The Spectre of Grief…
Visualising Ontological Terror in Performance

Presented by Louise Morris
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Statement of Authorship

Except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis, this dissertation contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other persons work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

LOUISE HEIDI MORRIS

29/06/2007
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
John David Edmonds Branson
1964-2001

Disclaimer
The 5 year process of creation of this project, both academic and performative, was entirely collaborative. While every effort has been made to acknowledge individual ideas and contributions personally, given the fluidity of the collaborative process this is not always possible. Where I have used ‘I’, it has been done to drive the argument forward for the purpose of this dissertation. In almost every case it can be replaced with ‘WE’ as the core collaborators on this project were present from its conception to its realisation. Clare Reynolds and Katie-Jean Harding collaborated on the production of ‘The Alp’ (the performance outcome of my honours research) in 2002 and remained with the project up until the final production of ‘Aviary’. Jason Lehane, Kirsten Prins, Tania Smith, Anna Hamilton and Clint Dowdell began work on the project in 2004 and as with the aforementioned, gave tirelessly and generously their passion, ideas, knowledge, skills and time to this project over a 3-5 year period. In March 2006 we joined forces with Anna Voronoff (creator/performer), Evan Granger (set designer), Govin Ruben (lighting designer), Lauren Theos (costume designer), Terry Ryan (sound designer), and in Mid 2006 we were joined by, Matty Scott (production manager), Halcyon McLeod (performer/creator), Miranda Borman (performer/creator), Ivan Thorley/Robby McReeeche (performer/creator) Zachary Johnston (violinist), Kate McMillian (stage manager) Geordie Barker (lighting operator), Lisa Reynolds (costume assistant) along with the supporting artists, the outdoor ensemble; Elise Andrew, Alice Claringbold, Jo Clyde, Josephine Daly, Krista Green, Zana Grgurevic, Cassandra Longley, Carlo Marasea, Eden Thomsen, Mathieu Tozer, and Sara Vancea, who all contributed their time, talent and intelligence to the realisation of this project.

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Red Cabbage...without whom...I may have imploded. They are true collaborators, wing givers, in a way most cannot begin to comprehend.

All my love and thanks to Matty Scott of Cheeky Monkey Enterprises whose production management, technical expertise, filming, and endless hours of editing ensured the full realisation of the final production of Aviary, the capturing and treatment of footage out of darkness and the resulting presentation of the documentation through the DVD.

Thank you too, my ‘unofficial’ mentor, Yoni Prior for your heart felt support of this MA and its related projects.

Please refer to CREDITS on the accompanying DVD for everybody else who made this project possible.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that ontological terror is a burgeoning condition ingrained within our collective human psyche which can only be artistically represented through carefully chosen veils, two of which can be made explicit through an analysis of the aesthetic conventions of the liminal uncanny and the traumatic sublime. Artistic depiction of terror is realisable only through the reflections that are cast from it, the sum of which, make up these veils. The experience of terror is intimately aligned with the threat inherent within an experience of trauma or grief and the visual performance outcome of the Masters research Aviary, produced at the Living Museum of the West in 2006 is best understood as a representation of the mournful and desolate reflections that shimmered off a central moment of unspeakable terror.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The original drive behind this research was to speculate on current aesthetic debates about performance and visual images during times of terror. Explicitly, what are the strategies, affects and critical modes employed by artists to depict this disturbing and adverse ontological terrain? I believed research into this area was significant as it examined the place of art in a world that has become increasingly polarised by the spectre of terror in our daily lives.

The original aims of the research can be outlined as follows:

- To investigate the concept of the ‘liminal uncanny’ as a contemporary performance aesthetic.
- To provide an audience with multiple visual and sensory experiences of terror.
- To reveal how the medium of live performance, when combined with the aesthetics of painting and visual installation, disseminates information distinctively and thus speaks of terror in a highly affecting way.
- To develop a cohesive and effective collaborative methodology for working in theatre with material of this nature and refine my collaborative process of performance realisation.¹

These concerns grew out of my honours research into the culture of terror and the seeds of it, which have blossomed with escalating perversity since September the 11th 2001 (henceforth referred to as S11). The series of

¹ NB: While this was an essential aim in the development of my professional practice, the specifics of this process are not discussed in any detail in this thesis. To do justice to an academic analysis of collaborative methodologies in performance making demands a separate inquiry and thus lies outside the scope of this theoretical and practical investigation.
performances developed for my honours project entitled, *Sublime Horror: An Investigation into the Theatrics of Terror* (Deakin University: 2003) were primarily phenomenological investigations into the archetypes of terror, nightmare and loss.\(^2\)

The starting point for this Master’s research in 2005 was to investigate this ‘borderland’ of terror through the ‘liminal uncanny’ resulting in the creation of a full-length piece of visual performance. The master’s research is a continuation of the honours research and I make no apology for this. This paper attempts to articulate *why* there is a relentless return to ‘an inarticulable moment’ in my work; the key difference (while there is a repetition of similar themes and concerns) is that there has been a significant philosophical, methodological and practical maturation through the research. In addition, given the organic and changeable quality of devised performance, specific research aims and objectives have shifted in relationship to the creation of the work. These objectives are discussed in relationship to the art making in Chapters 2 through to 4 as each developmental performance stage led to a refinement of the core research aims.

**The core aims of the Masters research are as follows:**

- To investigate the philosophical concept of ‘ontological terror’ through the medium of visual performance.
- To endeavour to ‘represent the seemingly unrepresentable’, a specific moment of traumatic loss by identifying and utilising the visual iconography, mechanisms and coding of the ‘liminal uncanny’ and the ‘traumatic sublime’.\(^3\)

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\(^2\) Please refer to Appendix 2 for a summary of the Honours research.

\(^3\) See definitions of key terms and concepts.
The research methodology of this thesis draws upon a qualitative, phenomenological research model with the artist/researcher acting as a *Bricoleur*. I create as I research and visa versa. By this, I mean that a diverse amount of information has been accumulated, constructed, discarded, revisited and evaluated and I have utilised ‘whatever comes to hand’ (aesthetic and philosophical tools) to fashion meaning out of subjective experience. The research drive focuses upon a specific ontological problem, with the resulting performance work, functioning as a staging of questions. The pathway by which these questions are addressed is dependent on the context and as such, many interpretative paradigms have been accessed. Given the problematic nature of the field of ‘performance as research’, the necessary slippage and shifts in the research direction as the creation of the performance work evolves, relies on a research methodology that is interactive and complex and rejects any universal claims to authoritative knowledge.

Within this vast web, specific methodologies and philosophical pathways are explored to provide an aesthetic solution to a problematic situation. The psycho-analytical models of both Freud and Lacan have been used to analyse my performance practice. In addition, the theoretical, methodological and artistic practice of Antonin Artaud, Richard Foreman, Romeo Castellucci, Bill Henson and Rainer Maria Rilke have been investigated in order to articulate a position for my artistic practice within a theoretical model. As ‘...something cannot be well understood until it has been well described’ the research and resulting interpretive thesis serves to situate an ephemeral performance work *Aviary*, devised over a number of years, within a bricolage of questions, ideas and readings of art works. Specific attention was given to exploring a particular contemporary aesthetic of ‘liminality’ by identifying similarities in

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5 Ibid, p.17.

6 Ibid, p 18.
strategies, affects and critical modes within literary and theatrical projects that
deal with the perceptual mechanisms of the liminal uncanny and the
traumatic sublime.

The thesis charts the philosophical underpinnings of a new visual
performance, *Aviary*, with a particular focus on the key shifts in critical
thinking that grew out of the practical research and the situation of the work
within an ever-growing body of knowledge regarding the liminal, the
uncanny and the traumatic sublime. I then move towards a detailed,
philosophical elaboration and interpretation of the performance event. It is
hoped that by doing so, a particular thread of conceptual and aesthetic output
on the netting of that which constitutes terror in performance is illuminated.

**The two key objectives of this thesis are to:**

- Trace a pathway through a philosophical and aesthetic web which is
  primarily concerned with bearing witness to ‘unrepresentable’ or
  invisible ontological ground.

- Situate, interpret and interrogate within this model my artistic practice;
  the creation and realisation of *Aviary*. 
DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

It is vital to recognise that the key terms and concepts used and developed within this thesis are part of a historical and cultural framework and the use of them without acknowledging such a context would rapidly degenerate into superficial labelling. It is also important to acknowledge that a satisfactory, detailed analysis of the historical lineage and nuances of this interconnected framework has informed yet remains outside the scope of this dissertation. The following section will attempt to summarise the framework of usage in relation to my specific intentions with the full knowledge that the very idea of definition is problematised by these terms.

Terror

Terror n 1. extreme fear- stricken, - struck, affected with terror. 2. person or thing that causes terror; (holy).

