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The Haunted Stage: An Overview

popular saying among students of Ibsen is that "all of his plays could be called *Ghosts*," and, indeed, the images of the dead continuing to work their power on the living, of the past reappearing unexpectedly and uncannily in the midst of the present, are concerns that clearly struck deeply into the poetic imagination of the most influential dramatist of the modern European theatre. The comment is perhaps even more appropriate if we recall that Ibsen's title for the play was *Gengangere*, meaning literally "those that come back again" (the French translation, *Revenants*, captures this concept much more successfully).

Relevant as this observation is to the works of Ibsen, one might expand this observation to remark that not only all of Ibsen's plays but all plays in general might be called *Ghosts*, since, as Herbert Blau has provocatively observed, one of the universals of performance, both East and West, is its ghostliness, its sense of return, the uncanny but inescapable impression imposed upon its spectators that "*we are seeing what we saw before.*"[1] Blau is perhaps the most philosophical, but he is certainly not the only, recent theorist who has remarked upon this strange quality of experiencing something as a repetition in the theatre. Richard Schechner's oft-quoted characterization of performance as "restored behavior" or "twice-

behaved behavior"[2] looks in the same direction, as does Joseph Roach's relation of performance to surrogation, the "doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins."[3] The physical theatre, as a site of the continuing reinforcement of memory by surrogation, is not surprisingly among the most haunted of human cultural structures. Almost any long-established theatre has tales of its resident ghosts, a feature utilized by the French director Daniel Mesguich in a number of his metatheatrical productions and by Mac Wellman, who summoned up the ghosts of the abandoned Victory Theatre to reenact their stories in that space in his site-specific 1990 production, *Crowbar*.

All theatrical cultures have recognized, in some form or another, this ghostly quality, this sense of something coming back in the theatre, and so the relationships between theatre and cultural memory are deep and complex. Just as one might say that every play might be called *Ghosts,* so, with equal justification, one might argue that every play is a memory play. Theatre, as a simulacrum of the cultural and historical process itself, seeking to depict the full range of human actions within their physical context, has always provided society with the most tangible records of its attempts to understand its own operations. It is the repository of cultural memory, but, like the memory of each individual, it is also subject to continual adjustment and modification as the memory is recalled in new circumstances and contexts. The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the processes of recycling and recollection. As Elin Diamond has noted, even the terminology associated with performance suggests its inescapable and continuing negotiations with memory:

> While a performance embeds traces of other performances, it also produces an experience whose interpretation only partially depends on previous experience. Hence the terminology of "re" in discussion of performance, as in *re*member, *re*inscribe, *re*configure, *re*iterate, *re*store. "Re" acknowledges the pre-existing discursive field, the repetition within the performative present, but "figure," "script," and "iterate" assert the possibility of something that *exceeds* our knowledge, that alters

the shape of sites and imagines new unsuspected subject positions.[4]

A parallel process can be seen in dreaming, which, as many dream theorists have observed, has distinct similarities in the private experience to the public experience of theatre. Bert States suggests that both human fictions and human dreams are centrally concerned with memory negotiation. "If something is to be remembered at all, it must be remembered not as *what* happened but as what has happened *again* in a different way and will surely happen again in the future in still another way."[5] The waking dream of theatre, like dreaming itself, is particularly well suited to this strange but apparently essential process. Both recycle past perceptions and experience in imaginary configurations that, although different, are powerfully haunted by a sense of repetition and involve the whole range of human activity and its context.

The close relationships between theatre and memory have been recognized in many cultures and in many different fashions. The founding myths and legends of cultures around the world have been registered in their cultures by theatrical repetition, and, as modern nationalism arose to challenge the older religious faiths, national myths, legends, and historical stories again utilized the medium of theatre to present—or, rather, to represent, reinscribe, and reinforce—this new cultural construction. Central to the Noh drama of Japan, one of the world's oldest and most venerated dramatic traditions, is the image of the play as a story of the past recounted by a ghost, but ghostly storytellers and recalled events are the common coin of theatre everywhere in the world at every period.

The retelling of stories already told, the reenactment of events already enacted, the reexperience of emotions already experienced, these are and have always been central concerns of the theatre in all times and places, but closely allied to these concerns are the particular production dynamics of theatre: the stories it chooses to tell, the bodies and other physical materials it utilizes to tell them, and the places in which they are told. Each of these production elements are also, to a striking degree, composed of material "that we have seen before," and the memory of that recycled

material as it moves through new and different productions contributes in no small measure to the richness and density of the operations of theatre in general as a site of memory, both personal and cultural. The focus of this study will be upon such material and how the memories that it evokes have conditioned the processes of theatrical composition and, even more important, of theatrical reception in theatrical cultures around the world and across the centuries.

Of course, as anyone involved in the theatre knows, performance, however highly controlled and codified, is never exactly repeatable, an insight that Derrida used to challenge the speech-act theories of Austin and Searle, arguing that, while performative speech depends upon the citing of previous speech, the citation is never exact because of its shifting context.[6] As Hamlet remarks in that most haunted of all Western dramas, "I'll have these players / Play something like the murder of my father." That evocative phrase *something like* not only admits the inevitable slippage in all repetition but at the same time acknowledges the congruence that still haunts the new performance, a congruence upon which Hamlet, rightly, relies to "catch the conscience of the king" through the embodied memory of the theatre.

One of the important insights of modern literary theory has been that every new work may also be seen as a new assemblage of material from old works. As Roland Barthes observes in a widely quoted passage from *Image, Music, Text:* "We now know that the text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the 'message' of an Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, *none of them original,* blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture."[7]

This complex recycling of old elements, far from being a disadvantage, is an absolutely essential part of the reception process. We are able to "read" new works—whether they be plays, paintings, musical compositions, or, for that matter, new signifying structures that make no claim to artistic expression at all—only because we recognize within them elements that have been recycled from other structures of experience that we have experienced earlier. This "intertextual" attitude, approaching the text not as a

unique and essentially self-contained structure but as an open-ended "tissue of quotations," has become now quite familiar. The dramatic script, as text, readily opens itself to analysis on these terms, though, as I will argue in the next chapter, it participates in the recycling of elements in a rather different and arguably more comprehensive manner than do texts created in the tradition of other "literary" genres.

Definitions and examples of the workings of intertextuality have usually discussed this phenomenon as Barthes does, as a dynamic working within the text or among a body of texts, usually with a corresponding de-emphasis of the individual author (or at least of the originality of that author). Such an emphasis somewhat obscures the importance of memory to this process, an importance that becomes much clearer when we shift attention from the text itself to its reception. All reception is deeply involved with memory, because it is memory that supplies the codes and strategies that shape reception, and, as cultural and social memories change, so do the parameters within which reception operates, those parameters that reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss has called the "horizon of expectations."[8] The expectations an audience brings to a new reception experience are the residue of memory of previous such experiences. The reception group that Stanley Fish has called the "interpretive community" might in fact be described as a community in which there is a significant overlap of such memory,[9] and the reception process itself might be characterized as the selective application of memory to experience.

This process occurs, of course, not only in the arts but in any human activity involving interpretation, which includes any human activity to which consciousness is brought, but the major feature generally separating a work of art from other activities of the consciousness lies in the particular way it is framed, as an activity or object created to stimulate interpretation, that is, to invite an audience to interact in this way with it. Their interaction will in turn be primarily based upon their previous experience with similar activities or objects, that is, upon memory. The primary tools for audiences confronted with new paintings, pieces of music, books, or pieces of theatre are previous examples of these various arts they have experienced. An audience member, bombarded

with a variety of stimuli, processes them by selectively applying reception strategies remembered from previous situations that seem congruent. The process is a kind of continuing trial and error, since many interpretive possibilities are always present, and, as the reception experience continues, strategies remembered from a great many previous experiences may be successively tried in the search for the one apparently most compatible with this new situation. If a work requires reception techniques outside those provided by an audience's memory, then it falls outside their horizon of expectations, but more commonly it will operate, or can be made to operate, within that horizon, thus adding a new experiential memory for future use.

A familiar example of this process can be seen in the operations of genre. Although the term is most closely associated with literature, most of the arts offer groupings of material that could be called genres, and such groupings provide one important and traditional part of the horizon of expectations. Whether a literary genre is a very broad and flexible one, such as a comedy or romance, or one much more specifically defined, such as a classic detective story, the audience for a new work in the genre can be normally expected to have read other works in the genre and to apply the memory of how those works are constructed to the understanding and appreciation of the new example. In his perceptive recent study of the relationship between the concepts of genre and of drama Michael Goldman begins his discussion with a consideration of the dynamic of recognition, noting that "the first function of genre is that it be recognized" and that recognition, the awareness of witnessing something once again, has been a process particularly associated with drama from "the very beginning of dramatic theory."[10]

This process of using the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena is fundamental to human cognition in general, and it plays a major role in the theatre, as it does in all the arts. Within the theatre, however, a related but somewhat different aspect of memory operates in a manner distinct from, or at least in a more central way than in, the other arts, so much so that I would argue that it is one of the character-

istic features of theatre. To this phenomenon I have given the name *ghosting*. Unlike the reception operations of genre (also, of course, of major importance in theatre), in which audience members encounter a new but distinctly different example of a type of artistic product they have encountered before, ghosting presents the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus, a recognition not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes a part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably. Of course, on the most basic level all arts are built up of identical material used over and over again, individual words in poetry, tones in music, hues in painting, but these semiotic building blocks carry much of their reception burden in their combinations. Certainly, these combinations can and do evoke memories of similar, and at times identical, use in particular previous works in all of the arts, but it seems to me that the practice of theatre has been in all periods and cultures particularly obsessed with memory and ghosting, a phenomenon that I propose to explore in various constituent parts of that art.

Freddie Rokem, who sees, as I do, Marcellus' question in *Hamlet*, "What, has this thing appeared again tonight?" as profoundly evocative of the operations of theatre itself, focuses upon its significance for theatrical representations of historical events, the theme of Rokem's book *Performing History*. "On the metatheatrical level," Rokem observes, this question "implies that the repressed ghostly figures and events from that ('real') historical past can (re)appear on the stage in theatrical performances. The actors performing such historical figures are in fact the 'things' who are appearing again tonight in the performance. And when these ghosts are historical figures they are in a sense performing history."[11] Indeed, this is true, and this ghostly reappearance of historical, and legendary, figures on the stage has been throughout history an essential part of the theatre experience. My own interest here is somewhat different, however, focusing not only upon what is being performed (or, better, performed again) but also upon the means of performance, not only the actors but all the accouterments of theatre, the literal "things" that are "appearing again tonight at the performance." These are the ghosts that have

haunted all theatrical performance in all periods, whatever the particular subject matter of the presentation.

I propose to begin with the functioning of ghosting in the dramatic text, the widely accepted ground of theatre in many cultures, including our own. Although recent writings on intertextuality have called our attention to the fact that all literary texts are involved in the process of recycling and memory, weaving together elements of preexisting and previously read other texts, the dramatic text seems particularly self-conscious of this process, particularly haunted by its predecessors. Drama, more than any other literary form, seems to be associated in all cultures with the retelling again and again of stories that bear a particular religious, social, or political significance for their public. There clearly seems to be something in the nature of dramatic presentation that makes it a particularly attractive repository for the storage and mechanism for the continued recirculation of cultural memory. This common characteristic of the dramatic text will be the subject of my next chapter.

When we move from the dramatic text to its physical realization in the theatre, the operations of memory upon reception become even more striking. Because every physical element of the production can be and often is used over and over again in subsequent productions, the opportunities for an audience to bring memories of previous uses to new productions are enormous. Often these memories have been consciously utilized by the theatre culture, but, even when they are not, they may well continue to operate, affecting reception in powerful and unexpected ways. The most familiar example of this phenomenon is the appearance of an actor, remembered from previous roles, in a new characterization. The recycled body of an actor, already a complex bearer of semiotic messages, will almost inevitably in a new role evoke the ghost or ghosts of previous roles if they have made any impression whatever on the audience, a phenomenon that often colors and indeed may dominate the reception process. When the new character is of the same general type as the previous one, then the reappearance of an already known body operates rather like one of the variable recurring components that allow readers to recognize a genre. From this has arisen the familiar theatre and filmic practice of "typecasting,"

when an actor appears again and again as a rugged fighter or comic buffoon, in a character whose actions and gestures are so similar role to role that the audience recognizes them as they would the conventions of a familiar genre. But, even when an actor strives to vary his roles, he is, especially as his reputation grows, entrapped by the memories of his public, so that each new appearance requires a renegotiation with those memories.

