

## Unintentional Fallacies

### Gordon Armstrong

The more conscious brain is far more conventional. It's good for getting to the store on time and stuff. But you have to get rid of that voice or subdue it on some level.

Neil Simon

So at that moment I'm the person sitting there in the chair, thinking, "I hear this voice, I know that's somebody that I know . . ." And then once you get it "voiced," . . . the writing can begin.

Marsha Norman

#### I. *Intentionality and the creative mind*

In May, 1989, in a paper presented to delegates of the International Federation for Theater Research XIth World Congress in Stockholm, Ronald Vince noted that the decade of the nineteen eighties had seen the development of theater scholarship into a discipline that emulates the standards established in other fields of scientific knowledge.<sup>1</sup> However, James Arnott's 1981 call, in *New Theater Quarterly*, for the establishment of "a discipline to serve the artist" has not been achieved.<sup>2</sup> In Vince's opinion, "We have developed a descriptive vocabulary—that of semiotics for instance—but we do not have a convincing aesthetic vocabulary, and the question of artistic judgment remains unanswered."<sup>3</sup>

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Theater theory and historiography have evolved in the past decade out of a critique of positivist methodology, in particular out of Bruce McConachie's critique of Oscar Brockett's methodological approach to theater history, based on objective evaluation, authentication, and interpretation of documentary evidence.<sup>4,5</sup> According to Vince, the "documentary imperative" of positivism, derived from nineteenth century German Scholarship that stressed an emphasis on primary documentary evidence, insisted that the historian's task was similar to that of the cultural archeologist.<sup>6</sup> This interesting parallel is even more germane when one considers the changes historians have made in their conception of archeological methodology in the past two decades. In 1972, Foucault had noted that historically the document was "treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence."<sup>7</sup> Historians of the past viewed documents as inert objects that could miraculously be reconstituted to reveal what men had said or done. Now, stated Foucault, historians must not interpret a document but become cultural archaeologists and work on "the interplay of relations within it and outside it."<sup>8</sup> This was an archeology of social strata that consisted of intrinsic descriptions of documentary materials as relations of unities, series, and tables. The goal now was to define series' limits, relations, strata, etc., over large periods of time and to individualize different strata; to juxtapose documents from widely spaced periods without reducing them to linear schema.<sup>9</sup>

McConachie concurred in his critique of positivist historians, who, he suggested, are prone to hold "that facts retain significance in themselves." Noting also the positivists' belief that facts, arranged into patterns of relationships, unlock wider historical meanings *if*—an important caveat for the positivist—the barnacles of subjective meanings are carefully scraped away. McConachie firmly admonishes these researchers: "From the phenomenologist-postpositivist point of view . . . the barnacles themselves contain the only significance that can be known."<sup>10</sup> Time analyses of shifting spatial relations, and of documentary interpretations—in all their ambiguity and discontinuity—are more important than analysis of a document itself, in all its presumed objectivity and singularity.

In 1970, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas S. Kuhn described the discontinuous advancement of knowledge by the sequential development of what he termed a revolutionary paradigm shift.<sup>11</sup> This shift occurs when a prevailing system of thought can no longer explain the anomalies of a theory. Ptolemaic astronomy, for example, was replaced in 1543 by Copernicus's revolutionary paradigm on the placement of the sun in the cosmos. In 1985, two theater paradigms were proposed. Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion* examined the science of acting, and suggested that

Stanislavski's teachings and the proponents of American method acting, had deflected research away from competing theories, in particular Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1773). Subsequent acting theories and commentary, in many ways derivative of Stanislavski, have not clarified an already mysterious process. As Roach noted:

These terms and concepts do not add up to anything approaching complete answers to the problems posed by the actor's art, then or now. That we still regard the creative process and the performance event as miracles of a sort is credit to their fugitive nature and to the fascination that their contradictions continue to exert upon us.<sup>12</sup>

Roach examined actor's passions scientifically, biologically, experientially, over the course of Western civilization, using Diderot's *Paradoxe* as a new paradigm. He concluded that since the eighteenth century, physiology and psychology have sought to demystify the actor's "act of revelation." In consequence, the act of revelation that elevates the true actor's feelings into a kind of fiction—a work of art if done well—is further from being understood today, in the age of Stanislavski and the proponents of his scientific approach to acting, than it was in Diderot's.<sup>13</sup>

Also in a 1985 article, Bruce McConachie's call for a new postpositivist theater history paradigm attacked current practitioners of a nineteenth century positivist historiography, who based their research on August Comte's precept that material facts are the building blocks of objective truth.<sup>14</sup> In proposing that all objective facts were value judgments, McConachie's phenomenological and structural paradigm suggested that the theater historian begin with a question or two—questions based on his or her own values before looking for "pertinent" information:

From a postpositivist perspective, question-asking (even educated guessing) begins historical investigation; it does not follow the gathering of facts. And since this initial step is necessarily value-laden, better for the historian to examine his values through the lens of an appropriate theory, a process which can in turn, help him or her to ask more pointed questions.<sup>15</sup>

In McConachie's view, postpositivism needed a social-cultural frame of reference, since all interpretations are subjective, primarily language-based, and therefore prejudicial distortions of the truth. Agreeing with Attilio Favorini's relocation of the theatrical event "to some mid-point of inter-subjectivity

between performer and audience," McConachie suggested "the theatrical-dramatic situation exists in the dialectical interchange between concrete visual and aural images created by actors and others and the minds of the audience."<sup>16</sup>

Some qualification of these assertions may be in order. In the first place, McConachie left out any somesthetic stimulus. Furthermore, in describing his "dialectical interchange" as the basis of the theatrical-dramatic situation, McConachie raised as many questions as he attempted to answer. In what way are visual and aural images "concrete"? Are these actor's images "created," experienced, or a combination thereof? Are there additional "image" factors to be considered? What is meant by the "minds" of the audience? Are they also concrete? Finally, what is an "interchange" between an actor's image and a spectator's mind, and how is it effected?