This dictionary definition is painfully limited in its attempt to catalogue this phenomenon. At the same time, it is strangely accurate. This definition of terror on face value is merely pressing the accelerator upon fear. Interestingly,

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7 Numerous studies directly and elliptically trace the historical, aesthetic and theoretical interconnection of terror, the uncanny and the sublime. This thesis owes much of its philosophical conception to the following studies:

with one bracketed word, ‘holy’, whether intentional or not, it points us towards an ontological condition. Fear, a healthy, human survival instinct should not be confused with terror. Terror is a place where one cannot move. We are, in such a moment, metaphorically petrified. Stricken and struck, one finds it difficult to even take a breath. The innate act of breathing in and out, our essential mechanism of survival is momentarily suspended. In contrast to this, fear expands our human capacity. In a state of fear based on ‘flight or fight’ human beings can achieve things previously thought impossible. A mother will lift a car off a dying infant to save its life. Fear is a state of action and survival, whereas in a state of terror a human being can do absolutely nothing. There is a strange and hypnotic transfiguration that can accompany it and I will address this connection later in a discussion of the sublime.

Terror, as I see it, is a vacant, screaming hole of a threat becoming reality where we no longer have any rational conception of time or place. We no longer have control over the outcome...it is happening whether we like it or not. Fight or flight is not an option. This threat is intrinsically bound to our humanity. We are stripped naked of our rationality and are transported into a void that challenges our normal conception of what it means to be human. This is what has been and always will be the political power of the term’s usage. It is something we deeply know. To hold a human community in terror is to hold them in a state of passivity, stricken and struck, and somewhat malleable. It is essential to distinguish from the outset that I believe terror in performance functions very differently to political terrorism. Nevertheless the two concepts share a symbolic relation to ‘invisibility’ or what is unseen and near

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9 Ironically, ‘terrorism’ could be read as a final ‘act’ borne of being trapped in enforced cultural, economical and political inaction which is another line of inquiry entirely.
10 Zizek, S., defines ‘humanity’ as our ability to exist decently and understand our position with one another within a civilization. Zizek, Slavoj., Philosophical Commentary on Children of Men (Alfonso Cuaron: Director), Universal Studios, 2005.
11 I enter into a discussion of how the ‘doll’ could be thought of as the first human experience of this void in Chapter 2.
impossible to define. As Anthony Kubiak accurately surmises, ‘...terror operates in the theatre of the seemingly unspeakable and the apparently unrepresentable’.12

**Ontological Terror**

'We are not free. The sky can still fall on our heads. And theatre has been created to teach us that first of all'.

Antonin Artaud13

The specific terror highlighted as the focus of this dissertation is an ontological one, intrinsically linked to philosophical inquiries into the nature of Being and more specifically not-Being, of non-existence, oblivion. According to Martin Heidegger, an ontological question was unanswerable which was precisely why he regarded such questions as highly valuable due to their inexhaustibility. A number of key questions within Heidegger’s philosophical project are clearly the starting point for a definition and understanding of ontological terror.14 Heidegger considered Being to be our ‘primordial condition’, the essence of all existence.15 In his 1929 lecture ‘What is Metaphysics?’ Heidegger posed the question of ‘the Nothing’ and its intrinsic relationship to Being, defining ‘...that which lies that at the heart of our Being, as generative Nothigness’.16 This articulation of ‘Nothingness’ at the heart of human existence17 is the most relevant aspect of his ontology to this study.

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14 My reading of Heidegger’s ontology is primarily drawn from:
15 It is also relevant to this study to note that Heidegger was frustrated with the limitations of language to describe ontological phenomena and cautioned against confusing ‘...verbal representations of Being with the actual state of Being’. Watts, M., *Ibid*, pp10-19.
16 *Ibid*, p21
17 As Watts accurately surmises, ‘the Nothing’ or nothingness does not refer to the negation of Being rather its root meaning, No-thing-ness, implies a ‘presentness’ which Heidegger
This idea is intrinsically linked to the trial of human (co) existence and the ideological despair of late capitalism. Mark Osteen in his description of Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* describes how ‘...his novel dramatizes how our obsession with exercise and disease, our millenialist religions, our tabloid stories of resurrection and celebrity worship, and our compulsive consumerism offer charms to counteract the terror of oblivion’.\(^\text{18}\) This ‘terror of oblivion’, Heidegger’s articulation of ‘the Nothing’ and its alignment with Bakhtin’s concept of ‘cosmic terror’ (the human terror of total and utter annihilation due to a natural disaster of cosmic proportions i.e. an asteroid colliding with the planet)\(^\text{19}\) and its associated landscape of representations was the genesis of my research.

Traumatic experiences (which Lacan would define as ‘the Real’\(^\text{20}\)), momentarily rip open our constructed veils of permanence allowing us to glimpse the certainty of death and ‘the Nothing’ and create a sense of ‘not-Being at home in the world’\(^\text{21}\). The despair and terror that inevitably accompany such experiences are ontological and share a clear relationship with the Freudian Uncanny.


\(^{20}\) This concept is discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

\(^{21}\) Watts, M., *op.cit.*p44.
The Uncanny

Freud describes the intangible ‘unheimlich’ as ‘...that class of the frightening which leads us back to what is known of old and long familiar’ or the ‘...return of the repressed’. 22 A horrific event of the past, long hidden, unexpectedly and violently erupts from the human subject in a new and terrifying form. In this influential work, Freud concentrates on the unusual semantics of the term ‘heimlich’, and argues that contained within its double meaning is the key to understanding the uncanny. The German ‘heimlich’ can signify what is home-like, familiar and intimate but it can also describe what is secretive, buried and hidden. He describes how its meaning ‘...develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich’. 23 The terms are not in opposition rather the ‘unheimlich’ is a kind of sub-species of the ‘heimlich’. This requisite co-existence of the homely and the unhomely was fundamental to the mise-en-scene of Aviary (refer to Chapters 2 and 4). Freud maintained that the uncanny was terrifying precisely because it cannot be fully explained, however, he identified a number of persistent themes which can be outlined in relation to my practice as follows:

- The double (doppelganger, shadow, reflection). See twin figures in the development and grey men in the final production of Aviary (Chapters 2 and 4).
- Repetition (the death drive). In relation to the uncanny, Freud discusses repetition in the context of narrative and deja vu, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle; he articulates the concept of ‘Thanatos’ or the death instinct, the shadow of ‘Eros’, the sexual instinct. He argued one part of the

23 Ibid, p226.
human psyche was continually seeking gratification whilst the other sought to return to the quiet of non-existence. This essentially biological notion was used by Freud to explain our tendency towards destruction and disintegration. He compared the replaying of traumatic events by returned soldiers to children re-enacting a trauma through doll play, arguing that this ‘repetition compulsion’ contradicted the desire to reduce stress and seemed to indicate that individuals compulsively repeated traumatic events in order to master them.\(^{25}\) See ‘compulsive repetition’, the drive towards disintegration and the uncanny displacement of temporal and spatial reality due to traumatic shock imbedded in the mise-en-scene and narrative structure of *Aviary* (Chapter 4)

- The Automaton (Dolls, robots and so on which provoke uncertainty as to whether something inanimate is alive or not). See ‘dolls’ as a choric element in the development project (Chapter 2).
- Castration (losing body parts, specifically eyes and genitals). This is not as relevant to my practice and is more closely aligned with artistic explications of horror and the grotesque.
- Death and Primitive Beliefs (Specifically haunting and the return of the dead). See the multiple female figures which ‘haunt’ the male protagonist in the final production (Chapter 4).
- Indistinction and Uncertainty (sense of not being at home in the world). See the ruined and disintegrating environments in the development and the final production (Chapters 2 and 4).

\(^{25}\)The origin of the word sublime can be traced back to *lintel* (Latin: *limin*) which is loosely translated as the beam that forms the upper part of a window or door. Therefore terms which use variations of ‘sub-limen’ (such as liminal) connote the zone of the threshold or metaphorically describe ‘in-between’ spaces. To clarify the significance of this chain of connection, terror also occupies this threshold, ‘in-between’ threat and reality. See definition of the liminal uncanny on page 21.
The Traumatic Sublime

Like the uncanny, the etymological origins of the sublime signify a fascinating paradox.\textsuperscript{26} The sublime is semantically related to the subliminal, the seed of the psychoanalytical concept of sublimation. We commonly use the term sublime to describe the experience of an elevated ontological condition. This limited, yet popular usage of the term stems from Kant’s aesthetic analysis of the mathematical and dynamic sublime\textsuperscript{27} and its relationship to beauty, pleasure or the elevation of the self through an aesthetic experience. The terms subliminal and sublimation are used to signify what is hidden or below the surface or, if you like, a buried or displaced memory experience.

Three categories of the sublime have been identified by Kimberly Segall who first coined the term ‘traumatic sublime’ in 2005.\textsuperscript{28} It is this current conception of the sublime that is most useful to my interrogation of the treatment of terror through the formal aesthetics of Aviary.