A striking but not untypical recent example of this is provided by a review appearing in the *New York Times* in June 2000, written by that paper's leading drama critic, Ben Brantley, and concerning a current Broadway production of *Macbeth*. Not only is the review centrally concerned with the phenomenon of ghosting, but it even seeks to evoke in its own style something of the psychic disjuncture that the ghosting of an actor can evoke in the theatre. The opening paragraph, in full, reads:

> Across the bloody fields of Scotland, in the land where the stage smoke swirls and the synthesizers scream like banshees, strides a faceless figure in black, thudding along in thick, corpse-kicking boots. Who is this masked man, speaking so portentously about how "foul and fair" his day has been? At last he raises the gleaming vizard of his helmet and there, behold, is a most familiar wide-browed visage: hey, it's one of America's most popular television stars, and, boy, does he look as if he means business.

The popular television star in question is Kelsey Grammer, familiar as a very un-Macbeth-like character, an engaging, though ineffectual psychiatrist on the highly popular sitcom "Frasier." Brantley then goes on to consider why this well-known actor would choose to make a "semi-incognito first appearance" in the production and suggests, as one "quite legitimate" reason, that such an entrance

> forestalls that disruptive shock of recognition that might prompt some rowdy theatregoer to yell out "Where's Niles?" in reference to Frasier's television brother. It allows that actor's voice, most un-Frasier-like here as it solemnly intones Mac-

beth's opening line, to introduce his character without preju-
dice.[12]

The highly suggestive words *disruptive* and *without prejudice* sug-
gest the powerful, troubling, ambiguous, and yet undeniable role
that ghosting can play in the reception process in theatre, a role so
powerful in this production (as in many) that Brantley chose to
make it the centerpiece of his review. Ironically, in so doing, he
has (unwittingly?) "blown Grammer's cover." If there were any
members in the preview or opening night audiences whose first
impressions of the "faceless figure" in black were not ghosted by
"Frasier" (advance publicity and program notes already having
prepared most of them for this effect), then that number was
doubtless considerably reduced by the association being stressed
in the most visible professional review of the production. An effect
of this sort of ghosting upon reception is by no means confined to
constant theatregoers such as Broadway reviewers. Almost any the-
atregoer can doubtless recall situations when the memory of an
actor seen in a previous role or roles remained in the mind to
haunt a subsequent performance. Despite its commonality, this
familiar reception phenomenon has been accorded very little crit-
ical or theoretical attention. The haunted body of the performer
and its operations will be the concern of my third chapter.

If the recycling of the bodies of actors has received little atten-
tion as an aspect of reception, still less attention has been given to
the interesting fact that these bodies are only one part of a
dynamic of recycling that affects almost every part of the theatrical
experience and that, in its extent and variety, is more central to
the reception operations of theatre than it is to any other art form.
In my fourth chapter I will examine these operations as they have
been manifested in the various production elements that sur-
round and condition the body of the individual actor: costumes,
lighting, sound, and the rest of the production apparatus. I will
then move in my fifth chapter from these components of the per-
formance space to the space itself, discussing some of the ways in
which reception memory operates in relation to the places perfor-
mance takes place. Each, I will argue, is centrally involved, in all
theatre cultures, with the recycling of specific material, and the

ghosting arising from this recycling contributes, sometimes posi-
tively, sometimes negatively, but always significantly, to the recep-
tion process of the theatre as a whole.

All theatre, I will argue, is as a cultural activity deeply involved
with memory and haunted by repetition. Moreover, as an ongoing
social institution it almost invariably reinforces this involvement
and haunting by bringing together on repeated occasions and in
the same spaces the same bodies (onstage and in the audience)
and the same physical material. To indicate the importance and
ubiquity of this involvement I will present examples from a wide
range of theatrical cultures. Yet, while I do hope to demonstrate
that the operations of repetition, memory, and ghosting are
deeply involved in the nature of the theatrical experience itself, I
am fully aware that, just as the theatrical impulse manifests itself in
a very different manner in different periods and cultures, so does
the particular way in which these operations are carried out.
Highly traditional theatrical organizations, such as those of classic
Japan and China, are so deeply committed to the process of recy-
cling of material that ghosting might well be considered as their
most prominent reception feature. There is scarcely an element of
the theatrical experience in these traditions that audiences cannot
immediately recognize as having witnessed before. The same
actors appear year after year playing the same roles in the same
plays, wearing the same makeup and the same costumes, using the
same movements, gestures, and vocal intonations, all of which are
inherited by the successors of these actors. In such performance
cultures the attempt to repeat the original has resulted in a
codification of actions and physical objects so detailed as to be
almost obsessive.

On the other hand, some theatre cultures, particularly in more
recent times, have so prized innovation and originality that they
have attempted (never with complete success) to avoid entirely the
sort of performance citationality that characterizes the classic the-
atres of the East and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the major
national performance traditions of the West. The passion of roman-
tic artists and theorists for original expression and the genius who
would repeat nothing of his forebears (an ideal now almost totally
discredited by postmodern theory and thought) and the vogue for

theatrical realism and the various avant-gardes that came in the wake of romanticism very much weakened the major traditions of citationality in Western theatre. Among them one might mention the traditional lines of business, the genealogies of performance, with certain gestures and patterns of movement handed down from actor to actor, and the common practice of using the same scenery, costumes, and properties in production after production, all of these normal practice in the pre-romantic European theatre and increasingly rejected in the wake of romanticism.

Neither romanticism's desire for the original nor its rejection of theatrical traditions in the name of the presumably more individual, even unique experiences of real life in fact removed the theatre from its close ties to cultural memory. Nor did they remove the performative memories that inevitably haunted its productions, the bodies of its performers, and the physical objects that surrounded them. In the major theatrical manifesto of romanticism, Victor Hugo's preface to his play *Cromwell,* the author condemns the traditional neutral chamber or peristyle used indiscriminately as the setting for countless French tragedies since Corneille and Racine and called, instead, for exact and specific settings, unique to each situation and free of the memories of a theatrical tradition."The place where this or that catastrophe occurred is an incorruptible and convincing witness to the catastrophe," Hugo argued, and the absence of this species of silent character would render incomplete upon the stage the grandest scenes of history.[13]

The romantic (and realistic) interest in the specific illustrated by this passage encouraged a trend in the Western theatre away from the tradition not only of the generic stock settings that Hugo would replace with settings unique to each event but the entire interrelated tradition of recycled material—in costuming, plotting, character types, and interpretive traditions. Nevertheless, the connections between memory and theatre went far deeper than these changes in performance practice, and, as first romanticism then realism strongly altered theatre practice, the operations of memory in this practice in some ways (but by no means all ways) shifted, yet they remained of central importance to the experience and reception of theatre.

Even the radical change in the attitude toward stage setting proposed by Hugo simply shifts the operations of memory and association in different directions. If in fact the "exact locality" that he proposes were to be achieved (as it never was in his own theatre but subsequently would be in certain "site-specific" theatre of the twentieth century), then the settings would be haunted not by the theatrical associations of their use in previous productions but by historical associations that, as Hugo notes, could be relied upon to produce "a faithful impression of the [historical] facts upon the mind of the spectator." Its operations, theatrically, still depend upon an audience's recognition of it as "restored" material.

The new approach represented by romanticism and realism in Western theatrical practice did not, moreover, ever really challenge certain of the most common and powerful traditions of recycled material, the most important of which was the body of the individual actor. For all his interest in unique and individual settings for each production, Hugo willingly, indeed eagerly, sought to use his favorite actors, such as Marie Dorval and Frédérick Lemaître, again and again, fully aware that they would inevitably bring associations from old productions to new ones. Indeed, in his afterword to the published text of *Ruy Blas* Hugo praises Lemaître precisely in terms of the associations he evokes. After noting that "enthusiastic acclamations" greet this actor "as soon as he comes on stage" (a practice still common even in the most realistic theatre and perhaps the most obvious sign of the audience's reception being haunted from the beginning by previous acquaintance with the individual actor in other works), Hugo proceeds to laud him for the acting associations he evokes. At his peak, says Hugo, "he *dominates all the memories of his art.* For old men, he is Lekain and Garrick in one; for us, his coevals, he is Kean's action combined with Talma's emotion."[14] For all of its passion for originality, the romantic theatre remained deeply involved with cultural memory for its subjects and theatrical memory for their enactment.

The particular manner in which memory, recycling, and ghosting has been utilized in the theatre has taken a distinctly different direction in the wide variety of theatrical and dramatic expression that may be generally characterized as postmodern. In a move that

created a relationship between theatre and memory quite distinct both from the classical search for the preservation of particular artistic models and traditions and from romanticism and realism's search for unique and individual insight and expression, postmodern drama and theatre has tended to favor the conscious reuse of material haunted by memory, but in an ironic and self-conscious manner quite different from classical usage. The postmodern stage, one could argue, is as deeply committed to the recycling of previously utilized material, both physical and textual, as have been the traditional theatres of Asia and of the pre-romantic West. As Peter Rabinowitz has noted, "We live in an age of artistic recycling."[15] The actual manifestations of this commitment, however, reflect a very different cultural consciousness.

Theatre artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century based much of their work upon what Derrida speaks of as citation, but rarely did they present it directly *as* citation. The postmodern theatre, on the other hand, is almost obsessed with citation, with gestural, physical, and textual material consciously recycled, often almost like pieces of a collage, into new combinations with little attempt to hide the fragmentary and "quoted" nature of these pieces. This is certainly true, for example, of the work of Heiner Müller, widely considered one of the central examples of a "postmodern" dramatist. In his study of Müller, Jonathan Kalb describes him as "a new kind of master author whose identity is a pastiche of other identities"[16] and speaks of Müller's "postmodern valuing of fragments."[17] This can be clearly seen in what is probably Müller's best-known text, *Hamletmachine*, which, as Kalb notes, is "packed with quotations and paraphrases from Eliot, cummings, Hölderlin, Marx, Benjamin, Artaud, Sartre, Warhol, Shakespeare, the Bible, Müller himself, and others, often strung together without connecting text."[18]

The conscious and calculated recycling of material, from one's own previous life and work as well as those of others, is widely recognized as one of the hallmarks of postmodern expression, not only in literary texts but in theatrical performance. Robert Simonson, in a brief essay on the actor Spalding Gray in the popular theatre publication *Playbill,* called Gray "a walking piece of masterful post-modernism," justifying this appellation by Gray's continual

and highly self-conscious recycling of material, largely from his own life and work:

> Gray's drama never ends. One need hardly observe that his is hardly the unobserved life. The curtain rises when he gets up and falls with his head upon the pillow. Once onstage, relating the details of that existence, he is Gray the Performer in Gray the Drama. And, as an actor, in Gore Vidal's *The Best Man,* he is Gray the Performer playing Gray the Actor—a chapter in Gray the Drama, and a role he will no doubt dissect in his next monologue (as he did his experience in *Our Town* in the piece, *Monster in a Box.*)[19]

Gray was one of the founding members of what is probably the best-known experimental theatre company of the postmodern era, the Wooster Group, and that company also, like most companies around the world involved in experimental performance in the closing years of the twentieth century, has been centrally concerned with the process of recycling. In my final chapter I will focus upon the work of this group, not only because it is likely to be the most familiar postmodern experimental company for my readers but also because it provides so clear an illustration of the particular manner in which theatre's long-standing fascination with reappearance is being worked out in contemporary postmodern terms.

Although the Wooster Group may be, especially for Americans, the most familiar example of this process, an almost obsessive concern with memory, citation, and the reappearance of bodies and other material from the past is in fact widespread in the contemporary theatre internationally. It is indeed so widespread that one may be tempted to think of this concern as a particularly contemporary one. I hope to demonstrate, however, in the pages that follow that the theatre has been obsessed always with things that return, that appear again tonight, even though this obsession has been manifested in quite different ways in different cultural situations. Everything in the theatre, the bodies, the materials utilized, the language, the space itself, is now and has always been haunted, and that haunting has been an essential part of the theatre's meaning to and reception by its audiences in all times and all places.

three

The Haunted Body

hile the dramatic text has traditionally been considered a kind of founding element of theatre, that text does not in fact become theatre until it is embodied by an actor and presented to an audience. Although there have been many instances of theatre being created by actors without a conventional preexisting text and occasional (though very rare) examples of an actorless text being presented to an audience, the conventional basic elements of theatre are text and actor. Eric Bentley, in *The Life of the Drama,* suggests that "the theatrical situation, reduced to a minimum," occurs when "A impersonates B while C looks on,"[1] the *B* in most cases being provided by a preexisting dramatic text. Having now considered some of the ways in which the text that traditionally provides this *B* is ghosted, let us now turn to the operations of *A,* the actor, where we will find a rather different but often even more powerful set of ghostings that condition, in very significant ways, the "looking on" of *C,* the audience.