McConachie's short but exemplary discussion of Bert State's structural analysis of actor-audience relationships and Bruce Wilshire's phenomenological description of theater as "a worldly mode of communal interpretation" affirmed in significant ways that the audience was co-creator of theatrical events, in particular postmodernist theatrical performances of the kind created by Robert Wilson and Andre Serban.<sup>17,18</sup> The impossibility of such an analysis taking place within positivist guidelines, particularly such guidelines as posited by Oscar Brockett, precisely defined the most serious anomaly to any positivist paradigm for historical investigation. What is needed now is more precise description of those events; more analyses of limits, divisions, strata; perhaps a redirection of the origins of intention to "read" the barnacles that comprise any series attendant to those relations.

Notice should also be made that a Burkean terminology—McConachie's proposed solution—still depended on a concept of spectator's "reality":

Working back and forth between similar shows on the stage and what the historian may logically deduce to have been the probable expectations of the production's main audience, the theater historian may come to a rough approximation of the likely chart, dream, and prayer of the ritual for its historical spectators.<sup>19</sup>

On an encouraging note, McConachie's directive to theater historians that they must rethink and reconstitute the norms of their discipline accorded with Foucault's archeological metaphor, and with Marvin Carlson's recognition of the plurality of voices and strategies of interpretation at work among theater theorists and practitioners.<sup>20</sup> The poison of regarding objective criticism and historiography as attainable has been recognized. But we are still faced with

the antidotes of value judgments, prejudices, and subjective interpretations in Kenneth Burke's structures of social relations. Little in the nature of comprehending the art of the theater has been gained.

The postpositivists rejected nineteenth century positivism in general because of its dictum that facts contain significance in themselves, and their arrangement into larger patterns of relationships can unlock wider historical meanings.<sup>21</sup> However, these critiques, which postulated a new paradigm of revised relationships between documents and researchers, were not the only challenges the positivists faced.<sup>22</sup> The pure form of positivism insisted that a literary work be examined in relation to factual causes or genesis: "The author's life, his recorded intentions in writing, his immediate social and cultural environment, his sources."<sup>23</sup>

In questioning the subjective concept of "intention," the New Critics had their innings with the positivists; some attacks were quite justified, some attacks have not been refuted to this day. However, in applying this standard to drama, to the creation of dramatic scripts, and to the performance of dramatic works in the theater in particular in the second half of this article, the validity of the arguments of the New Critics and the positivists vanish. As discussed by certain contemporary playwrights, "intentionality" was neither subjective nor objective, conscious nor unconscious, but "less conscious," a biological necessity of what has been described by Paul MacLean as man's *triune brain*.<sup>24</sup> Recent research in neurology suggests that the ideology of literary and dramatic criticism and of the human sciences, anchored in nineteenth century paradigms, may be on extremely shaky ground.

The first crack in the positivist-cum-postpositivist edifice came in 1986, when British anthropologist Victor Turner, revered mentor to Richard Schechner's "Performance Theories," renounced hallowed axioms of his own, of his generation, and of several subsequent generations; axioms that expressed the belief "that all human behavior is the result of social conditioning."<sup>25</sup> Taking a page from both Foucault *and* MacLean, Turner discussed the geology of the human brain, noting that each strata is alive, and that "even our reptilian and paleomammalian brains are human, linked in infinitely complex ways to the conditionable upper [neomammalian] brain and kindling it with their powers."<sup>26</sup> This research did not precede postpositivism. Bypassing New Criticism, the postpositivists skipped over an important area of interdisciplinary dialogue; ignoring recent neurological and anthropological research, postpositivists further endangered an already tenuous foundation.

Much has been written about New Critical practise. The New Criticism was derived from the writings of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, and was developed in America by John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Allan Tate,

W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley in the 1940s and 1950s to challenge positivistic assumptions that a literary text expresses its place and time, or the author's personality and nothing more. In the view of the New Critics, "The poem [and I take this to include a dramatic poem or piece of theater] is not the critic's own and not the author's . . . . The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge."<sup>27</sup> Further, the New Critics declared: "The design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art."<sup>28</sup> As Robey noted in his discussion of this issue of authorial relevance, the only things that matter to the New Critic are the grasp of the full historical meaning of the language use in the text (including all its associations), and the names to which references may be made, but only to the extent that the meanings of these associations and references are a matter of public record about the culture in which the text was produced.<sup>29</sup> For those who work in the theater, the suggestion that the poem is embodied in language completely discounts the transformative qualities of performance. The figure is certainly arguable, but possibly not more than thirty percent of the meaning of a play is language-ridden. (I except the plays and dramatic theory of W. B. Yeats and Gordon Craig.) Even the assertion, in the name of scientific objectivity, that the specific properties of a text consist in the objective organization of the public, objective, meanings of words, is arguable. Statements that the studies of the authors' lives, of their immediate environment, of their ideas about writing and of the genesis of their works are to be excluded, denies the very basis of a comprehensive artistic analysis of a play's deep structures.