The classical sublime incorporates Kant’s conception of sublimity and is defined in relation to literature and art by Longinus\textsuperscript{29} as an intense, inspiring

\textsuperscript{26} It is important to highlight that judgements on the sublime are ‘aesthetic’ due to their relationship to pleasure. While Kant identified that both experiences relate to a human encounter with the infinite in nature which converts an initial feeling of impotence into pleasure through reason, the mathematical sublime was used to describe a reflection upon natural objects of great magnitude (such as the night sky) which inspire awe and respect within the human subject. Kant believed when encountering the power of nature in this way we convert our initial frustration and incomprehension into a pleasurable understanding of the ‘nature within us’. He used the concept of the dynamically sublime to describe the experience of natural phenomena that initially inspire fear and shock (i.e. a violent electrical storm) which highlights human weakness in comparison to nature. He believed that we use the power of reason to overcome such a fear, converting it into a pleasurable experience. B.Gaut and D. McIver Lopes (Ed) Routledge Companion to Aesthetics., Routledge, London, 2001. pp52-60.


and elevating experience where ‘…one beholds oneself in the very thing being described’. Edmund Burke later identified terror as the ‘…ruling principle of the sublime’ where we experience a loss of self followed by delight. Shapelessness, limitlessness, darkness and obscurity inspire both fear and awe within us. This description of the sublime is commonly used in relation to the gothic genre where a terrifying experience allows one to feel the thrill of threat followed by self-preservation when the threat subsides.

Having identified these psychological experiences of elevation of self through the classical sublime and temporary loss of self through the gothic sublime, Segall argues that there is a third experience, a fracture of self which occurs in the ‘traumatic sublime’. Her analysis is focused on a particular sublimity found in post-colonial literature where a memory of trauma is displaced, fractured and repeated. She states ‘the traumatic sublime is a troubling sensation that occurs when a painful event of the past is changed into a disturbing image and shifts the gaze from self to other’. This shifting of the gaze from ‘self to other’, from the actual to the symbolic, the void to the veil is vital to understanding how ‘ontological terror’ was explored in my production of Aviary and is discussed in detail in Chapters 1 and 4.

This form of sublimate experience has a clear relationship to the uncanny and I believe it has far reaching implications for our understanding of aesthetic experience in the new millennium. It is a fractured and broken aesthetic intimately related to Lacanian conceptions of the self developed in a ‘mirror of the other’ and the Real, ‘…the rock upon which every attempt at symbolisation stumbles’. A culture of continually shifting borders has

31 Segall, K., op.cit, p42.
affected our ability to define thresholds. The self is reduced into an obsessive focus on and a terror of ‘the other’. In this sense, terror (excessive fear due to the threat of oblivion) is everywhere.

What unites the traumatic sublime to past theoretical musings upon the sublime is its relationship to awe. For even when encountering (perhaps especially when encountering) the horrifying, awe, as first identified by Kant, inspires something pleasurable in the human spirit. We feel awe when we encounter extreme beauty but it can also be described as a state of desire or a gravitational pull towards an object or phenomena even if it terrifies us. There is a traumatic aspect to this, as we simultaneously resist and are drawn towards the empty zones of ‘ontological terror’. The obsessive repetition of the sublime image of the fall of the twin towers by the media is evidence of this desire. The notion identified by Segall that such zones cannot be sublimated but rather repeatedly manifest as troubling sites of memory (such as ruins or objects imbued with symbolic associations), with figures represented in ethereal and often multiplied ghostly form is most suited to the aesthetic analysis of Aviary.

The Liminal Uncanny

In ‘A Forum of Theatre and Tragedy in the Wake of September 11, 2001’³⁴, a number of leading theatre practitioners discuss the profound unhinging of accepted aesthetic categories of tragedy, terror and trauma which have occurred as a result of this event. Amongst the ruins of traditional modes of

³³ This conception of human desire is evident in the erotic writing of George Bataille, open to death and rot as equally as it is to beauty. See Susan Sontag’s commentary in Bataille, G., Story of the Eye, London, Penguin, 1982.

representation, new representative strategies are needed to deal with this acutely unsettled terrain. Within each practitioner’s response to the question of defining new modes of dealing artistically with terror and tragedy, a distinct repetition of ideas can be noted. Speechlessness, incomprehensibility, silence, the Other, the unknown, the unimaginable, the spectacle, the eruption of the Real, the void, the ruin, the things that exist between, the threshold. By extracting key terms in this way I do not wish to oversimplify and reduce what are essentially complex and unique responses to finding new aesthetic categories and modes of representation in the wake of ‘terror’. Nevertheless, I believe the repetition of the terms throughout the article in response to terror is telling and guides us towards the ‘liminal’ as a contemporary form of tragedy and its mechanisms, a potential mode of theatrical representation.

In *Liminal Acts*, Broadhurst gives a detailed explication of the problem of aestheticization as put forward by philosophers Kant, Nietzsche and Heidegger and moves towards an articulation of contemporary aesthetics in relation to ‘liminality’ through the work of Baudrillard, Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard. In Chapter 3, Broadhurst draws attention to Kant’s conception of ‘Negative Pleasure’ in relationship to the sublime and the re-theorisation of a ‘contemporary sublime’ by Lyotard as post-modern practice which strives towards ‘presenting the unpresentable’. This produces sensory and kinaesthetic reactions such as the exciting, the disconcerting and the unsettling in relationship to the contemporary sublime. Tackling this problematic notion of liminality as intrinsic within experiences of contemporary sublime, Gene Ray brings us back to Lacan and ‘...the sudden emergence of the Real’ in relationship to what he describes as ‘threshold events’. He describes this as

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35 Broadhurst, S., *Liminal Acts: A Critical Overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory*, London and NY, Cassel, 1999, See pp26-68. While these readings have informed my thinking in relation to liminal aesthetics, I see no merit in reproducing or summarising them in full here as this has been thoroughly undertaken by Broadhurst. Rather I have extracted those ideas most pertinent to this study.

something seemingly incomprehensible and catastrophic which leaves a legacy of trauma and represents a shift in historical consciousness. In his exploration of such events, he utilises both Lyotard’s ‘unpresentable’ as described above and Adorno’s ‘ethics of representation’ (i.e. evoking without invoking), moving the sublime in the direction of a theory of collective trauma.37

Interestingly, Broadhurst draws attention to the fact that due to the focus on linguistic modes in their semiotic analysis, these traditional theories are limited in relationship to the liminal.38 She calls for an intersemiotic model that includes but is capable of moving beyond language. She states, ‘...the mode of signification in the liminal is narratives inscribed on the body...the use of gestus...that does not support something spoken; rather, they speak themselves, leading to a free association of themes rather than a linear narrative which can provide no answers in manifest or rational (linguistic) terms.39

Drawing on the notion of ‘the unsettling’ in relationship to the contemporary sublime I have identified the ‘liminal uncanny’ as a specific mode of signification in performance which essentially manipulates liminal (threshold) qualities as identified by Susan Broadhurst40 and blends them with the persistent themes of the Freudian Uncanny (as outlined earlier). The liminal mechanisms which are most pertinent to this performance aesthetic include:

38 Liminal performance shares a close relationship with postmodernism through its privileging of ambiguity, indeterminacy, boundary collapse, the dissolution of fixed identities, thematic free association and so on, but is not necessarily bound to its semantics in performance.
40 Ibid, pp12-22.
• Repetition
• Non-linguistic coding and a focus on pictorial/visual representation
• Density of imagery which is taken to spectacle proportions
• Working upon the senses and emotions
• Focus on gestus (action of body) and personae
• Contradictory mise-en-scene which seeks a problematised thematic
• Use of unconventional space

I believe this coding of the liminal uncanny and the aesthetic experience of the traumatic sublime help us to best understand the manifestation of terror in performance. I have utilised these terms in order to distinguish a specific zone of inquiry, a mode of signification and a particular psychological experience which best describes the treatment of terror in the final production of Aviary.41

Visual Performance and its Relationship to the ‘Unimaginable’

‘Concerning that about which one cannot speak, one must remain silent’

Wittgenstein42

I think it is essential to acknowledge my specific lineage and the definition of this concept. Influenced by the epic visual spectacles of Robert Wilson, and specifically the aesthetics and methodology of Romeo Castellucci, I define visual performance as that which utilises the formal qualities of painting and installation as its primary mode of representation. As a result, the minimal use of spoken text creates space for audience contemplation not unlike the silent, private publicity of an art gallery. In addition to this, the formal 3D qualities of performance (and sculpture) such as liveness, physicality, and gesture are also privileged. This distinguishes it from the 2D ‘cinematic’ even though this often artificially describes the aesthetic this genre of work tends to privilege.

41 See Chapters 2 and 4.
The traditional supporting elements of ‘theatre’ elements such as architecture, sound, light, design and other media are treated as equal to the privileged elements or as Castellucci describes, conceived in ‘the same breath’. The established makers of meaning i.e. the actors, the narrative and the text are also actualised in the same breath and are therefore not privileged in the conventional sense (they are not, however, discounted, as many critics of the genre claim). The symbolic weight of a tea-cup is identical to an actor, a sound or a light. They are all one story, the same breath. Castellucci uses the term ‘Infans’ or ‘before speech’ to describe the drive behind types of theatre.\(^{43}\)

The Masters research has revealed that during visual performance, language or more specifically the ‘actor speaking with the intention of revelation or explanation’ disrupts and disturbs the visual landscape because is it is not part of ‘The Real’ or inarticulate and should be carefully approached with this in mind. It is not that language has no place in visual performance, to the contrary, language when approached as what it is, part of the symbolic order, is a powerful tool in this context.

