persist, there is considerable theoretical precedent for this expanded understanding of the ways that theatrical elements may each contribute independently to the performance, notably in Brecht's 'separation of the elements (Brecht and Willett, 1992: 37) and Schechner's argument that 'all production elements speak their own language' (1968: 59). Surprisingly, Abulafia argues that light that works in relation to narrative is the least autonomous

– working mainly to 'strengthen the illusion of fictive time and space' (2016: 107). While this is a very common use of light in dramatic theatre – and an approach advocated by authors of lighting manuals such as: Gillette (1989), R. H. Palmer (1994), Pilbrow (1997; 1992), Essig (2005),– I argue that it is erroneous to suggest that coherence with a dramatic text is necessarily limiting in terms of light's autonomy in performance. A representative example of this kind of limited view of the connection between light and text can be found in the guide to designing light in relation to dramatic text, provided by R. H. Palmer. In this, there is a clear hierarchy in which the light ought to serve the needs of the text. This is a limiting conception of light as an artistic form; one which ignores the potential for light to communicate in excess of the dramatic text. In his guide, R.H. Palmer demonstrates the kind of textual analysis that ought to be practiced by lighting designers, using the text of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* to form his own lighting score. In this he particularly emphasises the shifting atmosphere throughout, drawing particular distinction between the soft, shadowy world in which Blanche is comfortable and the bright and brash lighting that Stanley prefers.

> Stanley can well turn on lights as he moves through the apartment, which allows him to change shirts in full light, emphasizing his animal appeal to Blanche and setting a mood of tension with a strong contrast of light and shadow as Blanche seeks out the darker areas of the room (1998: 27).

By declaring that light must emphasise the thematic content provided by the play text (ibid.: 11), R. H. Palmer is positioning light as external to the principal expressive force of a given production. The light in his imagining of *A Streetcar Named Desire* exists to reinforce the ideas presented in the script. Although the dramaturgical construction of the play owes much to its use of light, the shifting and thematic use of light inspired by Williams' collaboration with Mielziner, there is little information in Palmer's score conveyed by light that is not *also* provided elsewhere in

the performance. The audience encounter Blanche's fragile mental state by means of language and *supported* by light. Interestingly, the play text uses light in both the stage directions and in the characters dialogue to express the ideas in the play but R. H. Palmer's suggested interpretation is limited to reinforcing those ideas in a different vocabulary rather than providing information or ideas not given elsewhere. This is precisely the kind of view of the subordinate position of light in relation to the dramatic text that Abulafia is arguing against. And it is significant that there have been substantial developments across performance studies interrogating the once dominant position of the written text and extending consideration towards other elements. Scenography in particular has benefitted from this re-evaluation of perceived hierarchies, as has the expansion of the field of dramaturgy. In respect of these developments, then, it is important to acknowledge that both scholarship and practice have moved on since R. H. Palmer wrote this manual, and, while many productions continue to use light only in a supportive role, there are clear examples of work in which scenographic elements actively construct and contribute to the telling of a dramatic text.

Barba observes that the word 'text', before it came to mean a manuscript text meant a 'weaving together' (1985: 75). This understanding of text as 'weave' is integral to Barba's conception of dramaturgy as 'the work of the actions' (ibid). For Barba, an 'action' may be any element of performance that draws the attention of an audience, whether intellectually or synaesthesically, and he is particularly interested in how these weave together to become the dramaturgical texture, or text, of a performance. He further defines two poles of performance through which meaning emerges: concatenation and simultaneity (ibid.: 76). A tension between these two poles is, he argues, seen in the distinction between theatre based on previously written text, and that based on a more widely encompassing performance text. In the concatenation

of linear, written text based work he identifies a 'tendency to consider as ornamental elements all those interweavings which arise out of the conjunction of several actions at the same time; or simply to treat them like actions which are not woven together: in the background' (ibid). This tendency quite succinctly captures the view of light as a supportive, rather than a generative element in performance. The example of *Ballyturk,* then, demonstrates a dramaturgical weaving together of elements in which the light works with and in excess of the written text.

Considering, instead, light as a *simultaneous* force within performance it becomes possible to view the action of light as a generative, creative force in the performance of a dramatic play. Within the performance of this dramatic play, the light not only enhances the tone suggested by the script or the actors' delivery, but further contributes simultaneous richness of meaning through its action. In working concurrently with the text, but in a different register, the light here avoids repeating elements presented elsewhere and instead provides an additional sensual language within the performance. Again this kind of simultaneity recalls the parataxis of Lehmann's postdramatic, a principal illustrated by Heiner Goebbels' rejection of the incessant multiplication of signs in favour of a theatre where all the elements 'maintain their own forces but act together, and where one does not just rely on the conventional hierarchy of means' (Lehmann, 2006: 86). The independence of the light is, arguably, less defined in the example of *Ballyturk* than in previous examples such as *Hidden* or *Political Mother,* but that is not to say that the light is not an important, independent element within this performance. The light does provide an autonomous contribution to the emergence of meaning in this production, but this is not an autonomy defined through radical difference from the text, but a conversant autonomy in which the light works alongside and in excess of the spoken language.

Transient Architecture - *Piece No. 43*

In the above example of *Ballyturk* there is a clear spatial operation to the light as it divides and re-divides the stage, limiting the light to specific pools or corridors and then opening out to encompass all, or almost all of the stage. This spatial operation of light is significant on a number of levels, it connects back to the question of mediated visibility discussed in Chapter Three, and also, through the apparently physical delineation of space, links to the concepts of light as an object discussed in Chapter Four. This spatial play of light can be seen even more acutely in *Piece No. 43,* a piece of contemporary dance by the Russell Maliphant Company. Like *Political Mother* this is performed on a large bare stage, of which the edges are completely covered with black masking so that the edges of the space recede into darkness. *Piece No. 43* features an ensemble of five dancers who appear and reappear inside a continually shifting tapestry of boxes of light, some of which can be seen on the stage floor in Figure 10, below. It presents a pointed interplay between the bodies of the dancers and the structure of the light as each informs the other. At times dancers are still inside boxes of light while the intensity of the light changes around them, or flashes between them, creating a sense of temporal movement, and at other times the light is static while a dancer moves inside it. The movements of the dancers are quite fluid, and the costumes – like stylised rehearsal clothes – drape and swish to accentuate the flow of the choreography. In contrast, the environment created by the shifting light-spaces is marked by clean, straight lines and sharp angles. These light-spaces are architectural in that they constitute defined and distinct spaces, and transient because they dissolve without trace. In the first several minutes of the piece the light remains static – it is the dancers who move around and in relation to it. Yet even while static the spaces retain a sense of the temporal, they have emerged through light, and as such could fade away at any point, as we have seen other states

of light do in the preceding pieces. The spatial play in this example elucidates the kind of transient performance architecture that can be created by light in performance. Described as an *immaterial architecture* by Juliet Rufford, (2015: 4; 84) light plays a crucial role in presenting and reconfiguring performance space. Elsewhere Böhme notes the ability of light to create space, or to give a space a distinctive character (2017: 139 - 140). Furthermore, the continual temporal shifts of light demonstrate that this spatial operation is not fixed, but rather imbricates both space and time into its architectural offer. In fusing space and time together with affect sensation, and perception, then, the transient architecture of light, provides a theatrical antidote to the 'valorisation of space at the *expense* of the critical relations between temporality, built form and the performative dynamics of architecture within everyday life' critiqued by Alan Read at the turn of this century (2000: 1. Emphasis added). Because of its transient materiality, a critical exploration of the spatial operation of light is inherently also an exploration of temporality. Elsewhere, I have written about transient architecture as a fundamental underlying property of performance light (Graham, 2016), an idea which I will develop in more depth here through describing and reflecting on three sequences from *Piece No. 43*, emphasising the ways in which light creates and transforms space. As a spatial interlocutor in performance, light operates in a way that parallels many observations about theatre architecture, in terms of how it 'articulates space, giving it a particular feel' (Rufford, 2015: 3).

Dramaturgically, *Piece No 43* is structured as a series of vignettes, each with a different spatial configuration. Between each section, or scene, there is a moment of darkness, when light returns it reveals a different space, or array of spaces, than was previously present. As a piece of contemporary dance, this piece is markedly different in terms of content then the previous example, so my account here turns to

the experiential domain, emphasising sensual constructs over thematic associations. This difference notwithstanding I will again describe certain fragments or sections of the piece, aiming to demonstrate the ways in which light not only manipulates but creates space throughout.