If the New Criticism is applied to theatrical production, the notion of avoiding the "Intentional Fallacy" in drama, whereby theater directors deliberately skirt any attempt to portray accurately what a given playwright had in mind at the moment of inspiration—Molière writing for himself, La Grange, Madeleine and Armande Béjart; Shakespeare writing for Heminges, Condell, Pope, Phillips, Kemp, Richard Burbage, et al.—begs the question of what exactly the contemporary director can have in mind when she or he subjectively evaluates and interprets the objective structure of a play's meaning? The New Critics attempted to abolish personal history but they did not abolish a new intentional subjectivity. Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* is a case in point.<sup>30</sup> As McConachie noted, in *Performance Theory*, Schechner's thesis was developed from the anthropological theories of Victor Turner.<sup>31</sup> Schechner claimed the paradigm of the rite of passage to be the heart of all ritual. But there is also a New Critics' mentality within Schechner's theory. In *Performance Theory*, Schechner discussed the

*Natyasastra*, a compilation of stage experiences in classical Indian dance-theater. In company with McConachie's siting of the dramatic representation at a mid-point between the stage and each spectator, or Bruce Wilshire's mimetic fusion that occurs between actors and audiences, Schechner found links in his interpretation of the *Natyasastra* "between 'mechanical acting' and feelings: the causal chain can go in both directions."<sup>32</sup> Having declared that the "performance—the psychophysical score of a scene, dance, piece of music, etc.—occupies a space *between* the performer who is doing the action and the spectator who is receiving it," Schechner suggested that the performer performing can be the "objective correlative" of T. S. Eliot's "enunciative literary text."<sup>33</sup> But Eliot's "objective correlative" is a descriptive term, "not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion," an indirect expression of feelings through the description of things.<sup>34</sup> Schechner's use of specific theoretical concerns, voiced by one of the founders of American New Criticism, was exactly the right track for him to follow in devising both a description and an analysis of performance. But the critical elements for evaluation, the persuasive analysis of the actor's creative process in achieving the representation of a specific character, and how that process is communicated to the spectator, were missing.

In their *Sewanee Review* article, Wimsatt and Beardsley quoted Socrates' questioning of a number of poets and other guests on the virtues of the assembled poets' works: "There is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they [the poets] did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration."<sup>35</sup> Not only should the author or playwright not be consulted because his or her commentary is irrelevant but also because the artist has no special virtue in comprehending and/or interpreting the true nature of the art work. In one respect, the New Critics had a portion of the argument right against any interpretation of a playwright's intentions. In "Genesis, A Fallacy Revisited," Wimsatt noted that true "intention" lay in those inner workings of the mind: "An art work is something which emerges from the private, individual, dynamic, and intentionalistic realm of its maker's mind and personality."<sup>36</sup> And Wimsatt made the critical distinction:

"The closest one could ever get to the artist's intending or meaning mind, outside his work, would be still short of his effective intention or operative mind, as it appears in the work itself."<sup>37</sup>

According to Robey, the only way to treat a work of art was to examine it as an object in the public domain, and not as the private creation of an

individual.<sup>38</sup> But one should note that, even in the public domain, when an art work was interpreted and evaluated, it was not an objective intellectual operation. The New Critics had their limitations, but their humanistic approach to literary matters was not one of them. The postpositivists, who combined a structural application of texts to a phenomenological process by which the spectators of a theatrical production could create meaning in a text, could not obviate the necessity of including analyses of the art work itself in their criticism.

In his article, "Objective Interpretation," E. D. Hirsch mounted a strong counter-attack on the new criticism by noting August Boeckh's 1886 distinction between "interpretation," the meaning of a text and "criticism," the relevance of a text.<sup>39</sup> The latter philological function established a relationship of the text to something else. Since the relevance changed constantly, textual meaning itself must not be identified with the author's or reader's psychic acts.<sup>40</sup> In his 1982 Paul Anthony Brick Lectures at the University of Missouri, Cleanth Brooks suggested even more remarkably that the intentional fallacy referred "not to [sic] mistake made by the author but to one made by the reader or the critic."<sup>41</sup> To his great credit, Cleanth Brooks brought structuralists and deconstructionists into clear focus, noting that "whereas structuralism attempts to reveal the deep structure that underlies the surface meanings of any literary construct, deconstruction, using a more radical analysis, deconstructs that very structure, revealing its lack of any relation to anything beyond itself."<sup>42</sup> One could scarcely wish for a better rationale for a discontinuity theory of history, on the order of the paradigms suggested by Foucault or McConachie.