W.J.T Mitchell provides us with a fascinating reading of words and images and their relationship to terror in his 2005 essay.\(^{44}\) He highlights a fundamental distinction between two types of images with their origin located in 18\(^{th}\) Century aesthetics and semiotics:

- **Emblematic Images**- Image as word or determined by and readable in words.
- **Expressive Images**- Obverse and unreadable, prior to language and symbolisation.

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\(^{43}\) Castellucci, Romeo. Master Class at Malthouse Theatre Melbourne, Sunday 15\(^{th}\) October 2006.

\(^{44}\) Mitchell, *op.cit*, pp291-308
Mitchell then elaborates on the problematic relationship between words and images which he describes as being built into discourse. What Foucault described as ‘the sayable and the seeable’ or Lacan dubbed ‘the vocative’ and ‘the scopic’. He states, ‘We see this limiting character most clearly when we note the way ‘words fail’ to capture the density of signification in the image, or conversely we find ourselves unable or forbidden to make an image of that which we can nevertheless mention or name- God, the infinite, absolute chaos, or the void’.\textsuperscript{45}

He then goes on to explore the utter limits of the divide through a conceptualization of ‘the unspeakable’ and ‘the unimaginable’ in relationship to terror and terrorism. Ironically, he muses, that in such a context ‘the unspeakable’ is usually followed by an outpouring of words and ‘the unimaginable’ an outpouring of images.\textsuperscript{46}

As an artist and researcher, it is the outpouring of images in relationship to ‘the unimaginable’ and the concept of ‘Infans’ in its relationship to both image creation and audience witnessing that fascinates me and as such informed the development and creation of \textit{Aviary}.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p291.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p295.
INTRODUCTION

Dusk in the Silent Forest: Our Collective Understanding of Terror

“…we are a stunned human-kind…no longer aware of its own limits”

Romeo Castellucci
2006

Ontological terror is the fault-line of our culture.

This causes an immense problem for artists, as ontological terror is unrepresentable in any artistic medium. To do so is to destroy it. Once given form, terror metamorphoses into something else entirely. When we attempt to grasp it, even the most meticulous realisation is decoded by an audience in relationship to shock, denial, rage, profound sadness and grief, horror, political propaganda, disgust, pornographic violence, anguish, sickness, madness, hysteria and a million other things but never terror.

Terror has no face. This is its power.

We cannot see a void. We can only sense it.

In representing terror we only have veils. That we need these veils is signified by the fact that the horror of removing them is embedded in the etymological origin of the word apocalypse. 49

47 Throughout this thesis I repeatedly use ‘our’, ‘we’ and ‘us’ to comment upon certain personal observations and perceptions of such phenomena in relation to established philosophical ideas of terror. This device is used to engage the reader on a personal level. The qualitative and subjective nature of the research, both in regards to practice and discourse indicates that my explorations and descriptions are not ‘universal’, rather they are specifically making reference to an experience of Western, ‘late’ capitalist culture within an Australian context in 2007.

Ontological terror is concerned with terror at the heart of human existence (or the end of the world as we know it) and it is the bedfellow of grief. In a state of grief (or a miniature, domestic apocalypse as I like to call it) our protective veils are temporarily torn away and we become acutely aware of its colossal presence. While we cannot represent terror, we can have some idea of its hiding place. You can pretty much guarantee that when you cross a threshold, terror will be hovering close by.

Grief is one doorway where terror looms. Through use of the aesthetic and narrative conventions of both the liminal uncanny and the traumatic sublime we can take an audience into a silent forest to witness an event, and allow them the space to grieve, but from that point it’s up to them.

“No-one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear”.  
C.S.Lewis  
_A Grief Observed_

Terror = the 11th of December 2001.

No.

This is not a typing error.

Two months to the day that our global conception of terror was irreversibly altered, I received a phone call that would signal the end of the world as I knew it. The sudden death of my artistic and intimate partner and the shock experienced in that moment redefined my personal understanding of grief and became the catalyst for attempting to artistically process this highly subjective and confronting emotion. One human life, no matter how precious,

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49 From the Greek _APOKALYPsis_ literally meaning ‘the lifting of the veil’.  
www.wikipedia.org/apocalypse

50 See definition of key terms and concepts.

is a meagre drop in the ocean of civilization and compared to the horrors of the past and those which continue to plague us since the turn of the millennia, such a loss is little horror at all. Yet it was and thankfully remains my only personal intimation of terror.

Like a car crash in slow motion, my artistic and academic pathway swerved into the darkness in a desperate attempt to name and give face to the demons in pursuit. Arrogantly, I mused that regardless of scale, the experience of fear had to be universal. What was this demon? Did it have a face? Could it be represented? Abstracted? I watched hundreds of terrible and not so terrible horror films, truly petrifying reams of historical footage; images of disaster both real and imagined, man-made and natural. I delved into the grotesque, the abject, the forbidden, the uncanny, the liminal, the shadowy, gothic underworld of the dead, the un-dead, and their habitats of ruined buildings, deserted landscapes, hospitals, graveyards, haunted spaces, traumatised spaces…all the while careering towards the ultimate manifestation of fear, faceless and un-representable, ‘ontological terror’. I aimed to meld the political with the personal, the universal with the subjective, and the aesthetic sublime with the horrific.

**I wanted to create a work that could speak to us of the unspeakable.**

‘Any true feeling cannot in reality be expressed. To do so is to betray it. To express it however is to conceal it…Any strong feeling produces an idea of emptiness within us, and lucid language which prevents this emptiness also prevents poetry appearing in thought. For this reason, an image, an allegory, a form disguising what it means to reveal, has more meaning to the mind than the enlightenment brought about by words or their analysis…Hence true beauty never strikes us directly and the setting sun is beautiful because of everything else we lose by it’

Antonin Artaud

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Artaud is talking to us in opposites and in doing so he draws our attention to the spaces and harrowing silence that lies between them. He highlights the ambiguous territory of the threshold. No stranger to an artistic, theoretical and personal journey into terror and madness his thoughts are the obvious starting point to what needs to be discussed in this dissertation. To disguise what we mean to reveal is still the staple diet of human functioning and as such, performance. We have invented elaborate systems of perception and interaction which aim for a target yet avoid a direct strike in any form. When dealing with ‘ontological terror’, these disguises, veils, shadows, reflections, call them what you will are all we have.

As James Elkins asserts in *The Object Stares Back*, we are profoundly limited in what we are able to see. When it comes to an experience so fundamental to our humanity such as ‘ontological terror’\(^\text{53}\), we are, I believe, stuck in Plato’s Cave. Which begs the question, why is the dance of shadows reflected on the cave wall more palatable than the outside world?

The obvious answer would be that we are terrorized by our own mortality, frightened into submission by the horrors of the outside world and the possibility of our own death or the death of those we love. This is partially accurate. The calming flicker of sex, violence and death, the staple of almost every household television and computer screen from approximately 6pm each evening, enslaves most, yet what is outside that could possibly be so blinding and incomprehensible that we would prefer to tighten our own shackles, content to consume the shadows cast in the communal fire by the puppeteers? What is it about our human condition that we prefer to remain prisoner to a reflected reality and live in darkness, unwilling to leave the

\(^{53}\text{See definitions of key terms and concepts.}\)
confinement of the cave? And if due to a longing for regeneration, we do slip out, why do we hunger to return?

When I venture out of my cave, particularly at SVU/Amazing Medical Stories hour, I am privileged[^1] to be greeted by a strange, unsettling stillness and, dare I say it, sublime beauty. There are no bombs exploding, no collapsing buildings, no giant teething vaginas, no sex fiend murders stalking me, no real threat. Still, I feel a strange and deep discomfort of the kind experienced most acutely walking alone through the silent forest at dusk. I put this forward as a metaphor for our collective terror, a silent forest may be a city laneway, a deserted park, a desert landscape or a cliff overlooking the ocean. It is a liminal place, at the threshold of night and day, at once sublime and a gateway to all things subliminal, a fissure where terror lies.

Confronted by the awe inspiring, silent forest, I become aware of the ‘real’ shadows being cast, I am aware that the ground on which I stand is fracturing; I sense the danger because the void is closer than I dare to admit. I miss the lulling comfort of the cave, with its flickering, fictional shadows and upon return, dutifully re-clasp my chain, content to consume the contrived monsters. Regardless of what quantum physics has discovered, we still prefer to exist in a Cartesian world and our grey areas battle to be heard over the blacks and the whites of comfortable human perception.

Within this particular reading of Plato’s allegory, there is the tentative suggestion that a scene which could be described as aesthetically beautiful (an unpopular concept in contemporary art due to its association with a bourgeois aesthetic) in an ugly and horrifying culture may now hold more potential to

[^1]: I am aware of the presumptive nature of this statement and make it with the knowledge that I am a white, educated, middle class woman, living in relative economic and social stability in Australia in 2007. In no way are such statements representative of a wider human experience or condition.
unite us in our grief; to stop an audience in their tracks and provoke reaction, than the use of a potentially sickening opposite.

Can we approach terror by creating performance which guides the audience into the silent forest at dusk?