The common view of theatrical production as the embodiment of a preexisting literary text tends to take the actor as a more or less transparent vehicle for that text, physically congruent with the stated requirements of the text and possessing adequate vocal and physical skills to deliver the text effectively to the audience. This

simplified view, however, does not take into account what the actor creatively adds to the literary text, nor does it take into account the central concern of this chapter, the major contribution of the actor to the process of theatrical recycling and its effect upon reception. Within any theatrical culture audience members typically see many of the same actors in many different productions, and they will inevitably carry some memory of those actors from production to production. The operations of that sort of recycling, the recycled body and persona of the actor, will be the focus of this chapter.

In every culture in which theatre is developed as an ongoing cultural activity, a group of specialists in that activity appears, the actors. In theatre traditions East and West the most common arrangement is for groups of actors to gather into ongoing associations for the production of dramatic works. The theatre is normally a social occasion on both sides of the curtain. Bentley speaks of A, B, and C as if they were individuals, but in fact they are almost invariably groups—a group of audience members assembles to watch a group of actors impersonate a group of stage characters. This gathering of actors into ongoing groups naturally encourages the association of particular actors with particular types of roles in production after production. This is not just a matter of assigning parts that are congruent with the age and gender of each actor but also a matter of the particular skills or inclinations each actor possesses—a particular physical build or quality of voice may seem to suit an actor for darker or heavier roles, a natural grace and handsome features may propel another toward romantic roles, while more irregular, even grotesque features or a gift for physical or verbal dexterity may lead yet another toward character and comic work. One of the earliest extended treatises on the art of acting, Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien* in 1749, remarked that, although many physical types were acceptable on the stage, actors, whatever their ability, could not depart far from audience expectations of the type of roles they were playing—heroes must have imposing bodies and lovers attractive ones; actors must look the proper age for their roles and have the natural vocal qualities suitable for their characters.[2]

The highly formalized and yet flexible *commedia dell'arte* provides one of the best examples of the combined workings of the

recycling of characters and the recycling of individual actors. Within a typical *commedia* company certain actors would continually play the same basic traditional characters—the young lovers, the comic servants, the foolish old men, the ridiculous pedants or flamboyant soldiers—all types well-known to their audiences and reappearing in countless scenarios. But individual actors could also put their own mark on a traditional character, even create a new name for that character, and thus appear again and again in a part uniquely their own and recognized and anticipated as such by their audiences in each new incarnation. In every generation of *commedia* performance, audiences went with a foreknowledge of traditional characters and character relationships and often with previous experience of a particular company, in which a memory of the physical characteristics and acting style of particular actors playing the same type in play after play reinforced the anticipation of how that type would be experienced in each new production.

The *commedia dell'arte* provides a particularly clear example of a close relationship between actors and types of roles that can be found, in varying degrees of organizational complexity, in theatre companies throughout history and around the world. We are perhaps most familiar with this custom in connection with the stock roles in nineteenth-century melodrama, but long before the rise of melodrama actors specialized in noble fathers, male romantic leads, tyrants, soubrettes, and ingenues. Nor is this a peculiarly European phenomenon. The classic Sanskrit theatre manual, the *Natyasastra,* contains lengthy descriptions of a great array of traditional stock character types, and Japanese Kabuki contains carefully delineated traditional role categories. Actors perform in the same category throughout their lives, the few who change (such as Ichinatsu Sanokama I in the eighteenth century, who began playing young men and changed to villains in later life) causing considerable amazement.[3]

In theatrical cultures in which theatre companies have operated under detailed and specific rules of organization, this close relationship between actors and predictable types of roles played is often embodied within the organizational legislation of the company. The best-known Western example is surely the neoclassic theatre of France, whose organization served as a model for the

leading professional European theatres from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. The French national theatre provided a detailed and fairly rigid system of acting roles, called *emplois,* with each actor assigned to a certain type of role. Pougin's monumental 1885 dictionary of the theatre provides for the Comédie Française a list of thirteen *emplois* for the men (*premier rôles, jeunes premiers, fort jeunes premiers, seconds amoureux, grands raisonneurs, pères nobles, seconds pères, pères non chantants, financiers, manteaux, grimes, paysans, comiques,* and *rôles de convenance*) and ten *emplois* for the women (*premier rôles, grandes coquettes, jeunes premières, jeunes amoureuses, secondes amoureuses, troisième amoureuses, mères nobles, ingénuités, soubrettes* or *utilités.*)[4] The subtlety of these distinctions may be suggested by Pougin's definitions of *ingénuités* and *soubrettes.* The former is "a very young woman in love, whose heart has barely opened to the emotions and accents of passion, and who retains the purest candor and innocence" (the naïveté is what separates her from the various *amoureuses*), while the latter is a "young comic woman, frank, vivacious, and gay." In Molière's *Tartuffe* the daughter, Marianne, would be played by an *ingénuité* and the maid Dorine by a *soubrette.* Small companies could double up the *emplois,* if necessary (Pougin remarks that this is often done with *grimes* and *financiers,* since they are both character old men),[5] but they were normally considered quite distinct by actors, audiences, and theatre administrators. In the famous *Moscow Decree* in which Napoléon drew up the legislative rules to govern the Comédie Française, one entire section is devoted to the "Distribution of *Emplois,*" which notes, in part, that "no actor or actress can be the primary holder of two different *emplois* without a special authorization from the superintendent, which should be given only rarely and for the most pressing reasons."[6]

A British commentator in the *Quarterly Review* reported on this legislation shortly after, noting that in France the official connection of actor with *emploi* "is so well understood, that each actor and actress is obliged to make a selection of a particular *rôle,* from which these decrees forbid them afterwards to depart . . . The *Père Noble* cannot become *Comique,* whatever be his vocation this way; and the *Ingénuité* must not look to be the *Jeune Première,* whatever ambition she may feel for playing the heroine." The reviewer uses

this occasion to praise, by contrast, the more flexible English the-atre, in which "all this foolery would be impossible. We represent not *Jeunes Premiers*, nor *Ingénuités*, but *men and women*, with all their various and changeable feelings, humours, and passions."[7] The fact is, however, that the British stock system, already well in place when this review was written and the dominant form of theatrical organization in Britain throughout the century, created a system there that, while not legislated in the French manner, was just as rigid in the delineation and predictability of types. As in any the-atrical culture, certain actors often became associated in the pub-lic mind with certain types of roles, and this universal tendency was reinforced in a theatrical culture, in which many plays were mounted in a very short period of time, and neither actors nor dramatists had either the time or the incentive to strike out in significantly new directions. In England, and in the English-speak-ing theatre, the practice of "lines of business," in fact closely paral-lel to the French system of *emplois,* was almost universal.

The popular dramatist Dion Boucicault drew up a list of British lines of business that compares favorably with the detail and com-plexity of the contemporary French system. According to Bouci-cault, a "first-class theatrical company" should consist of "a leading man, leading juvenile man, heavy man, first old man, first low comedian, walking gentleman, second old man and utility, second low comedian and character actor, second walking gentleman and utility, leading woman, leading juvenile woman, heavy woman, first old woman, first chambermaid, walking lady, second old woman and utility, second chambermaid and character actress, second walking lady and utility lady."[8] Dutton Cook, who repro-duces this list, further comments that, even without French-style legislation, British actors in fact rarely departed from their accus-tomed lines of business. As in France, a player once associated with a particular line tended to remain within it.

The light comedian of twenty is usually found to be still a light comedian at seventy: the Orlandos of the stage rarely become its old Adams. The actresses who have personated youthful heroines are apt to disregard the flight of time and the burden of age, and to the last shrink from the assumption of matronly

or mature characters—Juliets and Ophelias, as a rule, declin-ing to expand into Nurses or Gertrudes. And the actor who in his youth has undertaken systematically to portray senility finds himself eventually the thing he had merely affected to be.[9]

At first glance the tradition of the *emploi* or the line of business would seem to be based on a desire for verisimilitude—attractive young performers playing stage lovers, wiry acrobatic actors play-ing clowns, and older actors, especially those with grotesque or less attractive features, playing character roles. Surely, this natural sort of division lies at the basis of role assignment in the theatre and today dominates the more naturalistic genre of film, in which cast-ing according to physical type is the normal practice. In the the-atre, however, in which the fundamental organizational unit has frequently been an ongoing established group of actors known to a continuing public, other forces in casting have proven more powerful than the demands of verisimilitude.

We in the United States, as members of a theatrical culture that, unlike most others, has provided little social or economic encouragement for the establishment of ongoing companies and one that, moreover, places particular stress upon verisimilitude, tend to be amused by or even contemptuously dismissive of the common practice in cultures with such companies to keep the same actors in the same roles or types of roles for most or all of their careers. We are perhaps willing to accept an actor who spends a career in the portrayal of "character" roles, like the *com-media* masks—simpletons, villains, or comic old men or women—but we tend to dismiss as grotesque or foolish an actor who simi-larly maintains youthful roles into advanced age. In the case of a highly stylized theatre, such as Japan's Noh, in which convention reigns and all female parts are in any case taken by men, we may be more willing to accept the possibility of an actor even of advanced years still successfully portraying youthful maidens, but, when we read of an actress such as Mlle Mars, the leading lady of the Comédie Française at the beginning of the nineteenth century, still playing romantic heroines until the end of her lengthy career, we tend to dismiss this as a product of vanity and possessiveness of good roles and to pity the audiences who were forced to tolerate

this grotesque affectation. Doubtless, vanity has been a factor in such cases, but, before we simply dismiss the common phenomenon on those grounds alone, we must take into account the importance of the audience's memory and associations.

In the operations of traditional theatre, East and West, in which audiences are normally accustomed to relatively stable companies of actors who offer the same plays over and over again, they become accustomed to seeing certain actors appearing again and again in specific roles or in specific types of closely related roles and soon come to associate those actors with those roles or types of roles. Before we too hastily condemn the apparent folly and vanity of an aging actor still playing youthful roles, we must recall that every new performance of these roles will be ghosted by a theatrical recollection of the previous performances, so that audience reception of each new performance is conditioned by inevitable memories of this actor playing similar roles in the past. The voice that might seem to an outsider grown thin with age may still to a faithful public echo with the resonances of decades of theatregoing, that slightly bent body still be ghosted by years of memories of it in its full vigor.

Joseph Roach describes precisely this process in the case of the aging Betterton, who at the age of seventy still was preferred by his public to all others in the portrayal of youthful roles. That public, suggests Roach, looked past the infirmities of his physical body to his "other body, the one that existed outside itself in the fact of his performance of it. Transcending the body of flesh and blood, this other body consisted of actions, gestures, intonations, vocal colors, mannerisms, expressions, customs, protocols, inherited routines, authenticated traditions—'bits.'" Unlike the physical body, "the actions of this theatrical body could not be invalidated by age or decrepitude."[10] The power of performance memory, reinforced by the repetition of familiar gestures, intonations, and mannerisms, here proved more powerful than the actual physical appearance of Betterton himself; the ghost had a greater performative visibility than the body it haunted.

In the case of well-known and highly celebrated actors a phenomenon that in some ways is even stranger is not uncommon. Even new audiences, for whom a performance cannot possibly be

ghosted by fond personal memories of previous high achievement, may be affected by the operations of celebrity itself to view and experience a famous actor through an aura of expectations that masks failings that would be troubling in someone less celebrated. It would be an oversimplification to assume that an audience that apparently excessively admires a famous actor well past his prime when seeing him for the first time are simply hiding their feelings of disappointment out of social pressure, fearful of saying that the emperor has no clothes. It is quite possible that their reception has been in fact significantly conditioned by the actor's celebrity, ghosting their reception even in the absence of previous theatre experience. A similar effect has long been known to psychological researchers, the so-called halo effect, by the operations of which teachers prepared for certain levels of performance from particular students tend to experience the work of the students according to those expectations.

In a traditional and basically stable theatrical culture in which actors are employed and cast according to certain culturally defined *emplois*, or types, or lines of business, even a young actor never before seen by the audience will appear onstage already ghosted by the expectations of the role type in which he appears. As time passes, however, and the audience experiences them in a variety of roles, most actors begin to develop audience expectations about their particular approach, even in the highly conventionalized and traditional theatres, like the Japanese Kabuki or Noh. Before many appearances most actors, consciously or not, develop associations with particular ways of portraying even the most codified *emplois* and so appear in new roles with a double ghosting, the cultural expectations of the *emploi* itself overlaid with those of the actor's own previous appearances.