In the 1980s, the position of postpositivists and phenomenologists who called for a relocation of the theatrical event at "some mid-point . . . of intersubjectivity between performer and audience" (Favorini), or who defined theater as a fundamental mode of relationships that intervened between live actors and audiences (States), or who described "mimetic fusion" between actor and spectator (Wilshire), accentuated Foucault's 1972 emphasis on the play of *différance*. This relocation was not original to Foucault. In 1934, Jan Mukarovsky declared "the autonomous existence and essential dynamism of artistic structure."<sup>43</sup> The work of art—in our case, the theatrical event—is identified neither with the individual state of consciousness of its creator nor with any such states in its perceiver nor with the work as artifact," but bears the character of a sign. Declaring the art work to be an aesthetic object located in the collective unconscious, with the artifact functioning as a perceivable signifier, Mukarovsky rejected his contemporaries' view that the art work was "a direct reflection of the psychological or even physiological states



of its creator or direct reflection of the distinct reality conveyed by the work . . . ."<sup>44</sup> By denying the validity of any subjective mental state and any hedonistic theory of aesthetics, Mukarovsky and adherents to the Prague School neutralized the creative process in favor of the creation of a constant dialectical relationship with an outward signifier and a collective unconscious. Directly related to this issue, neuroscience of the 1930s was emphatically not the neuroscience of the 1980s and 1990s. But the Prague Linguistic Circle began with a prior scientific agenda that had more to do with Jungian archetypes than dramatic art in this case; art in general for humanity's information. Furthermore, as one commentator has noted, this semiotic point of view valorized the terms "art" and "aesthetic," giving them a hallowed, metaphysical status that rendered them useless except as icons.<sup>45</sup>

Relationships of groups of similar elements—sets of apples to sets of oranges—rather than direct comparisons, described the methodological approach of the cultural archeologist, the postpositivist, and the phenomenologist in the theater. Even Richard Schechner, summarily announcing the imminent demise of dramaturgy and of conventional theater as the detritus of a eurocentric culture—at the very least, an English ethnocentric bias we ought to be reaching beyond—suggested that ritual performance occupied a space "between the performer who is doing the action and the spectator who is receiving it."<sup>46</sup> The basis of the New Critics' analytical dichotomy—does the text mean what the author wants it to mean or does the text mean what the speech community at large takes it to mean?—had been consigned to the literary dustheap as naively irrelevant. Radical subjectivity, the basis of Modernism, derived principally from the works of Anton Chekhov, had no counterpart in the critical world.

As noted earlier, Hirsch was acutely aware of the subjectivity and relativism of contemporary New Critic commentators who, he claimed, "destroy[ed] any basis both for any agreement among readers and for any objective study whatever."<sup>47</sup> However, Hirsch's critique of Wimsatt and Beardsley's "Intentional Fallacy" essay was itself the best reason to abandon positivism. Hirsch made a point of singling out Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's doctrine that the textual meaning of a document, leading a life of its own, changes over the course of time.<sup>48</sup> The question Hirsch posed, "Is it proper to make meaning dependent upon the reader's own cultural givens?" has been soundly answered in the affirmative. Further, Hirsch's apocalyptic protest against the concepts of the New Critics: "As soon as the reader's outlook is permitted to determine what the text means, we have not simply a changing meaning but quite possibly as many meanings as readers," was exactly the point of Wellek and Warren's "perspectivism." As Wellek remarked,

perspectivism, holding that values "grow out of the historical process of valuation," required that the historian "refer a work of art to the values of its own time and of all the periods subsequent to its own."<sup>49</sup> The resulting tensions of ambiguity, as Wellek and Warren described them, and the postpositivists' belief in the multiplicity of paradigmatic readings of relations to a text, are part and parcel of a realization that objectivity is largely an illusion.

This rejection was perfectly in keeping with Hirsch's own doctrine of objectivity. In a real sense, we have simply broadened the "horizons" (Hirsch's term) of norms and limits that bound the archeology of meanings represented by the text, or script. In his essay, Hirsch's conclusion—that interpretation "is the construction of *another's* meaning"—does not vitiate the intentional fallacy arguments since *another's* meaning might well be, in the context developed here, the playwright's, the actor's, the spectator's biological (conscious and unconscious) intentions. The old paradigms of "consciousness" and "the unconscious," so popularized by psychoanalytic literary theory, simply do not stand up to recent neurobiological research.

There is not space here to elaborate on the neurophysical dynamics of "perspectivism," beyond indicating, as I have in the foregoing, the biological constructs of Geschwind and Edelman and their implications for further research in aesthetic theory. But it is germane to examine certain artist's intuitive sense of this neural perspectivism; in particular, a discussion of commentary by those playwrights who are on record as acknowledging a "less conscious" process in the art of creating *sub-intentionally* (in the normal sense of the word) their works for the theater.

## II. *Intentionality and the Playwright's Art*

Playwrights in recent years have become very vocal about the notion of artistic creation. David Rabe, Neil Simon, Robert Wilson and David Mamet, among others, have all commented in one way or another on the "less conscious" aspects of their artistic processes. Their direct witness to the process of writing playscripts that produce intentional thought and emotion in many ways confirmed the recent research on the relationships of artistic creation and spectator comprehension to neural pathways and secondary association areas of the human brain, and in particular, to the necessity of the interconnectedness of levels of the human brain. Some perspectives on unintentional and intentional fallacies in the mimetic arts may be gained from what follows: a brief, summary overview of one playwright's text, and his perception of his prospective spectator's comprehension of that text; a

discussion by two playwrights of the notion of the unconscious in their writing; a fourth playwright's description of his conscious efforts to unlock less conscious processes; one critic's conversation with a female playwright on the creation of "voices" for the stage; and commentary on a sixth contemporary American playwright's unconscious presumed needs. Intention, it seems, is both conscious and less conscious. Increasingly, the entire spectrum of radical subjectivity—the new perspectivism—appears to be a very complex, undismissable mosaic of levels of process.