Romeo Castellucci answers this by creating ‘...a new theatrical politic of intimacy’. He believes theatre is ‘...being asked to re-invent the act of watching’. For Castellucci, the spectator is a political figure inherently connected to their emotional response, as he believes it is only when we are emotional that we feel terribly alone in our grief and simultaneously connected to the source of the anguish. The objectivity of his image making, a rational treatment of form and spatial dynamics, manifests in a visual spectacle that attempts to access a strange and liminal conception of human perception allowing SPACE for the audience to become an emotional witness (to be a figure with true political force). The aesthetic of the sublime happens

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55 Castellucci, R. Master Class at the Malthouse Theatre VIC 15th October 2006 (my interpretation from notes taken). By ‘objective’ and ‘rational’ I mean that he resists ‘emoting on stage’ allowing space for an emotional reaction in the audience. He argues that it is ‘the space between’ each individuals emotional experience that makes an audience a community. Only an emotional witness can become a political force.

56 Like Bertolt Brecht, Castellucci places the power of radical politics in the hands of the spectator and their emotional response to theatrical representation. Nevertheless, it is in this sense that he both departs from and strangely ‘returns to’ Brecht’s conception of alienation as an interruption or diversion of emotional absorption into emotional/intellectual reflection and engagement as a political force in the theatre. It must be stated however; that in doing so he does not return to the bourgeois aesthetic of illusion and superficial ‘realism’ Brecht was rallying against. Through liminal theatrical representation, Castellucci’s uncanny dream-like compositions, sublime as they are horrific, I believe, access ‘something else’ in regards to emotional involvement due to the power of collective grief. Castellucci’s mastery of image, created through body, action, object, time, space, sound, light conceived and delivered in ‘one breath’ partially explain the peculiar power of his theatrical projects yet he also manages, in my opinion, to access and give form to a Jungian ‘collective unconscious’ if you like. His theatrical works and video ‘memories’ are profoundly and intimately affecting but the reasons why this might be so are highly elusive. He is unique in that he manages to represent through theatrical imagery something that is somehow foreign yet deeply understood collectively. This ‘something else or ‘space between’ that is presented on Castellucci’s stage is not easily rationalised as he is dealing with the territory of the unspeakable, the inarticulate and the unrepresentable which I attempt to explore in detail in the following chapter.
on the stage and the audience is left in silent awe, simultaneously alone and together in their collective grief. The shift is happening off stage, not on it.

Grief, if you like, is the doorway to our collective understanding of this terror. Like Poe’s raven, terror lurks on the threshold of our awe and a stunning sunset is shadowed by a glimpse at our mortality, an ontological paradox, which highlights the human grief of sensing what, could be, in a moment, lost forever.
CHAPTER 1

Speaking of the Unspeakable

How does one speak of the unspeakable? Furthermore, what exactly is ‘the unspeakable? The unspeakable is related to the Lacanian conception of ‘the Real’ or that which resists symbolisation and language. According to Lacan we assimilate reality and construct ourselves as human subjects by entering information about ‘the other’ (objects, human relationships and experiences) into the symbolic order (when we look in the mirror and say ‘I’). This is a linguistic framework which enables us to communicate with other subjects and determines our place in history and the complex social order. Excluded from this process are ‘destructive’ fantasies that exist in the realm of the imaginary order and experiences of ‘the Real’ which are unassimilable. Kirshner identifies traumatic encounters as one experience of ‘the Real’ which resists signification. Elkins, in his discussion of the philosophy of George Bataille, highlights how he identified three things we are incapable of seeing even though they are right in front of us; the sun, genitals and death. Elkins dismisses the first two but agrees with the third, explicating how the most horrifying images are those which seem inescapably close to capturing what cannot be represented; death. I agree with this argument, adding that Bataille’s ‘unseeable things’ can in fact be made visible when looked at indirectly, through filters or veils.

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59 This can be viewed in relation to Baudrillard’s concept of ‘simulacra’ which David Ritchie identifies as the principle behind the hyper-real representations of death in popular culture which frame our contemporary experience of mortality. Ironically, this ‘simulacra’ cocoons us from the actuality of death. Instead of lived experience we have Gorer’s concept of the ‘pornography of death’, a preoccupation with the voyeuristic, “stylised surfaces”. Ritchie, D., Loss, Grief and Representation: “Getting on with It”, Deakin University, in Double Dialogues, “Art and Pain” Issue 4, Winter, 2003.
Darian Leader, in his investigation of how artistic images act as veils for such experiences of the Real describes it as ‘the thing’ and relates it to the concept of Lacanian sublimation. I will quote his argument at length as it is the most concise and useful explanation of a complex idea central to the concerns of this chapter. He describes sublimation as the ‘...idea of a zone of emptiness, a void that is constitutive of our becoming human’. He goes on to argue that this is ‘...a zone that is always beyond what we can represent, or symbolise, or give meaning to and since it is beyond our capacity to represent directly, it is lost to us...For these reasons it becomes (sublimated) the space into which we project images and myths of an origin, of something that was there first and is now inaccessible. Leader then goes on to describe the process of projection which occurs around ‘the thing’. “The thing is a void, an empty space. We can do our best to represent it with images of invasive proximity (monsters) or of utter desolation (falling in a void) but these are only approximations, our imagination’s effort to conjure up what seems closest to its own boundaries. The thing is always beyond these boundaries, an inaccessible zone into which we project images of horror or absence.

So here, at the threshold of human experience we have ‘the thing’ or an awareness of ‘the Real’ over which an artist projects images. It is this awareness of ‘the thing’ and our desire to see (not see) it which draws a spectator to the artistic representation or ‘veil’. This appears to be a common artistic aspiration, the need to give form to that which is closest to our imagination’s boundaries. The Real is located at the threshold of our imagination and is concerned with trauma, the void, terror, collapse and emptiness which can only be represented through projections or reflections of what we sense but cannot gaze upon directly. Could it be then that artistic

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61 Ibid, p61.
representations of the Real are most effective when pre-tragic? They do not attempt to reproduce or ask the audience to gaze directly at ‘the thing’ through realism, character or conventional narrative but work elliptically and abstractly around it using conventions such as the chorus, symbols, signs and visual spectacle. This was an obsession of the Surrealists, to reject realism in an attempt to represent the Real, to mine the latent desires of their audience by striving to give form to the unconscious. It could be argued that this was one of the key desires of Modernism itself, a continuing aspiration that defines a continuity of the modern and the post-modern. As T.J.Clark states; “Modernism had two great wishes. It wanted its audience to be lead toward recognition of the social reality of the sign (away from the comforts of narrative and illusion) but equally it dreamed of turning the sign back to the bedrock of World/Nature/Sensation/Subjectivity which capitalism had all but destroyed”.62

This dream of ‘turning the sign back’ returns us to the obsessions of Artaud. In addition, I have identified two currently practicing theatre artists whose theatre (accompanied by extensive theoretical writing) appears to be a continuing project which wrestles with imperceptible, ontological ground.63

63 I owe much of the analysis of Richard Foreman’s ‘Ontological-Hysteric Theatre’ and his recent projects to Martin Harries. The ‘Shadows of Richard Foreman’ section largely paraphrases his argument for the express purpose of establishing a solid base from which to analyse the practice of Romeo Castellucci. From Harries analysis I could not help but see a philosophical relationship to the work of both Artaud and Romeo Castellucci’s ‘Societas Raffaello Sanzio’ even though the aesthetic concerns and performance outcomes of the three practitioners are manifestly different.
Antonin Artaud: Archetypes of ‘the Real’: The artist as ‘consciousness trying to be’

In her preface to the selected writings of Artaud, Susan Sontag identifies that the traumatic artistic and theoretical project of Artaud is based in his persistent and obsessional ‘thinking about the unthinkable’. In attempting to dissolve the boundaries between mind and body, art and life he pushed for extremities, for organic totality of feeling, for the return of ritual, of catharsis and for the theatre to become a ‘spectacle of sensory violence’.

“Artaud compares the theatre to the plague. To show the truth means to show archetypes rather than individual psychology; this makes the theatre a place of risk, for the archetype reality is dangerous”. 64 His obsession with the disintegration of boundaries and the descriptions of his own deteriorating and fracturing mind signifies a desire to give form to ‘the thing’ that is decidedly pre-tragic. He wanted to disquiet the audience, to re-introduce to the stage the great metaphysical fear which is at the root of all ancient theatre.

The ‘Shadows’ of Richard Foreman

‘Ontology reveals itself not through speech, not through enunciation, but through shadows’65

Martin Harries identifies the aspiration of the avant-garde as a synthesis of the experimental, the psychic and the political. Harries argues that while Foreman’s fragmentary form and use of repetition has become more aligned with the aesthetics of post-modernism, his work continues the avant-garde assertion that ‘...experimental aesthetic practice can provide an opening to

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65 Harries, op.cit, p86.
otherwise inaccessible psychic realms and that this psychic opening will in turn lay the foundation for a radical politics’.66

The explanation of how form is given to inaccessible psychic realms is of most interest to my argument, for it is within these realms that I believe ontological terror lies. I also don’t believe that the avant-garde is dead because its three synthesised layers still obsess the artists I find most interesting in contemporary culture. Foreman describes in his 1972 manifesto how in ‘...the new ontological mode of theatre, hysteria lies as a seed/spark, which forces the unseeable to cast shadows’.67 I agree completely with this statement and believe hysteria, like fear or grief is a knowable state of theatrical action which can be used to cast a shadow of (or in my terms, reflect) the ontological condition (terror). This casting of shadows is interesting as it confirms the notion that the ontological is knowable only indirectly.