Figure 10 - *Piece No. 43.*

Alastair Muir (2015). Image source:
https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/russell-maliphant-company-dance-review-dancing-the-light-fantastic-a3124591.html

Creation

The performance begins with five sharp rectangles of light evenly spaced across centre stage. Surrounded by darkness, these strips of light make the floor underneath them glow – it almost looks as though these slabs of light are raised above the level of the floor around them. A dancer approaches the box in front of him, the outline of his body becoming slowly more distinct as he edges closer to the limits of the light. He does not enter the space created by the rectangle of light, but lingers at its edge, part of his head and shoulders begin to catch the light before he retreats into the darkness. As he moves backwards, other dancers have begun moving forward

and they each have this exchange with the light-space in front of them. This sequence of approach is repeated in a staggered fashion, with one and then another dancer moving forward, hovering at the boundary of the light space, and then retreating. Their repeated lingering at the borders of these shapes suggests – at least in my viewing – that these rectangles of light are apprehended by the figures on stage in physical terms. The implied dimensionality of these spaces, appearing as both object and boundary, seems significant for the dancers; their movements relate to light through a ritualization of its boundary. Eventually, they enter the boxes, and as they cross the threshold of light their bodies appear to change, we see a line of light from the sharp edge of the box pass over their bodies until they are covered in its glow. Without the light itself changing the dancers pass through a series of different stages of light, and of being lit. From darkness, to being softly caught in the reflected glow of the light, passing this sharp barrier until they are fully covered in the light from above. This section also seems to involve me, in the audience, bodily as the low levels of light mean that I strain to see the figures, particularly as they retreat backwards into the darkness. I follow the bodies attentively trying to identify the point at which they fully disappear, but I can never quite catch the moment.

The particular kind of presence evinced by these boxes occupies a peculiar liminal position between there and not there. The dancers interact with them as though they are physical entities, yet of course they cannot be. Made of light, these boxes have no tangible exterior, no barrier to touch, and yet they are undeniably present in the action. To appropriate Schechner's famous phrase about the progression of the actor these boxes are simultaneously not there and not-*not*-there (in Turner, 1982: 121). Or in Seel's formulation they are both real and irreal. He defines 'real sense objects' as empirical objects, available to perceptual encounter. 'Irreal sense objects' on the other hand, he describes as special kinds of objects, 'given' only in conjunction with

projections of them, (Seel: 2005: 71). Irreal sense objects may be imagined objects, the kinds of things with described but inaccessible sensual qualities, like a vividly described (and consequently imagined) fictional creature. The boxes of light in *Piece No. 43* are real sense objects in that they could be apprehended sensually, through sight, by any seeing person in attendance. They are a dramaturgical fact of this performance, apparent to the audience and embedded in the actions of the performers. And yet, they are not quite real in the way that the dancers behave towards them. The apparent haptic interaction with the edges of light is an imaginative mental projection. The sensual conflict presented here is that this boundary is simultaneously a real visual object and an irreal physical object. The blurring of the real (visual) space with the irreal (physical) space here means that the experience is of encountering a light space as solid. This seeing as is described by Seel as aesthetic semblance, defining aesthetic semblance as a quality that

> enriches aesthetic appearing with additional aspects. […] there is an irreal givenness of something that retains its value despite knowledge of its irreality and, what is more, acquires its practical value precisely because of this (Seel, 2005: 61).

The gap that opens up between the appearance of a spatial border – delineated visually and reinforced by the behaviour of the dancers – and our collective consciousness that this border is completely permeable, renders the stage a space of possibility. What light is doing here is generating the conditions through which the performance takes place. It is performative in that, through conjuring a definable and meaningful space from a bare stage, light produces the 'fertile nothingness' of Victor Turner's concept of liminality (1990:12), or in the case of the transient architecture of light, the liminal space through which the immaterial is made material.

Construction

In a later sequence a dancer moves across the stage, through an expanding knot of overlapping boxes of light. She first appears in the upstage right corner of the stage, in a single rectangular box of light, to the sounds of percussive rhythm echoing through the space, fluidly she swirls her arms, moving swiftly around this restricted space. As she reaches a downstage corner of the rectangle, another one appears, overlapping the first and extending the space available to her. The overlap multiplies the shapes, so that there appears to be smaller, brighter shapes where the light overlays, and fainter, weaker spaces outside this zone, like one of those graphic puzzles asking the viewer to count the number of squares in a shape. She twirls smoothly into the next space and then slides further beyond it as another strip of light appears. The coordination between the dancer and the appearance of the box is seamless; in contrast to the opening scene where the boxes of light presented a clear threshold that the dancers took some time to cross, here the movement of the dancer is unbroken – as she traverses the stage the space opens up around her. It seems that the light just slightly anticipates the way for her, beginning to fade up in the instant before she steps beyond the previous boundary. It is not clear whether the light is dictating her path, calling her towards it, or whether the light is responding to her path of movement, or whether these two trajectories (of movement and light across the stage) simply coincide. The dancer's movement across the stage continues, leaving in her wake a strip of overlapping shapes of varying sizes. Having reached the opposite corner than she started in, she moves back across the boxes, then towards another corner, the nest of boxes expanding to meet her. This pattern continues until the stage is a nest of boxes, a geometric pattern of two intersecting diagonals stretching across the stage. Her movements across the space accelerate, hers arms rotating with such speed that they seem to

propel her through the boxes. On a final pass across the stage, the boxes extinguish after she leaves them, the space shutting down behind her. The segment ends with a mirror image of its beginning, the dancer alone in a single box of light, this time in the downstage left corner of the space, before fading to darkness.

Crescendo

Finally, in the closing sequence of the piece, the five dancers were again each positioned in an individual box of light, each box perfectly parallel to the edge of the stage but the line of boxes stretching diagonally to the rear corner of the stage. Repeating a motif from earlier in the piece, the light would ripple along the line of boxes, flashing momentarily brighter on each one in turn. Then, as the music increased in intensity and speed, the dancers each froze and the flashing of the light on each box grew to such intensity that, although each box was only lit for a brief moment before moving on to the next the sense of the full line never diminished. The dancers in each box froze and held a pose, that they would change in the darkness so that each time the light picked out their box they would be revealed in a new pose. The rhythm of this sequence increased relentlessly, building to an almost impossibly fast pace, with the percussive music pounding, until, reaching a final crescendo all went black and the piece ended.

In the sections described, the light is *generative;* as it not only responds to the movements of the dancers but also seems to instigate phases and modes of movement. The opening section in which the dancers hesitantly, cautiously approach the row of rectangular light spaces establishes this synergy clearly. Following the argument with which I began this chapter I suggest that the generative appearance of the light here is principally architectural, and that the spatial interaction determines

that light is not only animating the stage space, but also populating it with defined transient spaces.

Making Space(s)

Perhaps the principal feature of the light in this performance is the construction of the ever-shifting light boxes. What I have thus been calling the 'transient architecture' evident in this performance bears conspicuous resemblance to the ambition for light laid out in Prampolini's futurist manifesto which called for 'a colourless electromechanical architecture, powerfully vitalized by chromatic emanations from a luminous source' (in Palmer, 2013: 165). By transient architecture I mean the ability of light to make definable, distinct spaces within given physical environments. In much the same way that it can draw the eye towards a particular point, light can also create smaller spaces within the built environment. Focus on a particular area will tend to draw the eye, occasionally to the extent that the surrounding space is temporarily forgotten. Common examples of this include the usage of pools or boxes of light to isolate a moment or action within the larger performance environment. This type of light is frequently seen in dance productions or in theatre plays where multiple locations are required without setting changes, but it is also used in more abstract ways to convey psychic spaces, or to divide performance areas for other, non-narrative reasons. I consider these spaces to be architectural because, like solid structures, they work to define landscape –albeit on a generally smaller scale. When the space available to the body of a performer, or to the eye of an audience member, is limited to a certain area, the edges insinuated by light mimic a physical border. However, unlike solid structures, spaces created by light can be dissolved instantly, and their boundaries can be physically transgressed.

This transient architecture of light recalls McLuhan's (1964) assertion that the electric light provides 'space without walls'. The properties of light in performance are profoundly spatial, not only regarding the ability to radically alter the apparent dimensions or shape of a given space, but also in this ability to carve out new spaces or locations. The liminality of these ephemeral spaces is a crucial ingredient in performances governed, or influenced, by the presence of light. Shifting the boundaries of available space and confining a performer to a given space with light are expressions of control in performance. They indicate the presence of an external force, revising and reforming the physical space. The mutability of these spaces also points to the liminality of performance, creating a spatial as well as temporal instance of what Turner describes as 'pure potentiality when everything […] trembles in the balance' (1982: 75). The transient architecture of light provides fluctuating potential spaces within the solid structure of the performance environment, and this is the active principle that often motivates the management of space in performance. This architectural facility of light links to Rufford's proposition to consider theatre in terms of tectonics, the aspect of architecture concerned with the poetics of construction. In which she notes

> the importance given to ensuring a satisfying relationship between a form (an organised whole), its structural force (the way its parts stand up and hold firm) and its symbolic potency (the conviction and flair with which it represents an idea object of association) (2015: 68).