This dynamic can be clearly seen even in the *commedia dell'arte*, the most familiar example in the West of stable companies with character types repeated in generation after generation of theatrical production. Despite the apparent solidity of these early examples of lines of business, when they are looked at not in general but in the actual operations of specific companies and individuals, we find, not surprisingly, that in every generation the familiar general types were developed in infinite variations, according to the skill

and popularity of individual performers. Instead of there being a standardized servant mask like Brighella or an old man mask like Il Dottore, in which the individuality of the actor disappeared, these masks were continually adapted, often to the extent of creating new masks that combined or varied features of the old ones. These in turn inspired yet other individual variations in an endless series while keeping the idea (and the audience foreknowledge) of the type. Thus, the great early *commedia* actor Francesco Andreini was best known for his particular version of the flamboyant Spanish captain, Il Capitano Spavento, played "with a verve and *braggadocio* that set the pattern for all future players of the part," but he also created his own special variations of another traditional mask, Il Dottore, with the Dottore Siciliano and Falcirone the Magician, each featured in many popular productions. Locatelli, a leading *commedia* performer in early-seventeenth-century France, created an Arlecchino variant called Trivelino, making adjustments to both character and costume that were unique to him and also influential to other, Arlecchinos, Tivelinos, and still newer variants that followed.[11] Niklaus, a historian of the *commedia*, suggests the complexity of a single such variation, the Arlequin of Biancolelli, a disciple of Locatelli:

> Where Locatelli had created a variant in which was more of Brighella than of Arlecchino, Biancolelli achieved the fusion of the two Bergamasque clowns. His Arlequin looked like Arlecchino, practised all the traditional *lazzi*, played the same role: but he behaved with the bold cunning of Brighella. Brighella's mind entered Arlecchino's body. Then Biancolelli enriched that mind with his own wit and wisdom, his own culture, and shaded it with a little of his own sadness.

After Biancolelli, this more whimsical, emotional, and deft Arlequin was widely imitated, as was the throaty, croaking voice that Biancolelli added not as a matter of choice but because of a laryngeal defect.[12] But the character continued to change and evolve, with actors in each new generation making their own Arlequins, repeated with a combination of generic and individual features in production after production. A highly ghosted role such

as Arlequin provides a particulary clear example of what Joseph Roach has called "effigies fashioned from flesh," which manifest themselves in performance and which "consist of a set of actions that hold open a place in memory into which many different people may step according to circumstances and occasions."[13]

In the *commedia* the responsibility for developing and maintaining this living body of recycled material remained in the hands of the actors, well aware, as theatre professionals have always been, of the public's interest in seeing a particular actor in a particularly appreciated role or type of role. In theatres utilizing written scripts this process has also been traditionally reinforced by playwrights. They also, in most historical periods, have created new works with particular existing companies in mind and, whether the theatre was committed to some system of lines of business or not, have naturally designed characters to suit the proven skills and specialties of the actors that would create these roles. Goethe and Schiller conceived their productions with the specialties of Weimar actors in mind, Voltaire for the actors of the Comédie Française, Molière for the company in which he was the leading player. Even a playwright like Ibsen, with very tenuous ties to his major producing organization, is revealed through his letters to be quite concerned with the specific actors that would perform his roles and with what associations and physical and emotional characteristics they would bring to the roles, certainly predictable concerns in any dramatist who writes with an eye toward stage realization.

Thomas Baldwin's study of the organization of acting companies in the time of Shakespeare finds that in fact, as in British companies three centuries later, "each of the major actors had his particular 'business.'"[14] As in the *commedia*, actors became associated in the public mind with certain types of roles, but, also as in the *commedia*, popular actors created certain idiosyncratic ways of performing those types, establishing an echo effect in role after role to which both public and dramatists responded. Historians of the Shakespearean stage have often noted how sharply the clown roles in Shakespeare changed in 1599 when Will Kemp, associated with a particular type of clown, left the company and was replaced by Robert Armin, who specialized in a very different style. A recent study of the Shakespearean clown summarizes the change thus:

During Kemp's residency, the clown parts were created to allow for much improvisation; with his talents for jig dancing and quick repartee, Kemp could be trusted to make the most of any opportunity given him. For him were created the down-to-earth bawdy clowns, those with much wit and great hearts, if not always great intelligence: busy Dogberry, bumbling Bottom, and that mountain of flesh, Sir John Falstaff. Armin brought to the company a talent for subtle acting and a flair for music. For him were written clown parts with lyrics to sing, and he was given openings for elegant tumbling. He inspired the beloved court jesters, Touchstone, Feste, and Lear's Fool.[15]

In most periods of theatre history certain popular "types" have emerged in the dramatic writing: the witty maids of Molière's comedies; the fops of the English Restoration; the noble fathers of the eighteenth century; the outlaw heroes of the romantic era; the honest British sailors, aristocratic villains, and persecuted maidens of nineteenth-century melodrama; the grotesque spinsters in the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas; and so on. Most of them, like the traditional *commedia* masks, appeared in repeated clusters of recycled characters, while others appeared in new situations and new relationships in different plays, but all, like the masks, became associated with particular actors, and these actors, like their *commedia* forebears, inevitably introduced specific variations that marked their individual use of the stock type. Thus, a new production by an actor specializing in fops, witty maids, or noble fathers would be ghosted not only by memories of performances of that stock type by a number of actors but also by memories of previous performances of the type by that particular actor.

When, as has become increasingly common in the Western theatre during the past two centuries, major actors pursue their careers outside the operations of traditional repertory companies and their associated collective memory of a particular group or performers related in similar ways in production after production, the effect of what might be called *emploi*-ghosting is lessened, but the phenomenon of ghosting itself remains as powerful in its effect upon reception as ever. Even more basic to the theatre experience than ongoing theatrical organizations with relatively stable

companies of actors is the devotion of the audience itself to the theatre experience. The majority of theatregoers in any theatre culture are repeating theatregoers, so that, even when there is not a highly organized ongoing specific theatre organization, such as a national repertory theatre, there is a nonorganized but fairly stable ongoing collection of devoted theatregoers, who singly and collectively carry to each new theatre experience a substantial memory of previous experience. This continuity is paralleled, on the other side of the footlights, by a relatively stable body of actors, who, even in the absence of permanent established theatre companies, will be seen by a regular theatregoing public in play after play. It is these two continuities, more than that of any specific producing organizations, that primarily guarantees the operations and importance of ghosting.

In nineteenth-century America, when the theatre experience was dominated by popular star actors and when stock characters and character types were more common and more broadly drawn than in more modern times, the association of specific actors with specific types of roles was particularly clear and often operated in a manner very similar to the development and elaboration of the traditional *commedia* masks, except that in the later period playwrights also contributed significantly to this process. The "Stage Yankee," for example, became as familiar to American theatregoers of the early nineteenth century as a figure like Brighella had been to their Italian predecessors three centuries before. The Yankee, like the *commedia* mask, was particularly associated with certain actors, some of whom even, like *commedia* players, took on their character name, such as George "Yankee" Hill (1809–48).[16] The Yankee, also like a *commedia* mask, possessed certain general qualities but in the case of the best-known actors would take on special features associated with that particular interpreter. One of the most popular Yankee actors was Dan Marble (1810–49). Although Marble appeared in a variety of Yankee plays, among them *Sam Patch, the Yankee Jumper* and its sequels, *The Maiden's Vow, or The Yankee in Time* and *The Vermont Wool Deal, or The Yankee Traveller*, written by a variety of different authors and using a variety of names of Marble's character—Sam Patch, Jacob Jewsharp, Deuteronomy Dutiful, Lot Sap Sago—nevertheless all of these

stage figures were recognizably the unique Marble Yankee, a variation on George Hill's character with a distinctly Westernized, Kentucky feel.[17] Once again a close relationship may be seen between the reuse of a stock character type by one or often a whole series of dramatists and the reappearance of one or a whole series of actors specializing in this type. We have already noted the popularity of stage types, such as the Yankee or Irishman, on the nineteenth-century American stage as an example of textual recycling, but here again we must note that this phenomenon invariably involves the recycling of specific actors as well.

Although the echoes of previous characters in new creations is by far the more common phenomenon, the theatre, of course, also offers many examples of actors who literally appear as the same character in a number of different narrative contexts. The specific reappearing sequel or series character, like the more general type of stock character, is a common feature in dramatic literature, as I have already noted in my comments on the haunted text, and is, of course, a feature of nondramatic literature as well. The status of drama as a performed art, however, gives an extra impetus to this practice. The desire of readers, especially of popular fiction, to follow the adventures of popular characters through additional narratives has made sequel or series narratives a major part of that tradition, so that Arthur Conan Doyle, to take a famous example, was forced quite against his will to produce more and more Sherlock Holmes stories for a dedicated public. In the theatre this popular enthusiasm for a character may be created by or reinforced by the work of a particular actor (as, indeed, the American actor William Gillette did for the character of Sherlock Holmes), so that sequels may be created not necessarily because of an interest in the adventures of the character but to repeat the pleasure of once again seeing a specific actor appearing as this character. Thus, we have the phenomenon of the actor who becomes associated with a particular role, as the popular mid-nineteenth-century American actor Francis S. Chanfrau was with Mose, the "Bowery b'hoy," or the leading French actor of almost the same period, Frédérick Lemaître, with his colorful outlaw Robert Macaire. In the popular mind these actors and characters became almost indistinguishable. New plays were written in which the

already familiar characters could appear, but so strong was the identification of character with actor that no rival interpretations ever achieved any appreciable popularity. In the twentieth century television has largely taken over this aspect of popular theatre, but one may still get an idea of the appeal of the recycled actors and characters in the enormously popular series television shows, either serious, like the ongoing soap operas, or comic, like the vast array of family sitcoms.

Many of the great actors of the eighteenth and nineteenth century became particularly associated with a single role, even when they appeared with success in many other parts. Thus, for example, Coquelin, after his creation of Cyrano de Bergerac, was forever after associated with that role, as Tommaso Salvini was with Othello and Sarah Bernhardt with Camille. A late-nineteenth-century biographer of Edwin Booth remarks on precisely this quality in Booth's rendering of Hamlet and notes its similarity to other actor/character bondings in these terms: "Booth's impersonation of Hamlet was one of the best known works of the dramatic age. In many minds the actor and the character had become identical, and it is not to be doubted that Booth's performance of Hamlet will live, in commemorative dramatic history, with great representative embodiments of the stage—with Garrick's Lear, Kemble's Coriolanus, Edmund Kean's Richard, Macready's Macbeth, Forrest's Othello, and Irving's Mathias."[18]

In each of these famous cases, so dominant was the public association of actor with character and indeed with the whole pattern of action represented by the dramatic narrative in which this character appears that these characters were not even transferred to successful sequels in the manner of Mose or Robert Macaire. Many great nineteenth-century actors had their "signature roles," permanently associated with their names, like James O'Neill's Count of Monte Cristo or Joseph Jefferson's Rip Van Winkle. As one of Jefferson's biographers observes: "He was Rip and Rip was he. It might be said that the play was an incident, more or less important, in the life of every other player who had performed it, but that, comparatively speaking, it was Jefferson's whole existence."[19] The nineteenth-century emphasis on the star encouraged this sort of association, of course, but so did the related phenomena of

widespread touring and frequent revivals of the "vehicles." An interested theatregoer of this period would very likely see an actor like Jefferson many times and would moreover most likely see him many times in the same role, reinforcing both the associations and the ghosted memories of that interpretation.

The close connection between a popular actor and an often-revived vehicle role is less common in the twentieth century, particularly in the American commercial theatre, in which the nineteenth-century practice of frequent revivals has been replaced by the single long run. This has certainly not meant, however, the end of the often powerful bonding of a particular actor to a particular part. Very often the actor who creates a particular role in a popular success or in a major revival that overshadows the original production will create so strong a bond between himself and that role that for a generation or more all productions are haunted by the memory of that interpretation, and all actors performing the role must contend with the cultural ghost of the great originator. Anthony Sher's study *The Year of the King*, perhaps the best book ever written by an actor about the process of creating a role, returns again and again to the tension between this creation and the inevitable ghost of the most famous modern interpreter of the role, Lawrence Olivier. The struggle begins with the very opening speech, as Sher observes:

"Now is the winter . . . ."

God. It seems terribly unfair of Shakespeare to begin his play with such a famous speech. You don't like to put your mouth to it, so many other mouths have been there. Or to be more honest, one particularly distinctive mouth. His poised, staccato delivery is imprinted on those words like teeth marks.[20]

Not infrequently, the public memory of the original is so powerful and so entrenched that younger actors fear to attempt the role, since they can neither present a totally realized embodiment of the remembered interpretation, nor can they reasonably hope to displace it by something distinctly different. This is almost always the case when the first production of a play is a particularly powerful and memorable one, with strong actors who are either well-

known before the production or become well-known as a result of it and thus remain forever associated with it. Of the many examples in the American theatre, one might cite Lee J. Cobb as Willie Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar Named Desire*, Mary Martin as Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*, or Joel Grey as the Master of Ceremonies in *Cabaret*. For the rest of the century a major revival of any of these plays could hardly be mounted without reviewers comparing the new interpreters with these famous originals, a comparison surely made by many in the audience as well.