Harries points to Julia Kristeva’s argument that poetic language and other alogical structures function to guide us towards something that cannot be articulated. He stresses how Foreman’s later writing deals directly with this ontological ground and articulates an interest in the Real, ‘the things which make you stumble’ and articulates his setting up of subjective texts and mise-en-scenes which are effectively ‘minefields’.68 Interestingly, he calls this a ‘therapeutic aesthetic’ and relates it back to a cathartic experience (a ‘disorientation massage’) where narrative and meaning are fragmented but the spectator experiences a psychic opening or awareness of a ‘mutual human self’.69 This notion of the mutual human self can be compared to Castellucci’s conception of a ‘theatrical politic of intimacy’.

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66 Ibid, p85
68 Harries, op.cit, p88.
69 Ibid, p88.
Romeo Castellucci: Theatre’s radical re-signification, ‘INFANS’ and the ‘glance worthy of being tragic’

“Tragedy is a poison a community consciously takes in…it belongs to the human race”.

Romeo Castellucci 2006

Like Foreman, Castellucci frames his theatrical projects with philosophical writing that acts as an extension of the lived event. I would argue that both practitioners share a similar concern for the experimental, the psychic and the political but differ profoundly in their resulting aesthetic. This is mainly due to a different treatment of theatrical form (time and space) and the setting up of the artistic text. Foreman concentrates on the setting up of subjective texts as a means of articulating the Real whereas Castellucci’s aesthetic project is a highly objective treatment of form.

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70 Castellucci, R., *op. cit.*

71 The following analysis of his practice is taken from notes taken on his performance deconstructions during his master class at the Malthouse Theatre in October 2006. Any omission or fault in translation is my own; however, I have cross referenced these notes with his printed writing to ensure a continuity and accuracy of the ideas expressed.
For him, tragedy is the form we return to over and over in an attempt to understand inexplicable things such as violence, death or the loss of hope. There it is again, the attempt to understand the inexplicable. For Castellucci, the gaze of the spectator needs to become that of an emotional witness, closer to that of a child. Like Artaud, Castellucci returns to the pre-tragic to gain inspiration for his re-signification. He uses the term ‘INFANS’, or “before speech” to describe how children process the world through an enlarged space of visual and aural attention before they gain the ability to integrate these experiences into the symbolic structure of language. To reiterate Lacan, some experiences or ‘the Real’, can never be integrated in this way.

I believe it is precisely because of his understanding of INFANS and his objective treatment of form in the creation of visual performance texts that he gets closer than most to an actual representation of the Real.

All of the abovementioned philosophies and theatrical methodologies have one common articulation. While the signs and symbols of their stages are unique they all point to some inarticulate ontological realm outside of language and symbolisation.

**Aviary and the unspeakable moment**

*Aviary* was entirely constructed around the ‘thing’, a traumatic encounter or ‘a moment of ontological terror’. I enter into a more detailed analysis of the reflections this moment created and how they were realised in subsequent chapters but for the purposes of this chapter I am simply articulating that the landscape of *Aviary* grew from a very specific moment which resisted symbolisation through language and could not be looked at directly. It was at this point that my focus moved away from any attempt to scare an audience or
imbue them with a feeling of terror and became steadily attracted to wanting to explore the deep structure of an experience of terror.

The performance outcome of the _Aviary_ development at CARNI suggested that the images created were the ‘shadows’ cast by an unspoken trauma or a moment of ontological terror. I wanted to avoid the ‘therapeutic’ by not looking at my own grief directly but it was surfacing anyway, reflected in a variety of different forms. The audience feedback suggested that a number of terrible things were being hinted at (incest, infanticide, violence, grief) and while these sketches were visually effective something much deeper needed to be addressed in detail (death). I agreed as did the ensemble that there was more to investigate and some vital material was being skipped over in its realisation. In feedback sessions with Richard Murphet and Jenny Kemp it was suggested that I go back and attempt to ‘write out the moment’ or the core of the terror.

I felt one of the most affecting images from the development occurred at the sink, with collaborators Jason Lehane and Clare Reynolds caught in a repetitive sequence of gestures. An audience member had commented that the sequence made them feel physically sick. This forced me to question why I had chosen to allow that particular image to start ‘skipping’ backwards like a broken record. My collaborators and I discussed the possible reasons for this and concluded that we all felt this was the site of the ‘moment of terror’. During the month long break from the collaborative process I heard about a man who had fallen asleep while bathing his newborn child and woken to find his baby dead. I felt almost instantly that in a domestic setting the instant of waking was indeed a moment of ontological terror. I began to write:
The time has come…the sun is moving into her darker days…as we all

Its now 3.56am…she has not stopped crying in what seems like years…her temperature is getting higher…he decides to go to the all night chemist to get something to bring the fever down…I haven’t slept in days…but he has just found her in the cot…lyying…hot and feverish in her own vomit…He holds her towards me like a lump of rotting flesh and suggests she might need a bath…a bath…something in his eyes…tells me he truly believes I am the most disgusting…useless pig on this earth…I checked her 20 minutes ago…I’m too exhausted to even try and defend myself…I hold her to me and stoke her satiny head as I slowly stumble through the humid night air…shhh…I hear the car pull away…and finally feel some relief…his constant, judgemental eye…gone…away…finally…switching on the light…I catch a glimpse of some stranger in the bathroom mirror…I switch off the light and run the cool bath water…slipping her out of her night clothes…wafts of stale cheese and broccoli…I retch…please stop now my love…shhh…shhh…my poor little love…I slip her tiny body into the cool water…relief at last…the scream becomes a whimper becomes a giggle…now becomes a game…I support her bowling ball head as she frantically kicks her legs in the water…the icy splashing a relief for both of us…I move off my knees…slipping onto my side legs…her body in my arms…so heavy…her splashes become less playful now as she swishes her arms through the shallow cool water…opening and closing her eyes like some ancient…deep water…creature…she sighs deeply…this little echo of my own and I stare into her eyes…gently swishing now…her fingers like hungry coral…waiting for some stray plankton to come floating by…my burning cheeks feel delicious…resting on the cool tiles…What are you doing…what the fuck do you think you are doing…for Christs sake she’s blue…get the fuck out of the way…she’s fucking blue…she’s not fucking breathing…fuck…god…you useless…how long has she been in here…shhh…shhh…please stop now my love…she’s fucking blue…I move my hair out of my face…it is sticky with vomit…shhh…

My breasts are full…they ache with the pressure of un sucked milk…at 5.15 I walked past the bathroom…out of the corner of my eye I thought I saw…an egg shell floating in the putrid bath water…I cannot face the dishes today…haven’t had eggs recently…I try to eat…but everything ferments…sitting in the bottom of my guts like lumps of frozen clam juice…

I discuss in Chapter 3 how this panic-stricken, theatrical manifestation of terror began to cast shadows. We would create the entire final performance around the four identified emotional states, dynamic, rhythm, physicality of this moment. It would be reflected, re-written and abstractly storyboarded but it would never be spoken of. There would only be abstracted use of this text in the final performance dispersed through the sound-scape, and no re-
enactment of its horror in real time. Nevertheless, its presence was undeniable, casting its reflection into every image. But more on that later…

The following chapter is concerned with how we moved towards that point.
CHAPTER 2

The Ruin as a Vessel: The Creative Development of Aviary

Throughout this chapter, I examine the starting points, the sketches if you like, which lead to the development outcome of Aviary, shown at CARNI in West Preston in November 2005. I would recommend viewing the development footage and photographs on the DVD before commencing this chapter.

A series of key concerns which were the driving force of the initial creative development can be identified as trace elements in the final production and can be outlined as follows:

- The focus upon and manipulation of particular spatial, performative, visual and aural elements which could be identified as being present within an experience of the ‘liminal uncanny’.
- The investigation of subjective nightmares and night-terror states and their peculiar visual and acoustic qualities which could be potentially distilled into performance making devices such as rhythm, gesture, sound, light and so on.
- The architectural ruin as a vessel for terror, its inherent atmosphere; and the particulars of the site specific design and performance at CARNI.
- The significance of ‘The Doll’ as a harbinger of the terror of ‘non-being’.
The Liminal Uncanny in Visual Representation

In artistic representations, the ‘unhomely’ elements of the uncanny are usually experienced through their invasion of a ‘homely’ environment. A classic example of the otherworldly quality of the Freudian uncanny can be identified in David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986). In this film, a homely atmosphere (suburbia) is clearly established and gradually invaded and dissolved by brutal ‘unhomely’ elements. The most obvious example being the severed ear found in the idyllic park-land by the protagonist. While similar uncanny representations are still popular, I believe a different type of uncanny representation has emerged in recent years which functions differently due to its focus on the liminal.
The liminal uncanny diverts from the Freudian uncanny in its relationship to Freud’s/Heidegger’s concept of indistinction and uncertainty (a sense of not being at home in the world). In artistic representations I would define as ‘liminal’ uncanny, fragmentation, disintegration and ambiguity are privileged. In such liminal projects, the carefully constructed imaginative points or images spark within the mind’s eye of the audience a series of elliptical narratives.