Additionally, in accordance with Böhme's claim that the 'spaces generated by light and sound are no longer something perceived at a distance, but something within which one is enclosed' (2013: 6) the light here brings forth spaces which contain and present the presence of the dancers. The shifting levels, spaces, and colours of light generate an atmosphere in which the performance can be received. There is a connection here too with the atmospheres produced by light (as discussed through the example of *Ballyturk* above). In Böhme's terms:

> The space of moods is physical expanse, in so far as it involves me affectively. The space of moods in atmospheric space, that is, a certain mental or emotive tone permeating a particular environment, and it is also the atmosphere spreading spatially around me, in which I participate through my mood (2003: 5).

In the sequences described here, the light is clearly manipulating the sensory experience of the audience, mediating the possible visible throughout, and is manifesting as a presence in itself through the continual appearing of boxes.

Such boxes of light, of the kind described here, have also appeared in different guises across many examples in this thesis. *Ballyturk, Plexus, 17 Border Crossings, Political Mother* and *Institute* have all featured sharply defined boxes or strips of light. Such enclosures of light are, indeed, quite common in contemporary lighting practice, and are worth analysing in terms of what they reveal about the nature of created light as a distinct kind of performance entity. Such forms of manipulated light of which there are clear boundaries are fundamentally different to natural light, which is bounded – in our perception – only by external factors, such as the angle of the earth or the presence of clouds, trees, tall buildings or other obstacles. Artificial sources of light on the other hand have a range specific to the capabilities of the instrument in question. The capability to exploit this feature in performance lends a particular kind of relationship to light, that subverts philosophical positions about seeing *in* light. Seeing the bounds of light within surrounding darkness enables a thickening of the experience, in which an audience can see what is in the light from without of the light. This separation, however, is not a distanced Cartesian vision but a form of immersion in darkness that enables the seer to witness the whole trajectory of light.

Coming out of the Dark - *All That Fall*

As an adaptation of a radio drama, not originally intended for live performance, Pan Pan Theatre's production of Beckett's *All That Fall* offers a view of creative light in the simple fact of including light where previously there was none. Yet the generative capabilities of light in this piece exceed this literal observation. At a deeper and more interesting level, the light seems generative in terms of the sensory experience it creates, the ways in which it pushes the piece beyond representation, and the ways it seems to play with theatrical convention. The production invites the audience into what the artists call a 'theatrically tuned listening chamber'. The audience sit on rocking chairs, distributed throughout the space at differing angles, so that while the space may be communal, individual audience members sit at a certain remove from each other. On each chair is a cushion emblazoned with an image of a skull, linking to both the recurrent themes of death in the play and to the company's production of Beckett's *Embers* which featured an enormous skull. The floor is covered in a children's play carpet, showing a town with roads and colourful buildings. Above the rocking chairs there is a canopy of hanging lightbulbs and at the front, towards which all the chairs are essentially facing there is an imposing wall of theatrical lanterns. Behind the chairs, too, there is a row of lanterns on the floor, casting a blue light across the space, so that the audience are enveloped in light from behind, above, and in front. Enveloped in light but also surrounded by darkness; performed in a black box, the space is darkened and, at least initially, the lanterns are emitting just a glimmer of light, enough to glow as objects in themselves, and to spread a soft ambient light around the space, but the surrounding darkness is very much in evidence. Interestingly, this same production is used by Alston and Welton as an example that draws on the power of darkness in performance. They characterise the darkness in this piece as 'thick and pervasive',

noting that the intermittent glowing of the light provides an 'affective counterpoint' to the darkness, resulting in a sensual entanglement of 'enigma and foreboding' (2017: 2–3). That this production is equally pertinent to a study of darkness as it is to one of light, demonstrates, again, that the phenomena of light and dark in performance are interdependent and indivisible. More specifically, the interdependence of light and dark is specifically important in this piece as the ebb and flow of light gains a gestural quality because of the surrounding darkness, and the plunge to darkness seems weightier amid the presence of the light.

Figure 11 - *All That Fall.*

Ros Kavanagh (2015). Image source:
https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jun/14/all-that-fall-review-pit-barbican-london

Light in the dark

The importance of the dark in this piece is further emphasised in the wider context of the text's original designation as a radio play and the kind of commitment to the author's original directions often (and notoriously) demanded by the Beckett Estate. Beckett wrote about *All That Fall* that it was

> specifically a radio play, or rather radio text, for voices, not bodies. I have already refused to have it "staged" and I cannot think of it in such terms. […] I am absolutely opposed to any form of adaptation with a view to its conversion into "theatre." It is no more theatre than *End-Game* is radio and to "act" it is to kill it. Even the reduced visual dimension it will receive from the simplest and most static of readings … will be destructive of whatever quality it may have and which depends on the whole thing's coming out of the dark (in Frost, 1991: 366).

Although certainly a theatrical experience with a strong visual dimension, Pan Pan Theatre's adaptation here preserves the important principle of disembodiment in the play. Furthermore, with the disembodied voices heard from the controlled environment of the 'listening chamber' the whole experience seems to come out of the dark. In an accompanying essay in the production's programme, Beckett scholar Nicholas Johnson notes the enormous change in perceptions of radio broadcasts since the original text was written in 1956. He argues that the pace of, and proliferation of media in, contemporary life seem antithetical to the event nature of radio broadcasts in the early and mid-twentieth century. Johnson posits that listening in the dark would have been relatively common around the time that Beckett began experimenting with radio drama, suggesting that listeners would really have experienced the disembodied sounds of the play as emerging from the dark (2015: 34). Taking, as Johnson suggests, the notion of *absence* to be central to both the text of this play and the medium of radio more generally, the shifting forces of light and dark here might be viewed as a tussle between absence and presence. Yet, this production also makes clear that presence and absence do not represent a definitive binary, nor do light and dark. Instead, the aesthetic event of this production of *All That Fall* seems to collapse these apparent dichotomies into the same experience. Rayner argues that this kind of doubling is fundamental in the phenomenology of the theatre:

> The work of the theatre is the working of the double, and through the rift of doubleness difference makes its appearance in the unity of the

world, with its internal divisions, its imaginary representations, its materiality, and its significations. The imaginary and the material make a double thing, which theatre works into the artful form of an event (2006: 154).

Furthermore, taking into account the original status of the written text as an explicitly auditory drama does provide useful context in considering this performance as a theatrical work. In adapting the radio text to an installation style setting, this production interrogates the position of the body in the work. Despite the absence of (the bodies of) actors, the text of *All That Fall* is very much concerned with the body, its functions and failings – a theme consistently explored in Beckett's oeuvre. The play focuses on the character of Maddy Rooney, an overweight septuagenarian, lumbering towards a local train station to meet her husband, who, in turn, is blind. Throughout the play, the text indicates the sounds of her 'dragging feet' (Beckett, 1990: 172–198), and of her huffing and puffing as she progresses along the road. The audience hear the sounds of a handkerchief 'loudly applied' (ibid.:181), and of the strained efforts of Maddy Rooney and of Mr Slocum as they attempt to leverage her unwieldy body into the latter's car (ibid: 180). Jeff Porter suggests that such bodily focus lends to Maddy a 'radiogenic corporeality' unique to the medium of radio (2010: 435–436). Through her loquacious speech in which she makes repeated reference to the size and state of her body, and through the repeated sounds of her body moving through space, Maddy's invisible body is conversely 'more present than absent' (ibid.: 438). Elsewhere, Everett Frost, who directed a version of the play, argues that the disembodiment of radio uniquely affords the possibility of taking the audience *inside* Maddy Rooney's consciousness, presenting the world around her not as it is but as she perceives it (Frost, 1991: 367). In placing this sonic material in a multi-sensorial environment, Pan Pan create a textured layering of materials and materialities through which the text becomes an aesthetic event. The voices and efforts of the

fictional characters are summoned into the space through sound, even as their bodies remain immaterial, invisible, inaccessible. Added to these spectral vocal presences are the presences of both light and dark, alongside a bodily emphasis that implicates the audience into this sensorial confluence. The immaterial presences of Maddy Rooney and those she encounters on her walk are thus met with the embodied but voiceless attendance of the audience members, both severally and alone. The communal environment in which the audience listen further provides visual and sensual aspects to the experience, as light continually shifts, and haze in the air billows and dissipates. The added visual dimension does not serve to represent the actions of the absent voices but rather to accompany them; the voices come out of the ether and into a shared space. Given the multiplicity of elements within Pan Pan Theatre's charged environment, one might reasonably ask whether it is the light, specifically, that produces such expanded possibilities of meaning, or whether it is simply the elision of multiple elements that expands the experience so. I mean to show that, within this performance the light does in fact occasion particular modes of engagement that are unique to its sensual and dramaturgical properties, and that, in this instance, light affords a particular kind of engagement with the play. In much the same way that Seel observes that aesthetic experience can provide 'a type of consciousness that no other mode of experience can provide' (2008: 98).