Even when actors are not associated in the public (and media) mind with a certain specific role or even a certain stock type, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, once their career is under way, for them to avoid a certain aura of expectations based on past roles. The actor's new roles become, in a very real sense, ghosted by previous ones. H. L. Mencken describes this phenomenon in his usual acerbic manner. In the course of a career an actor, he suggests,

becomes a grotesque boiling down of all the preposterous characters he has ever impersonated. Their characteristics are seen in his manner, in his reactions to stimuli, in his point of view. He becomes a walking artificiality, a strutting dummy, a thematic catalogue of imbecilities.[21]

Bert States, to whom I am indebted for this entertaining quote, provides his own much more sympathetic gloss on this same theatrical phenomenon:

We do not think of an actor's portrayal of a role as being sealed off in the past tense, but as floating in a past absolute, as it were, like the role itself, outside time. Not only is it preserved in the communal memory as part of the history of the play, leaving its imprint (for a time) on the text, but due to the repetitive element in all style, remnants keep popping up in the later work of the actor. For example, certain mannerisms of Olivier's Othello—the darting glance, the emphasis on certain kinds of values, the deft economy of gesture—remind one of the "younger" Hamlet. Of course, this is only Olivier repeat-

ing himself, but it is Hamlet who is fleetingly remembered. There is *still* a Hamlet in Olivier.[22]

A typical example of this process in the American theatre is the romantic actor Edwin Forrest, whose favored roles would seem to have little in common (especially as compared with the narrow historical and geographical range of the Kentucky Yankee or the Bowery b'hoy): Metamora, an American Indian; Spartacus, a Thracian gladiator in classic Rome; Oralloosa, an Incan prince in the time of Pizzaro. In fact, however, each of these roles (all in plays created especially for the actor) involved mental and physical attributes that were particularly favored by Forrest and expected in any of his new roles by his audience. As his biographer Richard Moody observes: "Forrest found the noble Thracian [Spartacus in *The Gladiator*] an ideal role. The play offered abundant opportunities for muscular exertion, ferocious passion, and reiteration of the freedom-loving sentiments he held so dear."[23] Each new Forrest creation, seemingly so disparate, was thus strongly ghosted by his previous ones. The whole tradition of what has been called the vehicle play, a work constructed precisely to feature the already familiar aspects of a particular actor's performance, is based upon precisely this dynamic. One may think of the variety of regal and exotic queens Sardou created for Sarah Bernhardt or the neurasthenic, ethereal heroines D'Annunzio created for Eleanora Duse or, perhaps most strikingly, Rostand, who, after the actor Coquelin had achieved a stunning success in his creation of Cyrano de Bergerac, created for the same actor a Cyrano de Bergerac in feathers, as a heroic rooster in the folktale fantasy *Chantecler*.

The modern American theatrical culture offers few examples of the sort of ongoing theatrical establishments with comparatively stable companies of actors and often associated playwrights that have been common elsewhere in the world. The most familiar example of American professional theatre is much more ad hoc, with a company assembled for a particular production whose members may never work together again and with no guarantee for a playwright that any particular actor she may have in mind for a particular part will in fact be available or be used. This lack of institutional stability and predictability, however, does not affect

the basic process of theatrical reception, however, nor its heavy reliance upon audience memory and association. Even though audiences are less likely to associate certain actors with a constellation of other particular actors, as is the case in an ongoing theatre organization such as the great national theatres of Europe or the traditional classic theatres of China and Japan, individual actors, often even relatively minor ones, still carry with them memories of their work in previous productions, and audiences are at least as often attracted to a new production by their previous acquaintance with the actors that are appearing in it as they are by the name of the dramatist.

One need only look at the advertisements and advance publicity for the plays in any new season on Broadway to see the power of this dynamic at work. The leading actors commonly receive the major attention, often even above that of the play or playwright and almost certainly above that of the director or any other contributing artist. Moreover, even though the contemporary American culture does not look favorably upon formulaic work either in acting or playwriting, any actor familiar enough to be featured in the advance advertising will inevitably bring associations to the minds of a potential audience. Every well-known actor brings to the mind of the theatregoing public memories of certain productions or types of production, sometimes even of a specific dramatist or dramatic school. The actor Joe Mantegna, strongly associated with the plays of David Mamet, or John Malkovich, with those of Sam Shepard, bring associations of those dramatists and their styles to a new production even if that production is in fact the work of some other dramatist. The same thing is more generally true of dramatic style or tonality; most actors have strong associations with certain types of play—high comedy, farce, serious family drama, and so on. Alan Schneider in his autobiography, *Entrances*, describes the catastrophe that resulted when audiences at the first American production of *Waiting for Godot* came expecting to see Bert Lahr in a traditional burlesque comedy (an expectation encouraged by publicity that billed the play as "the laugh riot of two continents") and left in irritation and confusion when they could not fit the experience with those expectations.[24]

The process of recalling previous roles while watching the cre-

ation of new ones is clearly deeply involved in the process of reception, but it is also institutionally encouraged in the United States and elsewhere by the rather odd practice of providing in theatre programs actors' biographies listing previous roles, a practice so honored in the American theatre that this information is offered even in the absence of almost any other background information on the play or production. Indeed, I have even seen programs in which professional biographies of all the actors in the production appeared but without a word about the playwright, if he happened to have the misfortune to be dead.

In the case of actors who appear on television or in films as well as in the live theatre, the mass circulation of these other media makes it highly likely that even an active theatregoing public may bring to an actor's newest theatrical creation associations drawn more for that actor's work in the mass media than onstage. Often this ghosting is actively encouraged by the production's publicity program, hoping to draw to the theatre audience members who have enjoyed the work of a particular actor on television or in films. The advertising for the 1997 revival of the musical *Grease* on Broadway regularly mentioned that its star, Lucy Lawless, was well-known on television as the adventure heroine Xena, "Warrior Princess." Indeed, some advertisements mentioned only Xena, not the actress's name, or showed her in her Warrior Princess costume. Thus, both casting and advertising relied upon and clearly encouraged a ghosting of the warrior princess upon the role of the 1950s cool teenager, Betty Rizzo, a ghosting that was almost grotesquely inappropriate in terms of the musical itself, however successful it may have been in terms of stimulating ticket sales.

The combination of the appeal of the mass media in comparison to theatre, the importance of advertising and publicity, and the emphasis in the contemporary commercial theatre, especially in the United States, upon the star means that the most common publicity practice is some variation of that attempting to market the *Grease* revival by drawing upon the popularity of Xena the Warrior Princess. In February 2000 I received a mailing that is typical of the practice. A revival this spring of Sam Shepard's *True West* is hailed in this flyer as "Hollywood comes to Broadway," and its two stars (whose head shots provide the only illustrations in the flyer)

are identified as "Philip Seymour Hoffmann (*Magnolia, The Talented Mr. Ripley*) and John C. Reilly (*Boogie Nights, Magnolia*)." All three of these films were then among the most popular running in New York, and the advertisers clearly hoped that the opportunity to see these actors again, and live, would be at least as powerful as any wish to see this fairly well-known play itself. To the extent that they were correct, this revival was strongly and not necessarily positively ghosted by these current films, especially by *Magnolia*, in which both actors appeared. An almost comic concatenation of evoked roles was offered by the magazine *Playbill* in the opening sentence of its report on the then upcoming production of Neil Simon's *The Dinner Party:*

> Eve Harrington, Sweeney Todd, Baroness Else Schraeder, Jack Tripper, Flora the Red Menace and "Fonzie"—these are the past lives of the actors who've assembled onstage for *The Dinner Party*, which opens at the Music Box Theatre on October 19.[25]

A recent, more complex play of ghosting could be seen in a 1991 New York production called *Bon Appetit!* The premise of this unusual production was already a remarkably ghosted one, in which an actress studied a single television program on how to prepare a chocolate cake by the well-known television personality Julia Child and then precisely recreated this program onstage, scrupulously imitating every gesture and intonation of the original. I have already remarked, in speaking of dramatic texts, on the particularly close relationship between ghosting and parody. Clearly, the same observations can be applied to acting. Dramatic parody has been an important part of the theatrical experience since classic times, and, although there is little direct evidence that, for example, the actors in Aristophanes' parodies of Greek tragedy physically imitated the performance style as well as the content of those plays, the humor of the imitation would surely depend heavily upon this. Certainly, in later eras the physical ghosting of theatrical parody was usually even more important to the entertainment of the audience than the ghosting of the written text. Thus when Gherardi, a popular Arlequin of the late eighteenth century at the Comédie Italienne, appeared in a parody of Corneille's classic *Le*

Cid, there was little critical comment on the literary side of the parody but much admiration of Gherardi's imitation of the leading tragic actress of the time, Mlle Champmesle, in the role of Chimène. As one chronicler reported, he "imitates in his walk Mlle Champmesle, whose inflections he also imitates in his delivery."[26]

The existence of the videotaped TV program doubtless provided actress Jean Stapleton with the opportunity to create an even more detailed imitation of the gestures and vocal inflections of her subject, Julia Child, but the reception of her creation was further complicated by the fact that Stapleton herself came before audiences with an associated television personality probably as distinct in the public mind as that of chef Julia Child; this was Edith Bunker, the long-suffering and somewhat loopy wife in the television comedy series "All in the Family," probably the most popular such series of its period. An item in New York *Newsday* on the day the play opened provided an unusually clear insight into the resulting overlaying of personae. It began: "Three of the most-loved women in America will be on stage together tonight. There's actress Jean Stapleton. There's Julia Child, as played by Stapleton. And there's the invisible but inevitable presence of Edith Bunker, the lovable Queens housewife Stapleton created for *All in the Family.*"[27] Although Jean Stapleton is a stage actress of considerable experience and ability, any role she plays at this point in her career will for much of the audience be ghosted by the "invisible but inevitable" presence of Edith Bunker. The invisible but inevitable ghosting of previous roles in the theatre as well as in television and films has certain parallels to the phenomenon of intertextuality in reading and, like literary intertextuality, may be a source of distraction, a valuable tool for interpretation, or a source of enrichment and deepened pleasure in the work.

It is not only the operations of publicity that seek to capitalize upon audiences' associative memories and thus increase the reception power of theatrical recycling. Directors and producers, and of course the actors themselves, are also well aware, as they have always been, of the importance of an audience's previous experience with an actor in conditioning their reception of him or her in a new role. Normally speaking, the way that this process works is that an actor is cast who will bring to a new role audience

associations with a certain type of character or certain style of theatre, but the association can be much more specific, with a particular previous and well-remembered role in a particular production. A striking and powerful example of this could be seen in the fall 1993 season in Paris, when Jorge Lavelli staged Tabori's *Mein Kampf* at the Théâtre de la Colline. In Tabori's dark, surrealistic farce a mysterious elegant woman, Madame La Mort, appears, who, as her name suggests, turns out indeed to be a personification of death and who takes under her tutelage the youthful Hitler. In this role Lavelli cast Maria Cesares, who was recognized at once by French audiences as the actress who in her youth created the memorable personification of Death in Cocteau's classic film *Orphée.* The recognition of this connection in Tabori's play with the older and darker version of death provided a stunning effect. Rosette Lamont, reviewing Lavelli's production, aptly characterized Cesares as a "living quote."[28]

This kind of ghosting can sometimes have unexpected effects. When Greg Mosher cast Spalding Gray as the Narrator in a 1988 revival of *Our Town* at Lincoln Center, this was reportedly not for commercial reasons but to give a more contemporary "feel" to the play, since audiences could be expected to associate Gray with such material. This succeeded all too well. The New York audiences most familiar with Gray's work thought not only of his recently released film *Swimming to Cambodia* but also of his connection with the Wooster Group and the parodic treatment of *Our Town* in the Wooster Group production, *Routes 1 and 9.* Thus, when Gray delivered such a line as "Nice town, y'know what I mean?" the ghost of his flip modern persona converted it into a modern, ironic, cynical put-down, and the sentimental nostalgia that drives the play was constantly disrupted.