The influence of this perspectivism, to be found in the text and commentary of several playwrights under discussion below, perhaps justified the criteria of the intentional fallacy in the following playwright! In *Speed-the-Plow*, David Mamet's 1988 Broadway block-buster, two Hollywood hustlers—Bobby Gould, new head of production and Doug Brown, an independent producer—manacle morality (and the English language) in the name of the god of movies—*money* to be made on a prospective script:

*Gould:* The question, your crass question: how much money could we stand to make . . . ?

*Fox:* Yes.

*Gould:* I think the operative concept here is "lots and lots . . . "

*Fox:* Oh maan . . .

*Gould:* But money . . .

*Fox:* Yeah . . .

*Gould:* Money, Charl . . .

*Fox:* Yeah . . .

*Gould:* Money is not the important thing.

*Fox:* No.

*Gould:* Money is not Gold.

*Fox:* No.

*Gould:* What can you do with Money?

*Fox:* Nothing.

*Gould:* Nary a goddam thing.

*Fox:* . . . I'm gonna be rich.

*Gould:* "Buy" things with it.

*Fox:* Where would I keep them?

*Gould:* What would you do with them?

*Fox:* Yeah.

*Gould:* Take them out and dust them, time to time.

*Fox:* Oh, yeah.

*Gould:* I piss on money.

*Fox:* I know that you do. I'll help you.

*Gould:* Fuck money!

*Fox:* Fuck it. Fuck "things" too . . .

*Gould:* Uh huh. But don't fuck "people."

*Fox:* No.

*Gould:* 'Cause people, Charlie . . .

*Fox:* People . . . yes.

*Gould:* Are what it's All About.

*Fox:* I know.

*Gould:* And it's a People Business.

*Fox:* That it is.

*Gould:* It's full of fucken' people . . .

*Fox:* And we're gonna kick some ass, Bob.

*Gould:* That we are.

*Fox:* We're gonna kick the ass of a lot of them fucken' people.

*Gould:* That's right.<sup>50</sup>

In a 1988 interview, Mamet substantially explained the cynical, quick-sand morality of Gould and Fox:

We live in very selfish times. Any impulse of creation or whimsy or iconoclasm which achieves general notice is immediately co-opted by risk capital, and its popularity—which arose from its generosity and freedom of thought—is made to serve the turn of financial extortion.<sup>51</sup>

But elsewhere, Mamet has also said:

We, as a culture, as a civilization, are at the point where the appropriate, the life-giving, task of the organism is to decay. Nothing will stop it, nothing *can* stop it, for it is the force of life, and the evidence is all around us.<sup>52</sup>

The one statement seems to contradict the other. If Mamet had the first statement in mind when he wrote *Speed-the-plow*, a director might well interpret the play as a statement of the corruptness and phoniness of the American entrepreneurial spirit in Hollywood, the "get-rich-quick-at-all-costs" syndrome that seemed to pervade the 1980s. But if the director focused on Mamet's second statement, where the life-forces of our culture seemed to be moving towards an inevitable build-up of maximum entropy, in which nothing

would halt the pre-determined demise of our civilization, then *Speed-the-Plow* mocked the very notion of creativity. Perhaps Mamet himself was not clear. In any case, Mamet's commentaries could have led to the production of two different plays. If Mamet's contradictory postscripts are to be believed, the "intentions" of the playwright at the moment of composition are, at best, tenuous twine to follow through the labyrinth of consciousness. In Mamet's case, over a period of time the intentional fallacy dicta would seem to be justified! But even focusing on the play as an ambiguous *objet trouvé* is not sufficient. As one noted director has commented, "some playwrights' unintentional fallacies are enough to make one gag."<sup>53</sup>

In their *New York Times*' discussion of the role of the unconscious in creating a playscript, Neil Simon and David Rabe stated unequivocally that the role of *conscious intention* in the creative process is extremely limited:

*Rabe:* I think my conscious mind is not as intelligent as my unconscious. My conscious mind is very much interested in controlling everything and making it orderly—making it orderly in a familiar way. Then the unconscious can come up with something original.

*Simon:* I know. I know when my unconscious is doing the writing, because when my conscious is doing it, it seems familiar to me when I see it later on . . . *Brighton Beach Memoirs* took nine years from the inception of the idea. I let it sit for six years. It just kept going in my mind. I would think about it, and six years later I wrote 35 pages. I said, "This is good, but I don't know how to write the play." . . . And it took another three years. And then I sat down and went right through the play. But the unconscious is doing the work. It's typing away.

*Rabe:* *Streamers* took a total of seven years from the beginning. Suddenly I sat down and in about three or four days rewrote the whole play. And it was a full-length play now. I don't know how I knew—there's no way to measure that.