Mimetic and non-mimetic light

Structurally, the play can be apportioned into three sections; Maddy's journey to the station; her agonising wait at the station for the (unusually) delayed train; and finally, her return journey with her husband, Dan. Like the musical structure of the Sonata these sections can be considered in terms of exposition, development, and

recapitulation. At the beginning of the performance, once all the audience have taken their seats and become accustomed to the space and the gentle rocking of their chairs, the wall of light in front gradually recedes into darkness. Into this darkened space – but not fully dark, given the remaining glimmer of the overhead bulbs – come the opening sounds of the piece. As indicated in the text, there are animal noises: *'Rural sounds. Sheep, bird, cow, cock, severally, then together. Silence'* (Beckett, 1990: 171), and these are made by human voices, the actors impersonating farm animals. Then the slow rhythmic trod of the protagonist, the strains of *Death and the Maiden* which she is evidently hearing from a nearby house, and then finally Maddy's voice. Soon after, as Maddy encounters the first of the three men she will meet along her journey, light returns to the wall, only this time it is not the full bank of lanterns but only a single row that is animated, hovering in mid-air. This line of light emerges from the darkness as the sound of Christy's cartwheels approaches, hangs there while they speak, and then fades as the sound indicates his passage away. Twice more, then, a new arrangement of light emerges as Maddy encounters a new character, however the neatness of this pattern is soon disrupted and changes in light begin to occur before or after these moments. The sound and light exist in tandem but do not exactly correspond to each other's rhythms. This tone, of co-existence rather than correspondence creates a sense of a multi-layered sensual experience, one that is evocative without being representational. In the slippages that begin to seep in between the aural and visual chapters of the action, light seems to suggest itself as a proxy for the material bodies of the characters, and then to resist this elision.

This kind of context makes it difficult to immediately infer what the light is *doing,* as light occupies a formative place in the experience but not in the narrative. For Abulafia, the signification of this kind of experience lies in the 'sensation of light

itself' (2015: 111). In his account the principal qualities of signification through the sensation of light itself are 'spectacularity' and 'hypermediacy' (ibid). Spectacularity relates to the aesthetic pleasure derived from light itself, and a sense of the virtuosity of the craft behind its appearance. Hypermediacy refers to the explicit and active presence of technology in our reading of an image. Yet, neither of these seem to *fully* account for the signification of light in this case. Certainly the ebb and flow of light is a source of aesthetic pleasure in this production, and the exposure of the lanterns and bulbs in the space would seem to indicate an explicit engagement with technology. Furthermore, as Abulafia correctly points out, light, when used as a material in itself can display a performative autonomy, creating elements of performance independent of the text, and multiple meanings that need to be negotiated through performance (ibid.: 112). This example shows that, in addition to spectacularity and hypermediacy there is a third important quality in experiencing light itself, that of the phenomenal experience. The shifting flow of light in *All That Fall* produces a bodily engagement with light, layered over the content of the text. The bodily engagement extends from the visual experience of watching the configurations of light change, to the physical sensation of moving from light to dark, to light again. The brightness of the light ranges from a soft glow to an uncomfortable glare, and this forms part of my bodily reaction to the work. The sensation of light here incorporates an awareness of the lanterns, and the means by which light is produced, but remains principally an environmental encounter that multiplies rather than clarifies the textual interpretation.

Although the performers are absent, nothing in the staging is concealed, when the audience first enter all the lanterns are already glowing, and the space is filling with haze. All of the component pieces of the lighting design as such are revealed to us; a bank of lanterns forming a wall of light in front of us, clusters of bulbs hanging

above, and a row of lanterns on the floor casting a blue light over the space. Individually, these are all simple elements yet a sense of surprise emerges at the evolving patterns made by the lanterns in front of us, and the almost-hypnotic sense of watching the light shift before us. In the notes I made immediately after the performance I recorded the patterns made with light and the points at which I noted light fading. However when I reflected on the experience later the sequence of events was much less important (some of these notes appear in Chapter Two). In the following extract from my notes, for instance, I seem to have conflated a number of separate moments into a description of the *sensation* of the experience as a whole.

> *Contemplating a wall of softly glowing amber lanterns in front of me, and the presence of strangers around me I am moved by the gentle sway of my rocking chair. The floor is carpeted, a child's play-carpet complete with images of roads and fields, so I cannot hear the chairs move on the floor but from the odd rustle I sense that we are somehow united in this strange rocking. My feet don't comfortably reach the floor when I'm sitting back so I have the sense that the chair itself is moving me back and forth while I listen to the sounds of disembodied voices and the light softly changes. In the ebb and flow of light a voice comes and goes, voices come and go. I find myself counting the rows of lanterns in front of me – ten columns of twelve, each lens facing me, creating a perfect amber disc. I can hear the instruments buzz as their intensities change and I am continually surprised by the changing formations of lenses. Now there is a row of amber dots, apparently hovering half a meter above the floor, the voice moves on, and the row is gone. Now I hear a bicycle approach and see a vertical column of amber discs, and then it too is gone. I am left in the darkness, rocking and listening to the voices of absent strangers.*

In lieu of describing sequences of light changes I will focus here on the experience provoked, and on issues of correspondence and co-existence between light and sound raised by the performance. In part this is because, unlike some other work I have analysed elsewhere, the scenographic power of the light in *All That Fall*

emerges as a property of the whole performance, and cannot be isolated to particular points in the action. Other performances I have cited feature sequences where light is doing something specific at a certain point, for instance, in both *Piece No. 43* and *Plexus* the light is providing new spaces in conjunction with the steps of the dancer, or in *Institute* where the light operates, at points, like a kind of alarm system monitoring the characters' actions. In *All That Fall,* however, the role of light cannot be so easily defined through its place in the action, and this is largely due to the fact that, while other examples show light corresponding to action in some way, in this example the light seems to be co-existing with the sound and space, without necessarily or entirely synthesising.

Light and sound

There is one moment in *All That Fall* where there appears to be a clear parallel between the shifting light and the sound of the recorded drama. Towards the end of the play, when Maddy has finally reached the train station, we hear the sound of a train approach. The sound grows louder and louder, to a point of becoming uncomfortable, and simultaneously, a diamond pattern emerges from the lanterns in front of us and grows brighter and brighter until it makes my eyes water and I have to turn my head to avoid the glare. Here, the light and sound are each increasing in intensity, in this sensual cohesion they become part of the same experience. The interpretative experience, understanding these elements as a train, is formed by the content of the sound (the noise of a train), the context of the text, and the suggestive correlation provided by the light. Rather than representing a train, these elements coalesce to produce a sense of one. We don't see a train, or see anything that looks like a train but experience a sensual analogy of one. This audio-visual correlative recalls Heidegger's concept of the artwork as allegory (1956:

145). The nature of this sensual allegory points to the kinds of evocative meaning that can be produced by scenographic elements. Many examples of performance design use techniques of visual correspondence and representation; another production might have arranged lanterns in the approximate layout of a train's headlights to produce the same reading of 'train'. In my notes I wrote that the diamond shape reminded me simultaneously of the light of an approaching train, and of the triangular shaped grill at the front of early twentieth century trains. Those similarities occurred to me afterwards, in the context of the performance I didn't seek any visual similar images to which the shape might be referring because I so fully accepted the image of train that was presented. That a reading of train is produced here through a basically dissimilar visual image is a testament to the flexibility of expression in performance design. Rather than cerebrally decoding a metaphor here the audience – or at least this was the case in my experience – engages in a kind of instinctive metaphorical seeing. As discussed in Chapter Three, as a kind of seeing occasioned by light, this metaphorical seeing is illuminated by Wollheim's idea that there is a particular kind of seeing appropriate to representations (1980: 215). The twofold nature of Wollheim's theory of seeing-in, corresponds with the manifold processes of attending to performance design. In the case of the train in *All That Fall*, the experience certainly seems to be more than twofold. In the correlation between sound and brightness, we read the diamond shape *as* a train, and the increasing intensity as analogous to its approach but we don't receive a prompt to visualise the train through representation. Instead, the train, like the disembodied voices of the characters, is, simultaneously, present in the space, and absent from the space. What I am describing here as an allegorical, rather than representational, use of light provides a sense of train without giving a train like representation. The allegory here does not seem to populate an imagined

fictive space, but to fill the shared space with the very materiality of its presence. The fluidity with which this image is understood suggests, not a twofold experience of perception but what Crowther terms a 'sensuous manifold'. The complexity of the sensuous manifold lies in the 'integral fusion of the sensuous and the conceptual which enables art to express something of the depth and richness of body-hold in a way which eludes modes of abstract thought' (1993: 5). This fusion speaks to the simultaneous absence and presence experienced, and to the multiple association and sensations triggered by seeing light correspond to the recorded action. There is a bold gestural quality to the light in this production, through which it emerges from the darkness and reaches across the stage.