In a period when the long run has become an established part of theatrical culture, another variation of this inevitable comparison with the ghosts of past interpretations has also appeared. Often when a production has an extended run one or more of its leading actors, and sometimes the entire cast will, sooner or later, move on to other engagements. Nineteenth-century revivals were very often concentrated on a particular star, and when that star stopped appearing, for whatever reason, the production stopped

as well. Certainly, long runs in the modern theatre can also be based on the attractiveness of their leading performers, but normally the attractiveness of the production is somewhat more dispersed, and it is in any case very much in the interests of the producing organization to keep the production running as long as possible, even if leading players must be replaced. When this occurs, the new performer steps into a production in which the haunting is particularly concentrated and immediate. The surrounding actors, the already established public reaction to the production through reviews and word of mouth, and, to some extent, the specific memories of audience members who are returning for a second look all work together to make negotiations between the new actor and his or her predecessor particularly complex and the haunting particularly clear to the public. A new actor undertaking Macbeth or Othello may escape comparison in the reviews of his production with various predecessors in these roles (though it is rather unlikely). An actor who takes over a leading role in a long-running production, however, can be absolutely certain that critics and public alike will begin their reception and analysis of his interpretation by a comparison with the actor he has replaced. The result is a strange hybrid, not exactly a new interpretation, since the production apparatus, the scenery and lighting, the direction, and perhaps all of the cast except the new actor remain the same, but not exactly a repetition of the old interpretation either, since the new figure will inevitably bring a somewhat different coloring and perhaps somewhat different motivations to the role.

When it was announced in the fall of 1991 that Howard McGillin was replacing Mandy Patinkin as the gloomy uncle in *The Secret Garden* on Broadway, this was rarely reported without a critical opinion, before McGillin ever appeared in the play, as to what his interpretation of the character would be and how it would compare with Patinkin's. The *New Yorker* placed its comparison of the two in a welter of intertextual reference, drawing upon memories of previous theatrical experience but also upon film and literature, suggesting something of the variety of potential ghosts hovering about the reception of the new actor:

Mr. Patinkin excels at projecting just the wrong sort of gothic depression—he's more Young Werther than Mr. Rochester. The kind of brooding that Mr. Craven (the uncle) goes in for—and he's a haunted sort of man—leads to self-loathing rather than self-absorption. Think of the lugubrious way Herbert Marshall addressed the little girl in the 1949 movie. McGillin has exactly that quality.[29]

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that the theatregoing public in a city like New York inevitably views any new creation by an actor with some experience not only ghosted by previous roles but by an interpretive persona developed and maintained, as in the case of Patinkin and McGillin, by the institutional structures of media and publicity, which offer for all but the most obscure productions a complex interpretive matrix, often even before the play opens.

A particularly delicate balance must be maintained by the advertising and publicity, now major factors in the reception process, when such a shift occurs. On the one hand, the publicity cannot simply suggest that a new actor will simply imitate the departed one, since that would suggest a somewhat inferior copy. On the other hand, it must in some way counter the feeling that an established and successful interpretation is being replaced by a new but untested and unfamiliar one. The normal compromise is to replace a departing leading player by another who comes to the role (like Jean Stapleton or Lucy Lawless) with some familiar acting persona already established, often in film or television. Whenever possible the advertising then stresses how this already familiar background will bring an interesting new dimension to the role. Examples could be found in any season, but here is a typical one from February 2000. At that time a new leading actor, Jack Wagner, was announced as assuming the title role in the long-running Broadway musical *Jekyll and Hyde*. Wagner was not a familiar figure to New York theatregoers, but he was well-known to television audiences as a leading player in two of television's most popular serial dramas, "Melrose Place" and "General Hospital." With particular reference to the latter, the large newspaper ads, showing

Wagner looking at a test tube, were headed "There's a New Doctor in the House!" The ad continued "Beginning January 25, the star of *Melrose Place* and *General Hospital* injects some new blood into Broadway's hottest thriller."[30] Actually, the Victorian Dr. Jekyll and the medical figures played by Wagner on television had scarcely anything in common, even professionally, but the desire to sell a familiar face was far more important than providing an accurate image of the production itself.

A quite different dynamic operates in what might seem to be a very similar situation, when because of illness or other problems a leading player cannot perform and his or her place must be taken by a stand-in. Stand-ins are an essential part of the modern system of long runs and large advance sales, but they operate quite differently from the replacement stars just discussed. A stand-in is normally physically and vocally suited to the role, but an actor of much less reputation, who normally fills a smaller role in the production and so is familiar enough with it to step into the lead with little notice. No commercial theatre could afford to hire stand-ins with the kind of established reputation that regular replacements almost invariably have, so audiences rarely have much previous knowledge of these actors. Moreover, as last-minute replacements, stand-ins have neither the time nor the authority to put any significant stamp of their own upon the role, as replacement leads are accustomed to do. Therefore, strangely enough, the work of a stand-in is frequently ghosted to a significant degree, not by his or her own past work but by that of the actor being replaced. This is true not only because the stand-in, for the unity of the production, is expected to imitate the timing and details of action of the actor being replaced but also because the audience, which is normally not informed of the replacement until they have arrived in the theatre, have come with the expectation (if they have any expectation about this role at all) of another, more familiar actor in it.

This situation is a fairly familiar one to any regular theatregoer, but I would like to illustrate it with an example from December 1993, when the combined operations of ghosting and reception became particularly interesting and complex. The production in question was Neil Simon's successful Broadway comedy, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor,* based, as all reviews and press releases on the pro-

duction noted, on the author's experiences as a gag writer for the popular television personality Sid Caesar. When I attended, on December 28, the star of the production, Nathan Lane, was absent, and he was replaced by his understudy, Alan Blumenfeld. Lane is one of New York's most popular actors, having appeared the season before this as Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls* and having won in 1992 the Obie Award for Sustained Excellence. Blumenfeld, though he has had a long television career, is not particularly familiar to New York theatre audiences, and in any case his movement, even his gestures and comic "takes," were so closely modeled on those of the absent Lane, an extremely familiar stage presence, that in Blumenfeld one could often "see" Lane, ghosting a part in which he had never been seen by this audience. This kind of "absent" ghosting is, in fact, not uncommon when understudies replace a familiar actor with a fairly recognizable style.

What made this particular experience of *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* much more complicated, and interesting, was that the ghosting did not stop there. At another level the character Max, normally played by Lane and this evening by Blumenfeld, was closely modeled on Sid Caesar, whose mannerisms, extremely familiar to audiences from his television appearances, were imitated by Blumenfeld and Lane, opening another level of ghosting. And, beyond this, one of the high points of the evening was a sequence in which Max and his writers rehearsed a skit in which Max imitated Marlon Brando in his famous "Method" interpretation of Brutus in the film *Julius Caesar.* Max added to the complexity of this moment by not only parodying Brando's style in general but actually introducing lines of *A Streetcar Named Desire,* which, as I have already noted, is the most familiar and recognizable example of the Brando style. Thus, at this moment we witnessed Blumenfeld ghosted by Nathan Lane ghosted by Sid Caesar ghosted by Marlon Brando playing Brutus ghosted by his interpretation of Stanley Kowalski. The wave of laughter and huge outburst of applause that was stimulated by this sequence provided clear evidence that the audience not only recognized but also vastly enjoyed this complex web of intertextual acting references.[31]

Surely, the most familiar example of ghosting outside the operations of the traditional established company is that which occurs

when an actor who has developed a certain degree of public recognition undertakes a well-known role, a major role, for example, from one of the national playwrights—Schiller in Germany, Molière in France, or Shakespeare in England or the United States. Here two repositories of public cultural memory can and often have come into conflict, with potentially powerful dramatic results as they negotiate a new relationship, either a successful new combination or a preservation of a duality. The most familiar example of this in the Western theatre is the role of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Of course, in Hamlet we have one of the major repositories of Western cultural memory, as in Faust, but, while Goethe's version dominates that tradition, it is a tradition that allows, even encourages, new literary interpretations in almost every generation. Hamlet operates in a different manner. Here new literary retellings of the story are extremely uncommon, but new theatrical embodiments are innumerable, and so we have in every generation new embodiments of Hamlet onstage, each seeking to reshape the cultural memory of the character according to its own abilities and orientation. Each seeks to establish "*My* Hamlet" as Valéry, in literary terms, sought to establish "*My* Faust."

As both Bert States and Herbert Blau have noted, *Hamlet* is not only the central dramatic piece in Western cultural consciousness, but it is a play that is particularly concerned with ghosts and with haunting. In addition to the profound ways in which these two major theorists have demonstrated how the image of haunting appears within this complex and provocative drama, however, *Hamlet* is involved with haunting in quite another dimension: the temporal movement of the work and its accompanying theory and performance through history. Our language is haunted by Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in particular, so much so that anyone reading the play for the first time is invariably struck by how many of the play's lines are already known to her. Even more experienced readers (or viewers) can hardly escape the impression that the play is really a tissue of quotations. Our iconic memories are haunted by *Hamlet*. Who does not immediately recognize, in whatever pictorial style he may appear, the dark habited young man gazing contemplatively into the sightless eyes of a skull he is holding (and who, seeing that image, can keep from her mind the

phrase, "Alas, poor Yorick")? Our critical and theoretical memories are haunted by *Hamlet*, as Shakespeare in general and *Hamlet* in particular have occupied a central position in critical thought for the past two centuries, a situation that has not changed at all even with the development of the most recent, most iconoclastic critical approaches, such as feminist theory, queer theory, new historicism, and cultural materialism. And, finally, our theatrical memories are haunted by *Hamlet*, surely the most often produced classic, the dream and ultimate test of every aspiring young serious actor in the English-speaking theatre and to a significant extent outside it as well.

The very thing that makes *Hamlet* so attractive to a young actor, the density of its ghosting, culturally, theatrically, and academically, also, of course, makes it a formidable, even daunting challenge. Rare indeed would be the actor who would attempt this role as his first major serious part (rarer still, probably, would be the producer or producing organization that would provide him with such an opportunity and expose themselves to such a risk). Much more normally, an actor attempts *Hamlet* only when he has already developed a strong individual style and achieved a sufficient level of success and reputation to test himself against the role generally accepted as the hallmark of the art. Thus, every new major revival of *Hamlet* is doubly haunted, on the one hand, by the memories of the famous Hamlets of the past (some within the living memory of audience members, others known only through historical reputation) and, on the other hand, by memories of the new interpreter, who comes with his own particular style and technique, in most cases also familiar to the audiences. The successful new Hamlet will add his unique voice to the tradition and join the ghosts with whom Hamlets of the future must deal.

In *Cities of the Dead* Joseph Roach employs the useful term *surrogation* to characterize this process. Surrogation, suggests Roach, occurs when "survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates" into "the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure." The fit, of course, can never be exact. "The intended substitute either cannot fulfill expectations, creating a deficit, or actually exceeds them, creating a surplus."[32] A new actor attempting so haunted a role as Hamlet seems to me a particularly complex and

interesting example of this process, since he is attempting to act as surrogate for a whole host of departed predecessors, against whom he will inevitably be compared, to his advantage or disadvantage.

This dynamic has long been recognized by actors, audiences, and reviewers alike and is one of the features that makes each new major production of the play an interesting cultural event. It is most consistently recorded in reviews of and reports on each new production, which will almost inevitably make comparisons between the new Hamlet and others, living and dead. Occasionally, however, in the metatheatrical mode of the late twentieth century, directors have called attention to the dynamic within productions of *Hamlet* itself, especially in the already metatheatrical scenes with the Players. Thus, Daniel Mesguich, in his 1995 revival in Lille, France, had the famous "To be or not to be" speech delivered in several historical styles, along with commentaries on interpretation from Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Brecht. Similarly, Andrei Serban, in his 1999 revival at the Public Theater in New York, accented Hamlet's advice to the Players with a sequence filling the stage with actors carrying large reproductions of famous Hamlets of the past, many of them from the Public Theater itself but also including a few particularly memorable historical Hamlets, such as Sarah Bernhardt, and dominated by a poster of the present Hamlet, Liev Schreiber.

Occasionally, a single actor has come to *Hamlet* with so powerful and attractive an interpretation that he achieves for his generation the ideal fusion of the two ghosts, that of the role and that of the interpreter, making it extremely difficult for young actors in that particular generation to challenge this dominant image. This could certainly be claimed for Edwin Booth in late-nineteenth and John Barrymore in early-twentieth-century America and for a number of great British actors. Hamlet is so complex and so popular a role, however, that in most generations there have been a number of competing interpretations, so that the reception experience for regular theatregoers has not normally involved comparing a new Hamlet with one specific famous predecessor, as has often been the case with other famous roles, but with a number of competing ghosts, some from the past and others of the present.

Hamlet is surely the role in the English language tradition that evokes the most crowded field of ghosts. Most of the great roles of the traditional repertoire, those plays that undergo regular revival, share in this dynamic to a certain extent, but a part of the cultural memory of Hamlet has become that it is a kind of "test" for aspiring young actors, creating a special reception paradox wherein an important part of the audience expectation has become what the new actor will do to establish *his own* Hamlet. Here the comparisons inevitably made with the interpretations of the past take on a particular urgency and specificity.