*Simon:* I feel very happy when I've got an idea for something that I think is worth doing. And then I can leave it alone and not work at all—it can must do its own work there while I go to the beach or play some tennis.<sup>54</sup>

If Neil Simon and David Rabe are to be believed, the real creative force in playwriting is intentional but not voluntary. Intention is biological as well as interpretational. In the act of creation, an intention, or a series of intentions,

must be present. It bears repeating: creative processes are not automatic, beginning from square one for each function, but resemble in remarkable ways the dynamic of the Foucault analogy of relational and associational geological strata. Furthermore, the brain of man is not a computer resembling any of the current generations. On a more technical level, these elaborate non-limbic secondary association areas, which lead to associational maps of neural populations, are—through the differential amplification of reentry stimuli over a period of time, the basis of human thought as we know it. Parallel processing, the next generations of computers perhaps, is as close as science has yet come to the essential dynamic of imitating human brain function.

Playwrights whose work deliberately explored the mechanisms and possibilities of the bicameral mind posed considerable difficulties for both directors and actors. As playwright and director, Robert Wilson, for example, methodically created a visual core on which an audible text was superimposed. Wilson's method was conscious while his creation was less conscious. The playwright has described his creative process as the equivalent of combining the *visual* portion of a silent screen film with the *audio* portion of a radio play.<sup>55</sup> Instead of courting "the unconscious," as Simon and Rabe suggest, Wilson deliberately stalked the unconscious in a profusion of visual images, to which he later appended a text about a central idea. In describing the composition of *the CIVIL warS*, Wilson consciously mapped his deliberate chronology:

*Wilson:* First I made a structure out of what was earlier arbitrary—some 5 cuts . . . Then without knowing the text or visual effects, I worked from this diagram. Then I drew diagrams and covered the walls of my empty apartment in NYC with paper and began to make drawings and sketches as set builders would look and collected a series of drawings that filled out the structure. I found out through this the single theme that would thread through [the cuts], until the optical chapters were integrated like a tapestry. . . . And then separate (sic) from that, I wrote a text without thinking of a definite context.<sup>56</sup>

Wilson was deliberately conscious in his effort to create subliminal audible and optical text. In the foreword to the catalog for *The Forest*, he elaborated on the problem Newtonian "container-space" poses for contemporary dramatists:

If we don't illustrate in the visual book the visual imagery of the text, then the visual book of the audio screen is boundless. And if we don't illustrate the visual book with the audio book, then the visual screen is boundless. The problem with most theatre is that it gets boxed in . . . we're always shifting in and out of these interior/exterior audio-visual screens.<sup>57</sup>

Wilson's efforts to free the audio-visual screens were made to give the spectators a creative voice in the interpretation of the stage performance. In displacing the playwright's traditional role of providing a definitive script, Wilson forced the viewer to choose a text. By freeing the spectator's reentry creative choices, by making the conscious mappings (and unconscious neural mappings) a personal (and biological) choice of the spectator watching and listening to the stage performance, the playwright provided the audience member with the *opportunity* to have as authentic an experience of the production as the artist onstage.

In *American Voices*, a recent critical assessment of five American playwrights, Esther Harriott suggested that Sam Shepard is himself "a narcissistic individual . . . [who yearns] to return to a symbiotic union with a dominant parent."<sup>58</sup> Such a statement, made in response to her analysis of Shepard's dramatic works, raises critical alarms. Modern psychoanalytic criticism has shifted its emphases away from the psychology of the playwright to relations between playwright, spectator, text, and language.<sup>59</sup> Inevitably the playwright, when asked, says that he or she "had a spectator in mind," or "saw the play in terms of a spectator looking at the stage." Positivism has died a slow death in American theater, whether in the form of Harriott's style of critical analysis; in the guise of the "benevolent despot" school of directors; in the dictums of acting commentaries that solely insist on achieving "emotional truth;" and/or in classroom discussions of "schools" of criticism.<sup>60</sup> Radical subjectivity *begins* by asking: "what is the meaning of 'benevolent?' of 'achievement?' of 'truth?' of 'Be-ing?'" beyond 'the reality of the doing' in the life of the theater? The cognition of the complex mosaic of neural processes is the beginning of artistic judgment.

A less conscious approach to the problem of creativity appeared in Esther Harriott's interview with Marsha Norman:

*Harriott:* How do you give [your characters] that voice? How do you get inside their consciousness . . . ?

*Norman:* It's a voicing process . . . . I'm sure it's like composers when they begin to hear melodies . . . .

*Harriott*: You're saying that you hear it literally?

*Norman*: Yes, literally I'll begin to hear lines of dialogue. And the question gets to be "Who's speaking?" At that point, it's like that old TV show, "This Is Your Life"—isn't that the one where they had someone speaking behind the scrim? So at that moment I'm the person sitting there in the chair, thinking, "I hear this voice, I know that's somebody that I know. Who is it? And then once you get it "voiced," once you know how the characters talk, the writing can begin.<sup>61</sup>

Marsha Norman described what might be acknowledged as Gerald Edelman's "intentional re-entry," where maps of cross-modal association pathways are brought to the primary sensory areas of the brain—neuronal stimuli in search of an object—an act clearly on the mind of Pirandello in his 1925 Preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author*:

Creatures of my spirit, these six were already living a life which was their own and not mine any more, a life which was not in my power any more to deny them . . . . They are detached from me; live on their own; have acquired voice and movement; have by themselves—in this struggle for existence that they have had to wage with me—become dramatic characters, characters that can move and talk on their own initiative.<sup>62</sup>

Cleanth Brooks saw the intentional fallacy as demonstration of the fact—noted by Socrates two millennia ago—that writers sometimes write better than they know, "that oftentimes more than *conscious* design is involved, and that the writer does not always tell . . . the whole truth . . . about what his specific intentions were."<sup>63</sup> But he did not seem to recognize the possibility that playwrights like Robert Wilson, Luigi Pirandello, and Samuel Beckett may deliberately court a more—or less than—conscious design.