Reflections – Light as a Generative Material

This chapter has attempted to examine the generative properties of light in contemporary performance, arguing that light has a demonstrable ability to make atmospheric, architectural, and gestural elements in performance. What the analysis here shows is that the sense in which light can be considered a productive component aspect of performance extends far beyond the obvious or prosaic levels at which light generates shadow, or creates colour, focus, or shade. Rather, the examples in this chapter have shown that the generative capacities of light are dramaturgically consequential in the construction of performance. In this vein, ideas of *poiesis* and bringing-forth have provided particularly useful frames for thinking about scenographic light, which I define in terms of its active contribution to the emergence of meaning in performance. *Poiesis,* then, offers a mode of questioning what is, or can be, brought into being by light; positioning created light as an explicitly generative process as well as the product of artistic and technical production. In this vein, the actions of light – in the sense laid out by Barba in terms

of dramaturgy – can be understood as performative in themselves because they can cause actions, perceptions, or events to happen. Each of the three examples explored in this chapter involve light that encapsulates such a generative role.

In *Ballyturk* I argue, the light works with and in excess of the play text to create both a pervasive mood across the space, and to form a kind of conduit between the characters' understanding of their world and the audience's experience. Crucially, the moments of rupture between the two worlds of the storytelling state and the 'normal' room demonstrate a clear link between the character's conscious production of stories and the light, although the position of light within this remains ambiguous. Further to the strong changes of light, there are throughout, a number of more subtle shifts. What appears to be a single state of 'normal' in the room is in fact subject to continual tonal shifts, and even within the storytelling state there are a number of changes each time the state recurs. Within the room state, especially, the subtle shifts from warmer to colder light condition the appearance of the characters and the room, making the space seem more and then less inviting at crucial points in the action. These subtle shifts recall the observations in Chapter Three about the ways that light mediates performance, transforming the appearance of everything in its path. In this sense light performs a kind of enframing, a kind of calling forth *in a particular way* reminiscent of Heidegger's account of technology. In considering film dance, Ann Dils interprets enframing as a kind of filter, evinced for her in the screen of a dance film which conceals the weight of an actual dancing body and yet allows her to become aware of the process of seeing movement (2012: 26). In addition to the shifts of colour in the light of *Ballyturk,* the lines of shadow cast through the bars above the stage indicate the presence of an external world beyond the confines of the room. This suggestion seems remote until the rear wall cleaves in two. The direction of the shadows does not progress naturally, following a clear or logical

trajectory across the sky, but is, rather, unstable and subject to jumps and changes. Additionally, while the shadows initially seem to be cast from a coherent source, and all from one direction, there are points in the play where the shadows cross, illustrating futher the constucted nature of the scene. My point in describing these shadows is not to infer the logical details of their potential sources but to illustrate how their shifting presence indicates an active role of light. Not only in generating the physical shadows, but in disclosing through the shadows a stage world of instability. This returns us to questions of *poiesis* in light, of how light, in this example, brings into unconcealedness the precarity of the room. Wrathall describes this sense of *alethia* using the example of a cathedral:

> if a building like a medieval cathedral supports the faithful in their
> efforts to inhabit a world opened up by God's grace, the cathedral is also
> true in the ontologically broad sense – it works by lifting into salience
> what is essential or most important about such a world, and supporting
> the disclosive practices of that world's inhabitants (Wrathall, 2011: 4).

Applied to the example of *Ballyturk* – where we can reimagine the religious overtones of Wrathall's analogy in terms of a theatrical world-building – the diegetic light within the world supports the men in their efforts to enact their ritualised storytelling. Additionally, the atmosphere and palpable atmospheric ruptures created through the light discloses for the audience a sense of the external control these men are – at first unknowingly – subject to.

In *Piece No. 43* the light continually sculpts small units of space out of the surrounding darkness, isolating dancers in sharp squares and rectangles of light. At times, such as the opening moment, the dancers seem to interact with these light-spaces as though they contain physical boundaries. This apparent haptic interaction with the structures of light recalls the materiality of light presented in Chapter Four, and also points to a quality of conjuring, as light produces sharp, distinct boundaries out of the surrounding darkness. The sense of exchange between light and the

dancers in the long opening scene establishes a relationship between the human and the non-human presences in this piece. To an extent it seems that the dancers are testing the boundaries of the light, approaching slowly as if to see what might happen if they were to cross this immaterial barrier. Watching the dancers gradually enclose themselves in the path of the light excites a kinaesthetic appreciation of this apparently haptic relationship. As architecture, these spaces constitute structural propositions; tellingly after the long process of entering the boxes the dancers are always subsequently shown inside structures of light. Yet, as we have also seen in *17 Border Crossings, Political Mother,* and *Plexus* these apparently solid structures of light can also fade, dissolve, and mutate instantly. Rufford, drawing on Jacques Copeau articulates the view that 'architecture does not simply contain drama but *produces* it by co-creating its meanings, conventions and aesthetics' (2015: 2. Emphasis in original). Here too, these architectural spaces do not only contain the dancers, but enter into dialogue with them; extending to enable their continued movement, or pulsing around them. This conversant relationship between bodies and light can be considered in the terms Kozel uses when discussing the ability of technologies to reveal aspects of embodiment, where *techne* comes to enfold

> the layers of physical, conceptual and social knowledge that are revealed through digital/physical interfaces; these layers were concealed but, through the practices of revelation and movement, they come to take their place in wider circles of language and collective practice (Kozel, 2005: 35).

In *Piece No. 43* in lieu of a digital/physical interface, there is an interface between light and the body, and for the audience there is both the empathetic engagement with what that might feel like and the ability to observe this relational interface from a distance.

Finally, Pan Pan Theatre's *All That Fall* creates a score of light in a context where previously none was imagined: a radio play. Placing its audience within a shared

environment the performance creates a sense that the whole space is responding to the sounds of the voices in Beckett's text. Within this environment, light envelops the audience completely; light skims across the carpet under our feet, light bulbs hang and glimmer above our heads, and a solid wall of light in front of us commands attention. The darkness, when it comes, feels equally encompassing. The overlapping of multiple scores of light, sound, space, and voice emerges as a kind of synesthetic experience, in which light and dark seem to extend as bodily presences in the space. The light occasions a continuum of sensual experience, from the inviting glow of a barely shining lantern, to the searing of a wall of lanterns blazing directly into the audience's eyes, to the seemingly tactile presence of the encroaching darkness. There is a bodily quality to the light in this version of *All That Fall,* with beams of light extending like spectral limbs into the space. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's embodied account of perception, Vasseleu notes that '[l]ight has the diacritical structure of flesh' (1998: 45), meaning that the experience of light is a bodily one, dense with sensibility. Light is, Vasseleu continues, inseparable from what is seen; there is an attendant experience of light itself bound up in any visual encounter. In this version of *All That Fall* light does not here serve to cast light onto something else, but is instead the subject of its own illumination.

Taken together, then, these three performance examples offer a range answers to the question of how light may be understood as a generative force in performance. The disparate styles of these pieces afford a view of light's productive meaning-making capabilities in terms of character and atmosphere; sculptural architectural spaces; and sensual, material expression. Other examples would likely yield yet more ways in which light can be considered generative, and indeed I will return to this question in relation to all the examples discussed in this thesis in the Conclusion. This breadth of creative possibilities indicates the richness of light as a generative material, far

exceeding the sense of light as an interpretative medium, serving the needs of a text or production. Common to all of the examples analysed here is the sense that light, in its sensual appearing, produces something beyond itself, calling into being something that would not otherwise be present, thus demonstrating the dramaturgical potency of light as creative material.

Conclusions

This research set out to explore the role of light in performance and to articulate a sense of what it is that light does in performance, claiming that there is more at work in light's role than is accounted for elsewhere in subject literature. Uniquely in the field of scenography, this research explored the phenomenon of performance light through a lens drawn, principally, from Heideggerian phenomenology and the more recent philosophical school of object oriented ontology. This critical frame has enabled this project to address an important gap in light research, namely, the audience experience of light in the context of performance, rather than a practitioner's approach to working with light. In so doing, this work has emphasised the dramaturgical contribution of light as a material for and of performance, and has brought to the field a critical focus more commonly associated with other areas of performance studies. In Chapter Three I likened the shifting presences of light and dark in performance to Heidegger's understanding of the clearing, arguing that in constructing and directing the gaze light makes literal the metaphorical idea of bringing something to light. It is also the case that this research has sought to develop this clearing of understanding for light itself, to bring light to light – as Zerdy and Schweitzer put it (2016: 5) – or to bring light itself into a clearing where its essence may be revealed. It is through this close focus on light itself as a subject of study that encompasses material, dramaturgical, and conceptual processes that this PhD research makes its original contribution to knowledge in performance studies.