Although the particular theatrical and cultural positioning of Hamlet makes the operations of ghosting and of cultural memory particularly obvious in this role, the memory of the bodies, the movements, the gestures, of previous actors haunts all theatrical performance. As Joseph Roach has observed in *Cities of the Dead:* "Even in death actors' roles tend to stay with them. They gather in the memory of audiences, like ghosts, as each new interpretation of a role sustains or upsets expectations derived from the previous ones."[33] Modern American theatre audiences are probably less conscious of this important part of the process of theatrical reception than audiences in almost any other theatre culture, past or present, for two reasons. The first is that, as I have already noted in relation to the reuse of dramatic textual material, the turn toward realism in the modern theatre diminished the overt recycling of such material that has characterized most theatre of the past, both East and West. The second is that the regular revival of older, especially classic works, is much more uncommon in modern America than it is almost anywhere else in the world, and so the opportunity of recalling previous interpretations of particular works is much reduced.

Until fairly recent times even in the United States a large number of familiar plays were regularly revived, and with them came a whole repertoire of actors' movements and gestures, reinforced on the one hand by the memories of the audience and on the other by the traditions of the acting profession itself. Lawrence Barrett, a popular American actor and manager in the late nineteenth century, clearly summarized the prevailing practice of that era:

The so-called "business" of nearly all the commonly acted plays has been handed down through generations of actors, amended and corrected in many cases by each performer, but never radically changed. New readings of certain passages have been substituted for old, but the traditional "points" have been preserved, personal characteristics and physical peculiarities finding ample expression within the old readings of the plays.[34]

This attitude toward acting and performance memory may seem a bit odd, even unnatural, to a theatregoer in modern America, within a theatrical culture that places relatively little value on either memory or tradition, but in the great majority of theatrical cultures, past and present, something akin to what Barrett is describing has been the performance norm.

The Japanese Kabuki theatre provides an excellent example of this dynamic at work. The entire performance of Kabuki is governed (as indeed are all theatrical performances, whether they foreground this or not) by a set of fundamental conventions of the form, in Japanese called *yakusoku*. Within each performance these conventions work themselves out through a series of discrete actions called *kata*, which Kabuki historian Samuel Leiter has called "the bones or building blocks of kabuki performance." We may speak of *kata* associated with a single actor, such as those of Ichikawa Danjuro IX, or those of a family, such as the *narikomaya kata*, the *otowaya kata*, and so on. Some *kata* are particularly associated with certain roles, while there are also many that may occur in a wide variety of plays. Thus, it is possible to speak of walking *kata*, crying *kata*, running *kata*, laughing *kata*, and so on, for the representation of all emotions and modes of deportment.[35] By definition an action does not become a *kata* until it is set and repeated a number of times, to the point where it becomes a recognizable entity and is handed down to posterity. Today in Japan, as in the West, a desire for innovation is pitted against the forces of tradition, but Kabuki actors have found an interesting compromise. A contemporary Japanese actor seeking innovation will rarely attempt to create a completely new *kata*. He will much more likely restore to the stage old *kata* that are no longer in common use, just as Euripides did not so much create new versions of tradi-

tional mythic material as to restore to public consciousness less familiar earlier variants. The father's ghost is passed over but only to summon the ghost of the grandfather.

The normal lineage and recycling of action and gesture has traditionally been handled somewhat differently in the West. Up until the last century a more or less conventional interpretive tradition was established within each country for commonly revived plays, often descended more or less directly from the originator of the role in that country. This process was particularly clear in the case of plays that revived with some frequency, such as the major works of Shakespeare in England or Molière in France. Augustan theatre historian John Downes, praising Thomas Betterton's performance of King Henry VIII, notes that Betterton had been "instructed in it by Sir *William*, who had it from Old Mr. *Lowen*, that had his instructions from Mr. *Shakespear* himself."[36] Downes provides a similar performance genealogy for Betterton's Hamlet, which, unlike that for Henry VIII, is clearly incorrect,[37] but even in that case, as editors Milhous and Hume note, "however spurious the interpretation of the role, the anecdote indicates respect for a performance tradition."[38] Joseph Roach recounts a telling anecdote from Thomas Davies's *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1789) concerning the importance of performance memory to the dramatic practice of this period. During a revival of Nathaniel Lee's *The Rival Queens*, Betterton "was at a loss to recover a particular emphasis of Hart, which gave force to some interesting situation of the part," when another actor, recalling Hart's interpretation, "repeated the line exactly in Hart's key," thus gaining Betterton's hearty thanks and a coin "for so acceptable a service."[39]

The practice suggested by these examples resulted in a performance tradition that remained fairly stable for a number of generations in the European theatre unless, as occasionally happened, an actor appeared with a new interpretation that was so striking, original, and popular, that for a generation, or perhaps for several generations, it haunted all subsequent interpretations of that role. A famous example in the British theatre is Charles Macklin's noted eighteenth-century reinterpretation of the character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. The play had often been revived in the period of more than a century since its creation, but before Mack-

lin the character of Shylock had been traditionally played by one of the comic actors of the producing company—indeed, the most famous previous interpreter had been Thomas Doggett at the opening of the century, an actor who specialized in low comedy and broad farce. Macklin, who was still building his career when he first played Shylock in 1741, was associated with no particular type of part—he had played fops and young lovers, comic old men and burlesque transvestites. To the public, however, he was better known for his life outside the theatre, as a quick-tempered brawler, the subject of a famous trial for the murder in a heated quarrel of a fellow actor in 1735.

In this case audience reception of Macklin was potentially ghosted not only by the two traditional, and in this case mutually reinforcing, associations—his previous theatre appearances in a variety of basically comic representations and the traditional interpretation of Shylock as a comic figure by Doggett and others—but also by a third association, his public persona outside the theatre as a rather unstable and dangerous figure. Had Macklin presented Shylock in a conventionally comic manner, he would have reinforced the audience's ghosting of that performance by memories of his previous theatrical work, but, instead, he presented a revolutionary new reading of the part, not sympathetic but emphasizing the dark and dangerous side of Shylock, thus, consciously or unwittingly, encouraging the ghosting of his new interpretation not by his theatrical but by his public associations. Toby Lelyveld's performance history of the play suggests that Macklin's audiences "recalled his violent disposition and associated it with the character he now portrayed."[40] From this time onward public and theatrical impressions of Macklin coalesced in the character of Shylock. It became his signature role, played throughout his career, and, as one of his biographies observes, became itself the source of ghosting throughout that career:

> For almost fifty years he played the role. Indeed, most of his best parts were, in some degree, variations on it. Sir Gilbert Wrangle in *The Refusal*, Lovegold in *The Miser*, and his own creations, Sir Archy Macsarcasm and Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, are all cut from the same cloth. So closely associated was he

with the role that he became, for many of his contemporaries, particularly those who disliked him, Shylock Macklin.[41]

The case of Macklin's Shylock not only provides an example of one strategy by which an actor can challenge and to some degree replace the ghosts of past interpretations in the public consciousness (often thereby producing a new ghost to haunt future interpretations) but also introduces another element in the haunted body to which we must now turn our attention.

So far we have spoken, especially in the case of well-known and often revived roles, of the two sometimes contradictory, sometimes reinforcing ghostings provided by previous interpretations of that role and previous roles created by that actor. Macklin's Shylock, however, calls attention to a third source of ghosting, which in this case proved even more important than either of the others. This is the haunting of a new interpretation by the audience's knowledge of or assumptions about the actor's life outside the theatre. The operations of this sort of ghosting have been given almost no attention by theatre theorists, even by those centrally concerned with reception, despite the fact that in today's theatre culture (and indeed often in the past) the "private" lives, real or imagined, of famous actors and actresses have been a source of great interest to the theatregoing public and have unquestionably affected that public's reception of the artists' work. The only study that I know of devoted specifically to this phenomenon is Michael Quinn's pioneering 1990 essay, "Celebrity and the Semiotics of Acting."[42] Quinn, strongly influenced by the procedures of semiotic analysis, bases his comments upon the analysis of acting carried out by members of the Prague School, especially Jiří Veltrusky, who divided acting into three formal aspects, each with its own function. These three aspects Veltrusky calls the performer, which is the acting body itself; the stage figure, which is the image created by actor, playwright, director, and designers; and the character, which is the image as it is interpreted by the audience. The major function of the first is expressive, of the second, referential, and of the third, connotative.[43]

In the traditional post-romantic Western theatre, Quinn suggests, the second function, the referential, dominates. To it the

performer's expressive function is subordinated, and upon it the audience's connotative activity is based. In what Quinn designates as "celebrity" performance, however, the actor reaches across the referentiality of the play to express directly to the audience something about himself personally that will affect their reception but, because it is not involved with the play's own referentiality, can often operate quite independently of it. Celebrity performance can take many forms, from the intimate experience of seeing a neighbor or a member of one's one family in a school or community play to the general experience of seeing on the professional stage some person we have never met but whom we know from wide exposure of them in magazines, newspapers, or on TV. In each case the public perception of the performer dominates the expressive function. As Quinn describes it, celebrity actors "bring something to the role other than a harmonious blend of features, an overdetermined quality that exceeds the needs of the fiction, and keeps them from disappearing entirely into the acting figure or the drama. Rather, their contribution to the performance is often a kind of collision with the role."

Quinn places the celebrity actor in direct opposition to the system of stage types, in that in the former case the "newest young ingenue" is "by definition excluded from enduring fame, because the extent to which she exemplifies her type will correspond to the rate of her disappearance."[44] Clearly, this is indeed the opposite of the celebrity actor, whom the audience precisely recognizes on the basis of qualities outside the theatrical establishment. On the basis of this opposition Quinn argues for an inevitable clash between celebrity and referentiality, but their relationship is, I think, much more complicated than that. Certainly, celebrity works against the illusion of theatrical naturalism, and Quinn rightly notes its close relationship to the workings of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, but it may be debated whether within a theatrical context the pure illusion sought by naturalism has ever really been achieved, and in any case the vast majority of theatre has not sought such an illusion but has frankly accepted and even emphasized the audience's parallel awareness of illusion and reality, of the character and the actor. In terms of reception, and indeed of illusion, the question seems to

me not so much one of whether or not an actor's celebrity affects an audience's reception of a role (surely it normally does) but, rather, whether an actor's celebrity is naturally congruent to the role or, in a case like that of Macklin, can persuasively be made congruent. In Quinn's example of the ingenue, for example, it seems to me that if celebrity is congruent with the stage character being depicted this would be no more potentially disruptive to an audience's experience of the role than the parallel memory of the predictable stage type. Whether an audience member experiences an actress's work in a new role with the foreknowledge that a certain actress traditionally plays the ingenue parts or with the foreknowledge that the same actress has just won the Miss America beauty contest, the foreknowledge in either case ghosts the reception process and is, indeed, assumed to do so by an alert theatrical producing organization. In both of these cases the ghost reinforces the "illusion," but one could easily imagine cases, both involving the actress's stage career and offstage celebrity, that would be similarly challenging to the illusion. If, on the one hand, an actress known to the public for portraying comic old women or villainesses would suddenly decide to appear in an ingenue role, this ghosting would present a potentially serious reception problem, as would the audience's knowledge that this actress had just been involved in a major sexual scandal or a public morals charge outside the theatre (one might wonder, parenthetically, why Lillie Langtry, widely known to be the mistress of the Prince of Wales, scored such a success as Shakespeare's chaste Rosalind, but in fact the celebrity was reinforced by the opportunity *As You Like It* offered to see the rather scandalous Miss Langtry in tights).[45]

Freddie Rokem in the epilogue to his engaging study of theatrical memory, *Performing History*, discusses the use of two veteran German stage and film actors, Curt Bois and Heinz Rühmann, who near the end of their careers appeared in Wim Wenders's two filmic meditations on the history of modern Berlin, *Wings of Desire* and *So Far and So Close*. Both appear as melancholy oral historians. Bois, a Jewish actor who fled to the United States during the Nazi period, appears as a homeless vagabond, roaming through the rubble near the then desolate Potsdamer Platz. Rühmann, who

had a successful career under the Nazis, plays an old chauffeur who served the Nazis faithfully and is now hiding somewhere in the ruins of Berlin with his old car. Rokem perceptively observes:

> Bois and Rühmann do not only *play* characters who are survivors/historians in the two respective films; like all actors, through their individual biographies as actors and human beings, they are also historians who represent certain aspects of the past. *Their biographical and professional pasts have in a sense become inscribed in their bodies,* as something which exists as an extension of their direct presence on the screen.[46]

Actors appearing onstage in full acceptance of their celebrity can in fact be traced far back in theatre history. In 1276 Adam de la Halle appeared in propria persona, along with several of his Arras friends and neighbors, in his comedy *Le Jeu de la Feuillée,* and well-known persons appearing as themselves were a fairly common feature of nineteenth-century popular entertainment. One notable example was William F. Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), who played himself in countless stage and later film reenactments of his scouting days and fights with the Indians. Clearly, in these performances the "real life" and "theatrical" performances were not in conflict in the audience's minds but, in fact, were mutually reinforcing. Toward the end of his career Cody added to the regular attractions of his touring company a reenactment of the Battle of San Juan Hill, which featured as one of its attractions soldiers who had actually taken place in that battle wearing (at least according to the company publicity) the very uniforms they had worn on that famous occasion.