In addition to this adjustment of how the work is read, a distinct reversal of the homely/unhomely element is evident. Here, an unhomely (ruined) environment is established and the ‘uncanniness’ is evoked by the addition of ‘homely’ elements. This is popular in the Japanese horror genre, where abandoned spaces are made strange due to their function as homely environment for traumatised characters. In The Ring, a dark, abandoned horse stable houses a beautifully constructed child’s bedroom in the rafters. This ‘uncanny effect’ can also be observed in Zach Braff’s 2004 film Garden State which contains a sequence where the protagonist meets a family living inside a dilapidated boat teetering on the edge of an enormous, gaping quarry. Outside we witness filth, decay and industrial ruin, inside warmth, love and homeliness. I attempted this uncanny spatial reversal with some success with collaborator/writer Rebecca Rutter in the 2001 production of June...the place does not matter. In this work, a disintegrating environment was constructed outside a caravan situated in an industrial wasteland. The grotesque spectacle the audience was witness to outside the van could not prepare them for the jarring effect of entering the actual caravan at the conclusion of the work. Inside was a representation of paradise, complete with white fluffy clouds, operatic nymphs and a harp. Similar examples are numerous, particularly in contemporary film\(^{72}\), but one common factor remains, they all stage an

\(^{72}\) See also Jeunet and Caro’s The City of Lost Children
uncanny reversal of our expectations due to the strangeness of homely places in the most unhomely of spaces.

A striking example of an artist traversing a liminal, uncanny landscape can be witnessed in the work of photographer, Bill Henson. The subliminal, haunting nature of his images could be argued to be representative of this aesthetic and a brief analysis of some of the qualities of his work may further illuminate our understanding of the liminal uncanny and its relationship to the sublime.

**Bill Henson**

Curator Judy Annear describes Bill Henson as the ‘…master of the contemporary sublime…where the dissolution of the self can lead to a deeper understanding of the imaginary within our responses to nature as much as culture’.73 His work is particularly relevant to the concerns of this thesis as he believes that a major ambition of art should be to strive ‘…to describe the

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indescribable’. In his commentary accompanying his exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2005 he speaks of the idea of the ‘epiphany’ in relation to great works of art; that one cannot experience oneself as separate to the art work, that one has a sense of being contained by nature, a suggestion of perpetuity, altering our acuity of being. As I explicated earlier, such ‘epiphanies’ can be beautiful and transcendental but a sublime experience, a temporary loss of self in nature, in dreams, in grand art can also be utterly terrifying. Henson’s body of work could be described as having three important motifs which have been identified by Julie Annear and George Alexander as continuously recurring in his attempt to speak of the unspeakable:

1. The twilight zone- colliding and blending oppositions

The tensions between our oppositions are not set up in dualistic relationship by Henson; rather they merge, as if existing in the same ambiguous space. Darkness and light, progress and disintegration, childhood and adolescence, waking and sleeping, innocence and corruption seem to blur together in the same ephemeral image. He uses the architectural ruin, the dark forest, the abandoned building as sites which have lost their original meaning and now function as settings for the mind’s eye. He truly explores our liminal spaces, exposing the beauty and terror of our in-between states.

2. Traces and the limits of visual readability

George Alexander describes how the human figures in Henson’s photography are situated at ‘...the final limit of visual readability’. They are dream-like, ungraspable shape-shifters which seem at once to be emerging from and

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74 Ibid, p8.
75 Ibid, p4.
disappearing into the darkness. He describes how Henson’s figures are almost transparent, made up of light like an apparition, siting *Untitled 1977/87* and its resemblance to Victorian spirit photography. Henson sets up human presences as if they were traces left in the landscape, whose stories will never be fully remembered.

3. Elliptical narratives and the relationships of images

Annear identifies how Henson’s photographic installations can be viewed as single images but are purposely constructed to function as fragments of meaning. The images are not narratives within themselves, rather they are ‘…locations for further imaginings’. These imaginings happen within the mind of the viewer, with the experience structured by Henson’s compositions. The narrative works elliptically around the constructed image and its relationship to other images.

What is most striking about Henson’s images is that they seem to resemble the transient glimpses in the darkness conjured up in the minds eye as one slips in-between consciousness and unconsciousness, or the fragments of half remembered dreams that one desperately tries to get hold of upon waking.

One place that the entire ensemble felt they had experienced terror was during nightmares, or more specifically, night terrors which occupy a liminal zone between sleeping and waking. The initial reference point for the construction of images for *Aviary* was centred around Henson inspired ‘glimpses’ as we examined our own dark places and the shifting phantoms which inhabit them, through the de-construction of our own night-terrors.

76 Ibid, p6.
Night-Terrors

‘God is having a nightmare. This thing arrives at the moment he falls asleep and grabs him around the throat, it rushes him through the universe, pushes him beyond the stars and ploughs up the earth with his face and throws him back into heaven...he cannot understand what there can be in his creation which is so hostile...eventually the thing speaks.’

Ted Hughes

A night terror is distinguished from a nightmare due to its unique physiological and psychological state. My experience of this state can be defined as follows:

- A condition of cataleptic silence imbued with an awareness that an unspeakable terror is present, followed by a building, intense sound (the closest description being white noise).
- An experience of half waking and the environment existing exactly as it did when one went to sleep but with an overwhelming sense of danger.
- The feeling of utter immobility made physiologically distinctive by a pressing weight on the chest, legs and arms.
- A fixation upon a seemingly insignificant and vague image barely visible in the darkness which one is unable to stop looking at. In my three cases it was the image of a slowly moving barcode, a white tree (not unlike a photo negative), and a Chinese symbol burning into the floor beside the bed.
- A realisation that something (a being, a thing, a doppelganger with vicious and harmful intent) is moving towards you in the darkness but

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78 A night terror or ‘pavor nocturnus’ is distinguished from a nightmare by the violent and disturbing nature of the experience which typically contains a lack of dream imagery. This is because they are not technically dreams given they occur during non-REM sleep. A subject wakes abruptly from slow wave sleep, the deepest level of non-REM where the body is in a state of paralysis. Night terror experiences are more common in children and in adult sufferers they are often genetically predisposed and trauma related. See Carranza, C., *Banishing Night Terrors and Nightmares*, Kensington Books, 2004.
you are physically unable to look away from the object as mentioned above.

- The ‘symbolic’ object being looked at acts as a reflection of the real ‘terror’. This gripped immobility, combined with the threat of the approaching ‘thing’ is truly terrifying.
- When one finally wakes there is a temporary inability to regain full consciousness and a feeling of utter disorientation.

The experience of night terrors was one starting point for the performance explorations as I believed they revealed something of the ‘unknowable’ and its relationship to a state of terror. I was also interested in the symbolic object as a point of fixation, which veils the ‘real’ terror. These unusual qualities of night terrors were used as a reference point for the emotional and physical condition of the central female protagonist incarcerated in the kitchen in the final production of *Aviary*. Throughout the performance she is utterly immobilised by terror, fixated on the sink and pulling out a series of objects, devised by collaborator Clare Reynolds and myself, which function in symbolic relationship to the overall domestic and choric narrative; a locket (innocence and memory of courtship), lengths of material (torn bed sheets), broken plates (domestic violence), hair (as this, along with nails continues to grow after death). We eventually see the source of her terror, masked in a wet bundle, her dead child. These symbols were ‘reflections’ cast off the water which ricocheted into the entire space.79

Imagery in nightmares was also a central starting point and it became apparent through the research that nightmares, both living and waking could be divided into two categories (terrifying constriction and terrifying

79 See Chapter 4 where I use these symbolic objects and their specific reflections as the basis of my final analysis of *Aviary.*
limitlessness). Our narratives of terror, both fictional and real are witness to these two deep-seated fears either in isolation or combination.  

**Terrifying constriction:** Fears concerning suffocation, invasion, drowning, claustrophobia, earthquakes, falling buildings, being buried alive, being burnt alive, trapped, imprisoned, attics, basements, stairways, forests, sinking ships, cubes, and gaols.

**Terrifying limitlessness:** Fears concerning falling, being lost or stranded, exposed to the void, nothingness, infinity, eternal return, nuclear holocaust, super bugs, plagues, human extinction and the death of God, deserts, space, the sky and empty/ruined cities.

What interested me most about such nightmare states were the repetitive, non-linear, fragmented and nonsensical perception of images, personal relationships, memory, sound and text in a dream state and the utterly perplexing, yet often illuminating process of de-coding such experiences upon waking. Lying awake in one’s bed, desperately attempting to recall a word spoken, sifting through the image based fragments of deeply felt emotions seemed to me a shared, vulnerable and inherently fascinating place. This state of fragmented recollection was the feeling I wanted my audience to experience having witnessed *Aviary*.