The principal contributions to knowledge produced by this research are: the positioning of light as scenographic; the deepening of the understanding of complex relationship between created light and vision; the potential of light as a tangible

material in itself; and, ultimately, that light is or can be a generative material in performance. I will revisit the value of each of these contributions in greater detail as I return to the main arguments and questions driving the thesis. The insights produced in this research about the pivotal dramaturgical contributions of light in performance have been partially articulated elsewhere (Baugh, 2013; Crisafullli, 2013; Palmer, 2013; Abulafia, 2016; Stewart, 2016) and the claims of this research are strengthened by the earlier work of these other scholars in the field. As a contribution to the field my research has collated these insights into a single volume and has further extended and deepened existing understandings. Additionally, the scope of this thesis, using multiple examples and a wide range of theoretical perspectives means that my research has been able to present a more sustained questioning of the nature of light's role in performance than has been previously available in performance studies.

Scenographic Light

I have offered the term 'scenographic light' as a means of articulating the active role of light in performance. This term implicitly frames light as a material that can inscribe meaning in space and time, and asserts that research about light must be acknowledged as a key aspect of the 'scenographic turn'. The spatial inscription of scenographic light relates to the etymology of the word as scenic or spatial inscription, but also points to the nature of light as something that extends into and through space. In this way, the spatial inscription of scenographic light relates not only to its aesthetic capacity to transform the appearance of space, but also to its vitality as a kind of material in itself; radiating into the environment, like Böhme's ecstasy of the thing (Böhme, 1993: 121). The temporality of scenographic light further emphasises the transience and instability of light as a performance material.

This research has shown that the dialogic mutability of light as it shifts from one moment to the next is a fundamental and affective language of performance. As Baugh articulates, scenography is more than a synonym for theatre design, and 'has become transformed into a very full, socially engaged and active participant in an extraordinary expansion of activities' (2013: 239). Similarly, the use of the term 'scenographic light' serves to show that light is also engaged in this deeper level of affective practice. While the 'extraordinary expansion of activities' in other areas of performance design research has often meant the development of works beyond conventional theatre spaces and outside of traditional frames (Baugh, 2013; Lotker and Gough, 2013; Collins and Aronson, 2015; McKinney and Palmer, 2017) and the examples presented here have been more traditional in form, the insights produced about the meaning-making, and experience making capacities of light point to a more expansive practice. Indeed, the arguments presented through this research about the material, consequential impact of light in performance practice may have implications in the expansion of future practice and thinking about light. For example, the work this thesis has done to establish the proprioceptive sensation of light, and the role of light in destabilising the veracity of vision not only shows the manifold importance of scenographic light as a component of performance, but also demonstrates ways in which the study of light extends beyond the visual, and into questions of embodiment, that are more central to contemporary performance research.

The conceptual implications of scenographic light have led this project to draw important ideas of aesthetics, phenomenology, and ontology into the conversation about performance light. The application of these theoretical elements demonstrates the depth and the value of the study of light and the manifold ways that light can impact on a performance. This is by no means the first piece of scenographic

scholarship to engage with concepts of phenomenology, but it is unique among work on performance in using Heideggerian concepts to articulate the underlying, active role of light as a theatrical material. The essential premise of Heidegger's philosophy is that there is a difference between the presence of a thing and its essence. This research has turned this idea towards performance light as a way of addressing the underlying, intangible essence of performance light as a material. In so doing, it has established a frame for examining light that sits at a productive remove from formal or technical description, offering a theoretical basis for examining the agency of light in performance. The value of these theoretical perspectives lies in the novel insights produced. Through the positioning of light as a primarily dramaturgical, rather than visual or technical, material I have been able to demonstrate how the operation of light in performance reveals the phenomenological and dramaturgical workings of performance. Furthermore, this research has demonstrated that the use of auto-ethnographic audience research is a productive means of approaching light, and that this approach productively exposes light as a material for performance rather than as the preserve of technical divisions. Extending from this, the research has attempted to apply languages of performance analysis to light, eschewing technical descriptors, making the potential impact of light accessible to practitioners and scholars working in other aspects of performance. And in so doing, offers both new ways of thinking about the scenographic application of light in performance, and a language with which to discuss the operation of light as a component of performance.

Main Arguments Recapitulated

The core argument of this research has been that there is more involved in the action of light in performance than can be accounted for in examining only its

formal properties or technical production. The research set out to examine the extent to which this something more might translate into a consideration of light as a kind of actor, arguing for the critical significance of its role in the construction of performance. This argument has been at the core of this thesis, and I have explored it through multiple, overlapping modes of questioning. I will now therefore restate the principal arguments within each chapter, highlighting the ways in which each chapter has helped to drive towards a more thorough critical understanding of light in performance.

Chapter One established the case for the term 'scenographic light' and set out the term's significance in relation to the discipline of scenography and of light more locally. In setting out the rationale in my use of this term I have shown that – rather than a misappropriation that would seek to claim for light the performative significance of emergent scenography – the term 'scenographic light' aids in articulating the performative, active power of light, and also further highlights the role and power of scenography. Homing in on the scenographic performativity of just one element of scenography demonstrates that all elements of scenography are significant contributors and therefore joins the chorus of voices establishing scenography as an important means of reading performance while also pleading more specifically for the role of light within the field.

Chapter Two established the frame of a new methodology with which to examine light. The adoption of a new (to the field of light research) methodology appropriate to the terms of inquiry arose from both conceptual and practical needs. Conceptually, the starting point of this project aimed to explore theoretical implications of the role of light for performance. This led me to search for a conceptual frame that would account for the myriad roles of light in performance as an aesthetic, sensual, and dramaturgical phenomenon. The conceptual approach of

the methodology, also ultimately pointed to the practical points of the method; the need to use multiple examples of performance; the need to focus on the experience of the spectator; and the resulting importance of auto-ethnographic reflection.

Centred around the core research questions, the progression of the next three chapters leads to an expanded understanding of light as a generative performance material. I began, in Chapter Three by examining the seemingly prosaic link between light and vision, demonstrating that this is, in fact, a rich and polysemic phenomenon, and thus that light is a transformational presence in performance, with the capacity to radically alter the appearance and the availability of other elements in its path. Crucially, as the examples in this chapter demonstrated, the relationship between light and vision is complex, and impacts on the entire construction of performance. The manipulation of light in this vein includes the capacity of light to select and transform the visible, and to organise a performance across both space and time. In selecting the visible, light is not only making subjects apparent, but also selecting, by omission, what is invisible at any point. This kind of revealing, is also inherently a concealing. In transforming the objects in its path, light can shift the tone and colour of a stage, or can, through shadow and angle, accentuate or eliminate the appearance of wrinkles on an actor's face. Light can radically alter the perception of space and can manipulate the appearance of scale between objects or bodies and their environment. In this chameleon-like ability light undermines the veracity of the theatrical experience, there is no 'neutral' against which successive changes can be judged, manipulated light is always already unstable. Additionally, light can organise performance as a kind of curatorial presence, guiding the attention of the audience through selection, and also impacting on the emerging rhythm of a performance. This curatorial aspect of light is inherently an act of mediation in terms of how it divides and constructs a given performance.

Chapter Four explored the material aspects of light, examining light as a kind of performing object. This chapter argued that the phenomenal experience of attending to light in performance can be as much an experience of seeing light *as* light, as it can be of seeing other elements in, or transformed by, the light. The examples in this chapter presented a wide range of manifestations of light, pointing to a specific kind of objecthood. The multiple relationships that light can engender in those who use or observe it demonstrates its complexity as an object, deserving of deeper consideration. The materiality of light, however, is a mode of materiality unique to it, one that paradoxically combines both tangible and ephemeral qualities. As a material, light is fundamentally capricious; mutable and inconstant. This is perhaps what lends it power, as seemingly solid objects can melt away, barriers dissolve and continually transform. This mutability, however, does not mean that light is lacking materiality, but suggests, rather, that the materiality of light is uniquely ephemeral.

Chapter Five examined the generative capacity of light, detailing both the kinds of things that can be made by light (shadow, colour, shape, space) and the deeper implications of this kind of production within performance. This chapter extended Palmer's research on 'creative light' (2013), pointing to theoretical and analytical frameworks with which to approach the generative capacities of light. Critically, the frame of bringing forth, drawn from Heidegger's *poiesis* facilitates an exploration of what scenographic light produces, or brings forth in the context of performance. This claim of light as a generative material provides an extended understanding of the role of light in Hannah and Harsløf's understanding of performance design as both a doing and a thing done, (2008) noting that in its 'doing' scenographic light is constituting something in excess of itself.