Thus, the operations of celebrity do not necessarily subvert the authority of the dramatic role or even that of the production ensemble, as Quinn argues, although they clearly have the potential to do so. All depends upon the congruence or lack of congruence between the previous knowledge of the celebrity the audience brings to the production and the referential goal sought by the production. In both the United States and Europe in recent years theatres have sought to attract audiences by featuring well-known TV or recording personalities as stars, often with only the

slightest concern with how well the public personae of these figures would fit the stage characters they were assigned. The results, such as the featuring of recording star Sting as Mack the Knife in Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* or putting cultural icon Madonna in a relatively minor role in Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow* was that their already established personae simply did not fit into the rest of the dramatic structure, creating precisely the sort of disjuncture and distraction Quinn describes. Even actors who have not sought to build a strong public persona outside the theatre may be caught up in unplanned public events that become an inescapable part of their theatre image. The famous French pantomimist Debureau at the peak of his career gave a fatal beating to a man who insulted his wife. He was acquitted by a jury and enthusiastically welcomed back to the stage by his public, but he never after was able to inspire the same spirit of carefree abandon in his audience. The critic of *Le Monde dramatique* made it clear that his performances were thereafter haunted by this extratheatrical event:

> Debureau might find his costume on the same hook, his ceruse on the same pad, but he would never again encounter the same laughter or the same fervour—because he who normally lashed out with his foot had struck a blow with his hand, and instead of making people cry with laughing, he had made somebody weep with sorrow.[47]

In terms of dramatic illusion, ghosting can clearly work in either a positive or negative way, and celebrity provides a particularly powerful example of this.

Two long-standing traditions in the theatre provide central situations for the foregrounding of celebrity. The first is the frequently encountered audience applause that greets the first entrance of the evening's star performer or performers, even, oddly enough, within a realistic production. Since the actor has done absolutely nothing at this point to merit any such sign of approbation other than to arrive onstage without falling down, what is being manifested is obviously the expression of a positive collective memory of the artist's previous work or his celebrity. In

the nineteenth century it was common for such applause to be acknowledged with a bow, further disrupting the illusionistic flow of the performance, but, even though this acknowledgment of the audience tribute is now rarely seen, the applause, especially in productions that foreground a particular actor, still persists.

The other, much more universal locus for such interaction is, of course, the curtain call, a site where memory is particularly celebrated, primarily the short-term memory of the production just witnessed and now being recalled and acknowledged, but also, in many cases, the longer-term memory of past enjoyment of these actors or this company. No one has written more perceptively on the phenomenology of the curtain call than Bert States, and it is striking how central to his analysis are the operations of audience memory and, indeed, even the specific metaphor of ghosting:

> For obvious reasons, the actors remain in costume but not in character. Or, not exactly in character; for it often happens that an actor, if not the entire cast, will deliberately retain traces of his role, as in the continuance of mannerisms, or *lazzi*, for comic effect . . . or, in heavier plays, a general gravity of mood in which, say, the actor who played Hamlet remains vaguely Hamletic beneath a "house" smile. But this is taken by both audience and cast as evidence of the fanciful power of the play to outlast itself. As Bergson would say, it has encrusted its spirit on the actors who have just performed it.

Even more strikingly, States continues:

> There is also an unintentional, and far more interesting, sense in which the actor remains in character—or, to put it a better way, the character remains in the actor, like a ghost. It is not at all a clean metamorphosis . . . What we see now is not the unvarnished actor, fresh from Hamlet, but the real side of the Hamlet phenomenon . . . the actor has now annexed Hamlet, like a colony, to himself.[48]

Much of States's seminal study on the phenomenology of theatre deals with one or another aspect of what I have called ghost-

ing. At one point, in speaking of recurring images and conventions, he astutely observes that "once the theatre is armed with a paradigm it will not be satisfied until it has tried out every available content."[49] Thus, for example, upon the particular ghosting machine of the curtain call may be grafted a higher level of ghosting, as any curtain call itself is ghosted by memories of previous curtain calls and their repertoire of expectations. This is how, for example, the curtain call for Mary Chase's 1944 Broadway comedy *Harvey* could conclude with the opening and closing of a stage door left followed shortly by the opening and closing of a stage door right, a sequence that the delighted audience, relying upon the ghosts of other curtain calls, rightly recognized as representing the final "appearance" of the invisible rabbit for whom the play was named. One might balance this famous "invisible" curtain call with the most famous one that conferred visibility upon its participants. In the 1941 comedy classic *Arsenic and Old Lace* the thirteen victims of the homicidal sisters, never seen in the play, came out of the onstage door to the cellar/crypt to appear for the curtain call, a striking reversal of the curtain call's normal function of representing a return to "reality" as well as an unusual literal representation of the "ghosts" of the production.

So popular was this device that it was continued, and it increased in complexity (as ghosted conventions in the theatre often do), when there appeared among the displayed "corpses" first the play's producers, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, and then a variety of other well-known New York personalities. Thus, instead of the normal curtain call ghosting of actors by their stage personae that States notes, patrons were offered bodies ghosted by the operations of extratheatrical celebrity. Subsequent professional revivals of this popular classic have often followed this curtain call tradition, so that *Arsenic and Old Lace* has developed its own particular and complex ghosted curtain call. A London revival in 1966 featured among the bowing corpses such familiar stage figures as John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, and Michael Redgrave, none of whom had any other connection with the production.

In this interesting variation well-known actors appeared encrusted not with the spirit of the play just seen but with that of a host of previous plays that had developed the stage figure of each

of these familiar actors. Yet another variation appeared in the New York revival of the play in 1986, when former mayor John Lindsay, a familiar public figure, was observed among those emerging from the cellar. The *New York Times* article that reported this appearance placed Lindsay in the tradition of such noted earlier *Arsenic* corpses as Gielgud and Richardson,[50] showing that at least in the experience of some viewers Lindsay was ghosted not only by his political celebrity but by the performance tradition of this particular curtain call.

Gielgud and Richardson also introduce us to the last type of celebrity that I wish to mention. Like the others, it has an inevitable and quite distinct effect upon the process of reception and its operation is perhaps the most interesting of all such effects. One of the most powerful and positive experiences in the theatre arises from seeing a series of creations by those great actors in every theatre generation who in addition to creating memorable roles gradually take on a special aura of achievement, becoming in a sense indexes of the art itself, celebrity, if you will, but celebrity of a particular kind, based not so much on public notoriety but on a reputation for theatrical achievement. John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson are two obvious modern examples, as were Sarah Bernhardt and Eleanora Duse a century ago and David Garrick a century earlier. Once such actors have established themselves at the pinnacle of their profession, their appearance in each new role, or in each major revival, is ghosted not only by memories of specific past performances but, perhaps even more important, by a general audience awareness of the significance of the achievement represented by those performances. This effect is, of course, further heightened when the artist is nearing the end of a distinguished career. When John Gielgud plays Prospero, as he has done several times in recent years, the audience's view of the character is powerfully conditioned by ghosts of this great actor's own career, and Gielgud can draw upon that phenomenon to achieve an almost unbearable poignancy in his final "Now my charms are all o'erthrown / And what strength I have's mine own,— / Which is most faint." Similarly, when the aging Olivier played the aging James Tyrone in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, he created an unforgettable moment when the miserly Tyrone climbs on the

table to turn off an overhead light and pauses a moment, looking out into the audience with the light sharply defining his features. In that instant the fictive Tyrone achieved a stunning fusion with the awareness of Olivier as actor and as an index for the art of acting itself.[51] In such moments it becomes difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine how much of the enormous impact that such a moment can have on an audience is the result of the skill of the actor and how much is the weight brought to this moment by the actor's evocation of the powerful ghosts accumulated throughout one of the greatest acting careers within the memory of the assembled public.

The tradition of the star performer and the growing importance, especially in the United States, of companies of actors assembled for a particular production and then dispersed have both served to focus the process of ghosting in acting upon the individual actor, but a broader view of the theatre in different periods provides many examples of two or more actors who so frequently appeared together that the ghosted memory of their relationship was carried from production to production in a manner identical to the memory of personal associations of an individual actor. Even in the more individualized plays and productions of recent times, particular repeated combinations of actors and relationships can easily summon up echoes of sequences in other dramas. The pairing of two male comics of contrasting physical types and intellectual acuity is a theatrical device that goes back at least as far as the *commedia* and arguably to Plautine comedy, with its clever and stupid servants. In the twentieth century this pairing became much more evident in films, with such famous and popular pairs as Laurel and Hardy or Abbot and Costello, who would play different characters in different films but rely on the audience's ghosting of each new film by the memory of their relationships in previous films. The Marx brothers provide a three-way example of the same phenomenon. Male comic pairs were less important on the live stage in the twentieth century (except in the burlesque/vaudeville tradition) than in films, but some of the best known and most loved actors of the century were male/female pairs such as Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy in the most recent generation or Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne in the previous

one. Certainly, it would be a misrepresentation of these distinguished actors to suggest that they played essentially the same characters in most of their coappearances (as one might argue in the case of the traditional male comics), but what makes their careers even more interesting, from the point of view of ghosting, is that, even though they presented very different characters from play to play, each new incarnation stimulated in their faithful audiences memories of past work that deepened each new individual production. The fact that both of these prominent teams were also known as happily married couples in private life added the useful extra dimension of real-life reinforcement to the ghosting.

By the later years of their careers these acting teams were able to call upon the same kind of accumulated audience memories as could venerated single actors such as Gielgud or Olivier. When in the late 1970s Cronyn and Tandy appeared in a production of *The Gin Game*, dealing with two elderly inhabitants of a retirement home, it had been a quarter-century since their first major success together, in another well-known two-person play, *The Fourposter*. The emotional effect of *The Gin Game* was much increased by the audience's awareness of a career-long relationship between these actors, even though, in fact, the play itself assumes no previous connection between the two characters. There was, indeed, an interesting symmetry between these two two-person vehicles early and late in this dual career, since, if the reception aesthetic of *The Gin Game* drew significantly upon a backward awareness on the part of the audience, the first major Cronyn/Tandy vehicle, *The Fourposter*, seems more prophetic in retrospect, since it concerns the relationships of a couple over the entire course of their marriage.

The ghosting encouraged by two or more actors repeatedly appearing together, parallel to the ghosting of individual actors, is of course much more common in theatres such as the national theatres of Europe in which the acting companies, following the model of the first great national theatre, the Comédie Française, remain together for years and thus inevitably provide examples not only of personal but of group ghosting, sometimes consciously created by the director and sometimes occurring by chance. A good example of this process at work could be witnessed in a production of the late 1990s of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* at the National

Theatre of Norway. Director Stein Winge and his actors created a powerful and original interpretation of the sequence when Gina confesses to Hjalmar that he may not be Hedwig's father. The actor playing Hjalmar reacted violently, pursuing Gina about the stage and then giving his unresisting wife a series of blows. This reaction is itself unusual and striking, but the experience of it was clearly colored, audience members and critics alike reported, by the memory of a recent *Hamlet* at this same theatre in which the actor now playing Hjalmar had played Hamlet and in the bedchamber scene very similarly attacked Gertrude, played by the actress now playing Gina. We are not dealing here with as clear a conscious stimulation of audience ghosting as the corpses in *Arsenic and Old Lace;* indeed it is possible, though not likely, that director Winge may not have intended this effect at all. But, whether consciously intended by the director or not, the ghosted pattern of physical interaction created a reception relationship between two plays and two scenes that has, to the best of my knowledge, never been linked in critical commentary. In such cases one might speak of a kind of performance intertextuality, based not on literary but on performative echoes, since the literary texts of these two scenes have very little in common.[52] Like the invisible presences of the past roles of individual actors, past interactions of actors may be a calculated part of the production apparatus or may arise unexpectedly in the minds of the public, but in either case they may work equally strongly to condition the reading of a scene and perhaps of an entire production.