Samuel Beckett, a playwright who acknowledged privately that his plays were a "less conscious" creation, was particularly sensitive to the precision of concrete details that anchor his creations.<sup>64</sup> In *the CIVIL warS*, Robert Wilson insisted that a particular piece of stage property be spiked within an eighth of an inch; actors in a Wilson play moved "by-the-numbers" in measured robotic precision.<sup>65</sup> A recent Beckett production at Cambridge's American Repertory Theatre showed how insistent a playwright could be about the appearance of his work. JoAnne Akilaitus' December 1984 production of *Endgame* elicited Beckett's fierce resistance to the play's gutted Metropolitan Transit Authority



underground setting. Commenting in Paris in September, 1985, Beckett remarked: "Clov looks out a window; he sees nothing. How can this setting represent that!"<sup>66</sup> Describing the production as "an Endcircus," Beckett refused to acknowledge the production as his work. The relationship of setting to text, in which meaning, related to a particular space, creeps through the interstices of the language, reflected Beckett's absolute sense of the playwright's intentional relationships of space to language.

This tragic creative act, singular, human, reflective, is one measure of the achievement of man, and marks him as separate and distinct among the species. Aristotle's definition of tragedy—"an imitation of an action . . . exciting pity and fear, and bringing about the catharsis of such emotions"—fell short of a description of Twentieth Century theater.<sup>67</sup> Communication in the theatre comes not from objective mimesis, "imitation of an action," but from this radical subjectivity, the discontinuous, *implicative* neural mapping in the triune brain of the spectator. The focus is on the action, as it triggers archeological deposits of social and cultural strata. But recognition, and parallel identification, is also felt along the rows, laterally. As one astute scholar of the theater wrote: "the thrill is feeling yourself what the audience is feeling, sharing the expectations and the satisfactions that the action provides."<sup>68</sup> This double, even triple, perspective locks the attentive spectator into the theatrical realm, where an image of the present unleashes neural images of the past, whose present stage action precurses and predicts (foreordains?) the future, climactic stage moments, and images of future past neural moments. Samuel Beckett deliberately courted this perspective as the "vaguened image."<sup>69</sup> At this present moment, the paradigmatic power of theater and religion can merge, with the actor onstage serving as a medium, among other discontinuous mediums, of the playwright's own creative neural mappings of discontinuous associations.

The act of "crossing the threshold of the stage," as Stanislavsky described it, of making a "bungee cord" leap off a conscious mental bridge into the unknown world of a hundred—perhaps a thousand—billion synapses in the geology of the triune brain of man with no certainty of a safe return, is the actor's art. The bungee cord analogy represents one line among many possible lines of discontinuous mappings, and hierarchies of mappings that an actor might take in assaying a role. There is a complexity of less conscious intentions in role playing that the positivists, the New Critics, and even the postpositivists might never have imagined. Theater was the first mimetic art to celebrate these discontinuous possibilities. The interpretation of the bungee cord analogy, the absolute necessity of the interplay of unintentional relations within and outside the actor's, the designer's, the stage technician's art, by the

playwright and the spectator respectively, might be a beginning point that really serves the creative artist.<sup>70</sup>

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## Notes

1. Ronald W. Vince, "Issues in Theater Historiography," paper presented at the XIth World Congress of the International Federation for Theater Research, Stockholms universitet, Stockholm, 31 May, 1989.
2. James Arnott, "An Introduction to Theatrical Scholarship," *New Theatre Quarterly*, 39 (1981) 42.
3. Vince, "Historiography" 20.
4. Bruce McConachie, "Towards a Postpositivist Theatre History," *Theatre Journal*, 37 (1985) 470.
5. Oscar G. Brockett, *History of Theatre*, 4th edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982); see 722-23 in particular.
6. Vince, "Historiography" 1.
7. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1976) 6.
8. Michel Foucault, *Archeology* 29
9. Foucault, *Archeology* 7, 9.
10. McConachie, "Postpositivist" 470.
11. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970).
12. Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985) 16.
13. Roach, *Passion* 226.
14. McConachie, "Postpositivist" 466.
15. 471.
16. 465, 473.
17. 470, 471.
18. See Gordon Armstrong, "Images in the Interstice: The Phenomenal Theatre of Robert Wilson," *Modern Drama*, Vol XXXI, No 4 (1988) 557-71; Andre Serban's American Repertory Theater production in Cambridge, Mass., of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, with Magritte-like stage settings and classical-contemporary investigations of gender and sex, December 13-January 14, 1990.
19. McConachie, "Postpositivist" 485.
20. Marvin Carlson, "Towards a New Historiography," ASTR Meeting, New York, November, 1985, and cited in Vince, "Issues" 3.
21. See Bert O. States, "The Actor's Presence: Three Phenomenal Modes," *Theater Journal* 35 (1983) 359-75; Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theater as Metaphor* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982).
22. McConachie, "Postpositivist" 485.