Central to all of these chapters has been a focus on the event of performance. Such a dramaturgical perspective provides a valuable frame for considering light as agent in

performance. Accordingly, this research has been able to join with strands of object orientated ontology and new materialism to explore the agential capacity of performance light in terms of its material impacts on performance. Much as Schneider notes that new materialism presents opportunities to trouble the notion that 'living humans must hide somewhere in the wings of actions, or be the ones to ultimately bear agential responsibility for the actions of objects or animals or plants' (2015: 9), Harman's object oriented contention that objects maintain their own fundamental level of reality has been used here to articulate the essential reality of light as a kind of substantive material in performance.

Research Questions Revisited

This thesis set out to address the central question of light's capacity for meaning-making in performance through three interlinked sub-questions. Namely, what is the dramaturgical effect of light's mediation of performance?; to what extent can light be considered a physical presence on the stage?; and how may light be understood as a generative force in performance? As stated at the outset, each of these questions revolved around a central query as to light's underlying, active role in the construction of theatrical experience. I attempted to address these questions sequentially in Chapters Three through Five, rooting my theoretical reflections in a range of performance examples. I have attempted to respond to these performances in terms suggested by their form and content, indicating the aspects of light that seem to be actively working in the experience of each.

While Chapters Three, Four, and Five have each addressed a specific research question, there has also been significant overlap between the chapters. This is a consequence of the central, driving concern about the nature of light in performance, a concern which underpins each of the sub-questions dealt with in

those chapters. This overlap is also a consequence of the nature of light itself, as a perceptually and conceptually pervasive material, making it a valuable object of study precisely because it cannot be easily segmented but constantly involves multiple operations and processes. Given this overlap I will here return to the research questions, this time drawing from insights across the thesis.

1. What is the dramaturgical impact of light's mediation of performance?

The presence of the definite article in the wording of this question is in some ways misleading as it would seem to seek out a single, decisive answer. Rather – as asserted in the research objectives – the goal was not to provide definitive, conclusive, and thus limiting, pronouncements about *the* effect of light but rather to identify myriad possibilities of light as a dramaturgical interlocutor through its multidimensional mediation of performance. In lieu, then, of a closed answer, or set of answers, to this question, this research has identified multiple ways in which the action of light impacts on the dramaturgical construction of performance. While many of the features of light involved have been identified previously, a strength of this research is to collect and analyse these aspects of light in specific relation to performance dramaturgy. In addressing this research question, too, this thesis has expanded understandings about the multidimensional ways in which light mediates performance. The haptic and proprioceptive dimensions of the mediated, and sensuously metaphorical kinds of seeing prompted and enabled by light thus connect with Welton's discussion of the experience in attending to theatre of seeing feelingly (2012: 155-156).

Understanding dramaturgy as the 'underpinning principles of theatrical construction' (Turner, 2015: 2), or as the 'work of the actions' (Barba, 1985) it becomes clear that light operates dramaturgically in each of the examples included throughout the

thesis. In *Institute,* the light constructs a kind of surveillance of the stage, making clear the dramaturgical themes of the piece. In *Krapp's Last Tape* the dominant action of the light complicates Krapp's behaviour, allowing the viewer to question the locus of control in the world presented. In *Political Mother* the light creates a continual drama of appearance and disappearance; the structure of the performance as a series of snapshots is given wholly by the light. Examples from later chapters also reveal a dramaturgical operation of the light. In *17 Border Crossings* the light becomes a means of illustrating narrative details, but also exposes the dramaturgical construction of the piece, emphasising otherwise understated themes and foregrounding the telling of the stories. The light in *Plexus* moves the action along, revealing and concealing the presence of the dancer, Ito, and also driving her movements around the space. In *Hidden* light not only provides the structure of the action, but also *is* the only discernible performer in the space. The shifting states of light in *Ballyturk* work to add layers of dramaturgical meaning and structure around the play of the light and the recurrence of visual motifs extrinsic to the action. The sculptural quality of the light in *Piece No. 43* seems to render the dancers as moving statues, and further seems to provide both obstacles and pathways for their movements. This light is dramaturgical in the sense that it structures the performance, and manifests as an action to which the cast respond. In *All That Fall* the light constructs a dramaturgical frame for the play that is unique to that production. Placing the voices of the characters in an environment of light, the light seems to give body and weight to the voices that come out of the dark.

In each of these cases, the light constructs transformative possibilities that are indivisible from the meanings and structures of the performances, thus verifying Crisafulli's assertion that light is 'structural, constructive, poetic, and dramaturgic' (2013: 18). Beyond this broad claim, the modes of questioning in this thesis have

uncovered particular aspects of light that contribute to the constructive potential of light as a performance material. The discussion of the myriad relationships between light and vision in Chapter Three demonstrated the limitations of assumptions that the primary function of light in performance is to render the actors visible. Instead of this limiting view – which remains dominant in lighting design pedagogy – my research provides an expanded understanding, in which visibility becomes a kind of by-product of the action of light, and in which the modes of seeing facilitated by performance light are necessarily unstable, transient, and deceptive.

2. To what extent can light be considered a physical presence on the stage?

This question attends to the potential manifestations of light in performance, and explores ways that scenographic light seems to defy claims of ephemerality, spilling over into the material realm. *17 Border Crossings* presents the lanterns that produce light as a dominant presence in the space, and as flexible props with which the actor plays. In the more sculpted example of *Plexus,* the light seems to carve defined shapes and spaces within the structure, and further makes the chords of the set seem to shimmer and change colour. Without any human performers present, *Hidden* presents lanterns as its principal cast members, creating a kind of drama between lanterns and the respective qualities of light produced by each. In Chapter Two, *Institute,* foregrounds some of its lighting instruments, with lanterns built into the set calling attention to the construction of the lighting, and thus of the stage world. The glowing piles of paper and gridlines of tall shelves in *Krapp's Last Tape* also seem to emit a kind of light, and the proliferation of hanging lampshades call attention to the sharp contrast between areas of glowing light and swathes of darkness on the stage. The apparent density of the light and dark in *Political Mother* continually asserts the *presence* of light, as an element within the action as dancers seem to push against it. Although at first quite understated, the light in Chapter Five's *Ballyturk,* begins to

assert a kind of presence both through the character's manipulation of the lever, and then more interestingly, through the morphing of light from the general wash of the room to the stark pools of storytelling light, seemingly without prompt from the actors. The dancers in *Piece No. 43* initially approach spaces of light with caution, treating the edge of the light as a kind of physical barrier and thus granting a kind of physical reality to the light spaces created. The final example, *All That Fall,* presents light almost as a kind of proxy for the absent bodies of the cast. Through its apparent gestural quality, the light seems to reach outward in the space, spreading not only its glow but also the bodily experience of its warmth.

Extrapolating from these examples, it seems that the means by which light attains a kind of manifest presence include the use of haze, or high contrast, through the foregrounding of equipment, or through the ways that performers respond to light. The use of haze to lend dimensionality to light is a well-known theatrical device, pioneered by Svoboda and widely used in theatre and dance practices. Likewise, the use of high contrast – such as the superficially monochrome staging of *Krapp's Last Tape* – the foregrounding of equipment, or the deliberate actions of performers are all elements likely to lend a sense of physicality to light in performance. The more interesting findings of this research relate to the possibilities that emerge when light appears as a manifest presence in performance. Extended examination of light as a material in the sense of the physical also affords a deeper understanding of the nature of light as another kind of material; that of a dramatic or indeed dramaturgical component of performance.

3.   How might light be understood as a generative element in performance?

An understanding of light as a constitutive material, capable of transforming the appearance of spaces, bodies, and objects, while also appearing to manifest as a kind

of object in its own right, points, almost as a matter of course, to a conception of light as a creative and generative force in performance. The analysis of the examples in Chapter Five demonstrates, I think, that a reading of light as a generative performance material is not only appropriate but also fruitful in terms of performance analysis. Exploring, in detail, what the light is offering in a given moment of a performance, and furthermore what is occurring or appearing as a consequence of the light, is also a means of attending to the ontological and dramaturgical nature of the performance itself.

It is through light that the sense of two distinct stage-worlds is created in *Ballyturk*; the habitual state of the two main characters' living quarters, and the heightened storytelling state relating to the imagined town. It is also through light that elements of the schism between these two states emerge, proffering a kind of commentary on the action and offering another track through the play. In *Piece No. 43* the light creates a continually shifting tapestry of boxes, creating a kind of moving sculpture, but also generating a kind of unstable architecture in and around which the movement unfolds. In *All That Fall* the light creates shifting geometric patterns in tandem with the recorded voices, as well as producing a kind of slippery proxy for the absent bodies of the speakers. The light in earlier examples, too, can be considered generative. In *Institute,* for instance, the dramaturgical conceit of surveillance is largely constructed through the light. While there is a sound effect to accompany the early searchlight moments, it is the light that produces the sense of a specific, targeted response to the character's actions. The action of light in *Krapp's Last Tape* raises a number of dramaturgical questions about the meaning of the play, and this is a kind of generative action in the sense that the light brings forth the action in a way that serves to generate new meanings. In *Political Mother* the light continually redefines the space, creating demarcated shapes and spaces on the stage

and producing a temporal and spatial tension between light and dark. In *17 Border Crossings*, the light accentuates the storytelling fluidity of the performer's flow from one episode to the next but also, through its very transience, produces a kind of political commentary on the nature of borders. *Plexus* presents a use of light that brings forth the dancer in a specific aesthetic context, one that seems to generate a specific mode of consciousness towards her movements. And *Hidden* creates a miniature symphony of light, in which the different tonal properties of the lanterns produce a sense of multiple voices or characters.

It is also worth drawing out specific elements that light can generate in performance. Throughout the examples in this thesis, light has been shown to generate a kind of mediated, unstable visibility, that subverts the veracity of the visible. This deceptive ability of light further demonstrates the particularity of the theatrical experience, in much the same way that Wrathall, following Heidegger, observes that perceptual deceptions are not only mental events but are 'particular ways of being out in the world and involved with things' (Wrathall, 2011: 61). The way of being of a spectator involved with the sensory field of a performance in which visual information is unstable is one that implies manifold forms of fictional and metaphorical seeing, in addition to the rich sensual offer of changing light.

Another element that light has produced in many of the examples here is space, both creating specific spaces through distinct pools or shapes of light, and transforming the appearance of a given space. Light can transform space through the intensity –or otherwise – of its illumination, or through the use of colour, or through lighting spaces and objects from shifting angles, changing perceptions of size, shape, and distance. Crucially, the relationship between light and space is one forged over time; the spatiality of light is distinctly temporal as transformations of space made through light become evident through the shifting appearances of distinct light-spaces or the

mercurial ability of light to transform the feeling of a space from one moment to the next. I have termed this 'transient architecture' in recognition that the spaces generated by light in performance can share the organisational dominance of built structures, while also remaining fleeting and immaterial or only partially material. Examples here have also shown how scenographic light can harness the fact that light will produce shadow, but turning shadow itself into a potent dramaturgical material.

Reflections on the Methodology

Developed in tandem with the terms of the research, the methodology employed here has become an important contribution of this research, and one that could be developed further or applied in different ways to future research. I have specifically opted not to combine my approach with technical notes, using instead my own subjective experience of light as a vehicle for analysing the dramaturgical capacities of light from the perspective of an audience member. This has been an important intentional stance within this project, as a means of distancing the findings about the role of light from considerations of the technical. Such a perspective demonstrates that light is a consequential, creative material in performance with the capacity to deeply influence an audience member's experience of a performance. To date there has been a dearth of work examining the audience perspective of performance light in detail and my findings here illustrate the potential richness of the relationship between audience and light in performance. Future work could potentially fruitfully combine this approach with an empirical record (through technical data) of the actual progression of light in a given performance. Such an application may lead to valuable insights about the processes involved in attending to light, and of the role of memory and attention in recalling performances.

Additionally, the methodological approach suggested here could also be widened out to involve more audience members. While the parity of perception across the multiple examples here has enabled significant depth in the analysis of light itself – rather than the perception of light *per se* - the observances here remain those of an expert observer and an important next step for the field might be to consider the impact of scenographic light on a more general observer. More broadly ethnographic research on the impact of light on an audience, encompassing a wider range of perspectives, would potentially deepen understandings about modes of attentiveness to ephemeral scenographic materials. Bringing other frames of reference to bear on the experience of attending to scenographic light would provide a means of deepening the insights in Chapter Five about light as a force of *poiesis,* which showed that created light in performance is not only the culmination of an artistic process but also the beginning of another process of bringing-forth, one which implicates the audience in a creative exchange with the material components of performance.

 Either or both of these potential modifications to the methodology as it has been developed here, would facilitate a more thorough exploration of the role of perception in light spectatorship. While I have used spectatorship as a key tool of this research, this has not been the focus of questioning here and there remains much to be asked about the perceptual relationships between spectators and light in performance.

Most especially, though, the methodology employed here has presented a way of examining the polysemic phenomenon of light, through analytical means. I am not claiming this as the definitive means of addressing these questions but hope to have shown how the methodological design has opened up new avenues of knowledge than were previously available. As stated at the outset, one of the underlying objectives of this research was to develop a means of analysing light as a

dramaturgical component of performance. In line with this objective, the methodology employed here has provided a fruitful means of exploring the mercurial and complex nature of light in performance. Critically, the use of Heidegger's notion of ontological difference, coupled with Harman's object oriented ontology has brought about a deeper level of questioning about the nature of light as performing object.

Implications

The scope and ambition of this research means that, in ploughing the fertile field of thinking about performance light, the process has churned up a great deal of material that there has not been time or space to develop here fully. It is my hope then that this research may pave the way for further developments in light research specifically, and in performance design more broadly. Particularly pertinent questions raised by this work relate to the potential politics of the affective and performative dimensions of scenographic light. As the preceding chapters have made clear, scenographic light has the potential to materialise a drama of appearance and disappearance – both in cases where light accentuates or creates a kind of appearing and disappearing such as *Political Mother* and *Plexus*, and also in cases where light works as a kind of proxy for an absent body or idea, as it does in *All That Fall,* for example. Thus, in its practices of making visible light is enacting a kind of philosophical practice and there are, in consequence, significant questions to be asked about the ways in which light contributes to the construction of the theatrical gaze and the role that it may play in the politics of representation.

Within a research context, where a rich understanding of the potency of scenographic materials has already been established, this research serves to extend and develop both the discourse around scenography and analyses of light in

performance. This thesis extends existing research on light in performance, developing considerations of light through the previously underdeveloped lens of phenomenological and audience perspectives. Through this frame, it has sought to articulate the fundamental meaning-making properties of light as a component of performance, and has demonstrated – through close exploration of specific examples – the ways in which light can contribute to the structure of experience and the emergence of meaning in performance. It is my hope that this project will serve to move the evolving conversation about the role and value of light in performance forward. In the introduction I remarked on a certain stasis in some aspects of light research, in which writing about light seems so often to need to place itself in opposition to technical considerations. To an extent, this research has perpetuated this trend in also positioning its insights in relation to a lack, but I have also demonstrated that there is a wealth of existing research detailing the enormous dramaturgical importance of light in performance. Beyond this, my sustained examination of light in terms of its dramaturgical impact aims to dispense with staid arguments about whether light is an art or a craft and orient future research towards more interesting questions about the nature of light as an impactful component of performance.

Although this research has not directly explored conditions of practice, it implicitly pleads a case for embedding extended consideration of light at all stages of creative development. Theatre practitioners, particularly those engaged in design, may find in this research useful evidence as to the powerful contributions that can be made independently by performance materials such as light. The findings throughout this thesis indicate that light can – and does – make significant contributions to the construction of performance work. As the examples here show, light affords the possibilities for new kinds of meaning and engagement to emerge in performance.

Yet, as Moran's work indicates, there remain serious tensions around the creative agency of the lighting designer within professional theatre practice (2017: 17; 124). While there are – as stated in the Introduction –clear practical, and fiscal, reasons behind this limiting of the lighting designer's creative role, it seems that this limiting also stems from a persistent misunderstanding about the potential dramaturgical value of light as a material of performance. The findings of my research, trouble assumptions that light is principally facilitative and demonstrate the rich dramaturgical possibilities of light in performance.

This research may well suggest, then, some recommendations for practice, namely the re-examining of the lighting designer's place in production hierarchy and advocating for expanding collaborative practices between lighting designers and other theatre artists. Such suggestions emerge from the findings relating to light's formative role in performance, extrapolating that greater collaboration is likely to yield more creative work. It may well be significant, for example, that so many of the examples cited here are the products of close collaborations – such as those between Quinn and Cosgrove in *All That Fall,* and between Hulls and Maliphant in *Piece No. 43* – or of solo artists – such as Lucy Carter's work on *Hidden.* The nature of the relationship between the conditions of a work's creation and the impact of light in the resulting production, is absent from this research, but not, I hope, from future research. The other principal recommendation this research would make would be to embed considerations of light into analyses of performance – both in the growing academic field of performance design and in popular criticism. The work here has shown that attention to the role and impact of light in a given production not only elucidates the power of light as a material, but can also amplify the understanding of the nature of performance itself.

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