23. Ann Jefferson and David Robey, "Introduction," *Modern Literary Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1984) 3. There is some disagreement on this point. In "Postpositivist Theater History," McConachie noted that in the early part of the twentieth century some schools of sociology attempted to include notions of human intention as part of their explanation for historical change, "notions rigorously banned by most positivists because they dealt with unobservable entities." 467.

24. Describing a prototypical triune brain, Paul MacLean (1970) suggested three evolutionary divisions of the brain: protoreptilian brain, consisting of the upper spinal cord and parts of the midbrain, diencephalon, and basal ganglia; paleomammalian brain, consisting of the limbic system; and the neomammalian brain, consisting of the cerebral cortex, most prominent in man. See Robert L. Isaacson, *The Limbic System* (New York: Plenum Press, 1974) 220-221 in particular.

25. Victor Turner, "Body, Brain, and Culture; The Anthropology of Performance," *Performing Arts Journal* 1986, 156.

26. Turner, "Body" 177.

27. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *Sewanee Review* 54, 1946, 470.

28. Wimsatt, "Fallacy" 468.

29. Robey, *Theory* 74.

30. Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Routledge, 1988).

31. McConachie, "Positivist" 476. McConachie lists two texts as reference: Victor Turner, *Drama, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Actions in Human Society*, Myth and Ritual Series (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974), and *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Press, 1982). There are significant other Turner publications, acknowledged by Schechner in *Performance Theory*: "Body, Brain, and Culture," *Zygon* 18 (3): 221-45; *On the Edge of the Bush* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1985); and *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Press, 1986).

32. Schechner, *Performance* 270.

33. 270.

34. See David Robey, *Theory* 72.

35. Wimsatt, "Fallacy" 474.

36. W. K. Wimsatt, "Genesis: A Fallacy Revisited," *The Disciplines of Criticism*, ed. Peter Demetz (Yale, 1968) 194.

37. Wimsatt, "Revisited" 227.

38. Robey, "Theory" 73.

39. E. David Hirsch, Jr., "Objective Interpretation" 463.

40. Hirsch, "Interpretation" 466.

41. Cleanth Brooks, "The Primacy of the Reader," *Missouri Review*, Vol 6, No. 2 (Winter 1983): 189.

42. Cleanth Brooks, "The Primacy of the Linguistic medium," *The Missouri Review*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Summer, 1983): 194.

43. Jan Mukarovsky, "Art as Semiotic Fact," trans. I. R. Titunik in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976) 8.

44. Mukarovsky, "Art" 8ff.

45. Reviewer's commentary to a draft of this paper.

46. Schechner, *Performance* 6, 146, 270.

47. Hirsch, "Interpretations" 465.

48. Hirsch, "Interpretations," 464; commentary on Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1956) 31.
49. Wellek and Warren, *Literature* 43.
50. David Mamet, *Speed-the-Plow*.
51. Mamet, *The New York Times*, January 20, 1988, C13, 15.
52. Mamet, *The New York Times*, May 4, 1988, C16.
53. William I. Oliver, letter to the author, October, 1988.
54. Neil Simon and David Rabe, "The Craft of the Playwright," ed. Samuel G. Freedman and Michael Williams, *The New York Times Magazine*, May 26, 1985, 38, 52.
55. Robert Wilson, unpublished application for funding of the *CIVIL warS* for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival, Cambridge, MA, American Conservatory Theatre Archives.
56. Wilson, *warS funding*.
57. Robert Wilson David Byrne, "Workshop V Workshop," *The Forest Program Theater der Freien Volkeshbühne*, (Berlin, 1988).
58. Esther Harriott, "Sam Shepard: Inventing Identities," *American Voices: Five Contemporary Playwrights in Essays and Interviews* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., Inc., 1988) 16. See also review by Gordon Armstrong, *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1989): 309-311.
59. Elizabeth Wright, "Modern Psychoanalytic Criticism," *Literary Theory* 113.
60. Commentary in this article has been limited to some discussion of the literary theories of the positivists, postpositivists and the New Critics. Phenomenologists, Russian formalists, structuralists and post-structuralists, psychoanalytic and Marxist critics, deserve more attention.
61. Harriott, *Voices* 152.
62. Luigi Pirandello, Preface to *Six Characters in Search of an Author, Naked Masks: Five Plays by Luigi Pirandello*, trans. Eric Bentley (Dutton, 1952), repr. Weiss, *Drama in the Modern World* (Heath, 1960) 244.
63. Brooks, *Primacy* 167.
64. See discussion in Gordon Armstrong, *Samuel Beckett, Jack Yeats, W. B. Yeats: Images and Words* (Associated U. Presses, 1989).
65. Christopher Baker, "Behind the Scenes with Abbie Katz," *American Repertory Theatre News*, Vol IX, No. 2 (February 1989) 13.
66. Samuel Beckett, conversation with the author, Paris, September 16, 1985.
67. For modern interpretation of Aristotle's *The Poetics*, see Leon Golden, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968) 112-36 in particular; Francis Ferguson, *Aristotle's Poetics* (New York: 1961).
68. Travis Bogard, Letter to the author, March 19, 1989.
69. See Armstrong, *Beckett* 1990, 11, 44, 45, 50, 53, 64, 65, 70, 74, 77.
70. Special thanks to Mrs. Leslie Patterson, Assistant to the Curator, Harris Collection, The John Hay Library, Brown University, for assistance in providing material on Cleanth Brooks.