Having investigated the qualities of the liminal uncanny, and the obscure and terrifying visual world of nightmares and night-terrors, I identified four elements in the imagery which interestingly corresponded to the four key

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elements Edmund Burke defined as the terrible power inherent within the sublime: *Darkness, Nothingness, Obscurity, and Emptiness.* I felt that these four states could be explored and function as a four-act structure for the image play, or could at least provide inspiration for what it would eventually become.

**The Flooded Dolls-House**

Following this, I began the early stages of drafting the performance through free-fall creative writing, improvisation and story-boarding. I used the four key states identified above as inspiration for the images. The original performance was designed to take place in an indoor space (with access to an outdoor area) with a set constructed into a 2 story ruined and flooded dolls house. While most of this initial draft was discarded during the development process, the focus on the ruined dolls house functioning as a flooded tomb remained vital to our search for images and narrative in these early stages. This initial imagining of the space inspired the search for a ruined site within which we could construct the visual narrative.

**The Industrial Ruin**

“Each culture casts its own shadow, a shadow which is a perfect description of its own form and nature. The shadow which our technological civilization casts is that of Lilith, ‘the Maid of Desolation’ who dances in the ruins of cities”

W.I. Thompson

As I have already established, the industrial ruin is a recurring theme in liminal uncanny art, primarily due to its symbolic amalgamation of

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82 For further explication of the ensemble discussions and images arising from these states in development please refer to Appendix 4 and the ‘journals’ chapter of the DVD.
83 See Appendix 3
oppositions. Abandoned places engage the viewer in a complex and immediate dialogue, recounting our past through an inherent absence. Ruins are places of forsaken memory which speak to us of what we have left behind and the effect upon us is both traumatic and sublime. Alone in a ruin, we become acutely aware of the passing of time, our mortality and the vulnerability of our sense of self. We formulate intricate stories to fill the empty space, as ‘the thing’ is well and truly present in such a place. If we have knowledge of what the space was once used for, the emotional impact of the dialogue is heightened (as visitors to Auschwitz will attest). In our mind’s eye, we conjure up figures in the space, we invent a missing subject which is our imagination’s effort to counteract the ruin’s hostile reminder of ‘...the empty carcass of time’. 85

The ruined site is a vessel through which terror can pass.

The CARNI site (a ruined leather factory) was an ideal location for an exploration of this concept. In site specific performance, there are generally two schools of thought and methods of working. One places an emphasis on place (what is the historical, social, cultural significance of the site? How and why does it exist? Who has/does/will inhabit it? and so on) and the other is concerned primarily with space (the dimensions and aesthetic of the space itself). While most projects, including my own usually end up combining the two methodologies, for this research project, the site was chosen purely for its aesthetic properties and their relationship to liminal aesthetics.

For the development at CARNI, the brief was to create a domestic/homely environment within the existing ruin. Using the practical technique of

bricolage (or using what comes to hand), we began to construct our playground. After identifying the audience viewpoint, rooms of the house attic, bedroom, kitchen, dining area, study (suggested by the spatial dimensions) were constructed from materials found at the site. (Figures 2.3 and 2.4) The CARNI site was full of nesting birds, and I believe their continual presence throughout the three week development process intensified the recurring motif, leading one collaborator, Jason Lehane to suggest *Aviary* as an appropriate title for the work.

![Figure 2.3](image1.jpg)  ![Figure 2.4](image2.jpg)

A child’s bedroom was built on top of a flooded canal overgrown with ivy, a make-shift kitchen built coming out of a crumbling, windowless wall; these images go beyond a lurking threat of violence, an opening is torn in the veil to reveal a world already destroyed and the enduring human desire for comfort and survival within it. It is deeply apocalyptic. For me, such images also evoke uncertainty in the viewer, as the objects and figures from the theatre work appear to ‘haunt’ the space, caught in a no-man’s land, acting as manifestations or remnants of something that should not be there. To play with this confusion is appealing, as it allows us to scrutinize this liminal zone, and create a position of slippage, leaving the audience with a sense of disquiet and disorientation regarding, that which appears to be functioning ‘betwixt and between’.

54
The Doll

“We pulled our dolls along the bars of our crib…dragged them into the heavy fold of illness. They appeared to us in dreams and were tied up in the disasters of feverish nights. That superficially painted…drowned corpse which floated on the flood-tides of our affection… They were the first to inflict this larger than human silence upon us…”

Rainer Maria Rilke

Dolls were used as a recurring theme in the development of Aviary. The doubled female protagonists were doll-like in their appearance and were constantly interacting with various automated dolls. In addition, the chorus of the development stage took the form of two painted, living dolls who emerged from the attic and invaded the domestic space. We used a short story by Rainer Maria Rilke entitled Frau Blaha’s Maid and his Duino Elegies as triggers for the development of the visual narrative. I have long been fascinated by the haunting and uncanny nature of dolls but it was not until I was introduced to the writing of Rilke by collaborator Jason Lehane, that I began to understand the enormity of their significance in an investigation of terror. The surrealists were fascinated by these decoys which possessed the look of life, mannequins,

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87 Rilke, R, M., Duino Elegies http://tonykline.co.uk Accessed 30/08/05
statues, puppets and dolls populate their visual representations of the unconscious. The disfigured and traumatised ‘poupee’ created by Hans Bellmer are perhaps the most disturbing example of such investigations (see figure 2.5).

Freud discusses the uncanny effect of the doll ‘Olympia’ in the E. T. Hoffman tale *The Sandman*, which he uses to explicate his theory of the uncanny. He uses ‘Olympia’ to illustrate the uncanniness of the doll (automaton) due to the confusion it causes in the audience as to whether something is alive or not. He relates our fear of the doll back to the castration and mother complexes but falls short of any truly satisfying analysis of the doll’s power. For Rilke, it is not just that the doll is a harbinger of death due to the ‘...threatening emptiness behind the eyes’ but rather the doll becomes ‘...a harbinger of a universe unresponsive and indifferent to the human cry for meaning...’ A sense of futility and helplessness interrupts the newly found identity of the child and threatens to annihilate all boundaries, yet not in a blissful union with the motherly universe, but through a sudden ceasing of the meaningful structure of reality. The great fear which the doll inspires is the fear of a silence and emptiness at the heart of our existence’. In his *Duino Elegies*, Rilke sets up a persistent pattern of ‘the angel’ and ‘the doll’ as symbols for the extreme poles of human ontological terror. The goal of both symbols is to poetically tackle the relationship between the human self and the universe. The angel is aesthetic and beautiful, expressing our sublime relationship with annihilation yet the doll is representative of the threat of ‘non-being’.

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89 This is of particular interest as the doll’s specific function as a ‘choric’ element in the Aviary development was replaced by the ‘bird women’ in the final production of Aviary. In addition, the ‘doll’ qualities and their symbolic significance were maintained and manifested through the character of ‘Lotte’ in the final production (see Chapter 4).
Inserting the story-Triggers

In Rilke’s bizarre and dream-like short story *Frau Blaha’s Maid* written in 1899, a maid is imprisoned in the kitchen, utterly estranged from normal social life. She gives birth to a child which she immediately strangles and wraps in her blue apron, storing it in her ‘big doll’ cupboard. She then proceeds to calmly serve dinner. A few days later she measures the body and purchases a puppet theatre along with other, smaller dolls. She invites the neighbour’s children around for a puppet show and enacts an awkward performance with the small dolls before asking the children if they would like to see her ‘big, blue doll’. Sensing the approaching horror (through the staring eyes of the ‘punch’) the children fright away and when the maid returns to find the children gone she smashes open all the doll’s heads, including the head of ‘the big blue one’.

In the Aviary development, we used this story as a trigger for our synopsis (See Appendix 3). Most of the elements from this generative story were removed or altered as I felt their actual representation on a live stage would be grotesque, bordering on the comic and would not serve our particular study of terror. Nevertheless, some elements of the story such as the kitchen as a space of confinement and the wrapping and hiding of the dead child remained.

Removing the story-Traces

For the final development piece, we selected 30 minutes of material that we felt best represented the pathway towards of the final work. The final visual narrative for the Aviary development consisted of six figures: a man, a woman, a young girl (doubled) and two painted dolls. The basic synopsis involved the young girl returning home after a traumatic event, the loss of a

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91 See Appendix 5 and 6.
child which was never spoken of (but implied through images and re-enactments using prams, cots and dolls). She is not made welcome by the figure we assume is her mother. The male figure only interacts with the young girl, seemingly unaware of the other figures in the space. The girl interacts and is haunted by all the figures. Through the device of repetition (centred on the dinner sequence), we established that the man and young girl were the only ‘real’ figures in the space; the other figures were the various elements of the young girl’s traumatised psyche.

**Key Development Discoveries**

The Aviary sketches and the subsequent audience/supervisory feedback\(^92\) revealed a number of effective elements that we would carry into the final performance. Mainly:

- The ruined atmosphere as a site of memory and the gothic effect of decaying decadence in the set design.
- The significance of the bird and aviary symbol in relation to death and imprisonment.
- The multiplying figures, seemingly haunting the space. Establishing ambiguity as to who is actually living in the space.
- The division between upstairs (nightmare/chorus) and downstairs (domestic/character) space. The placement of the male figure in the threshold (or space between) these two environments.
- The moment of terror (the death of the child) as the core of the narrative and the significance of the kitchen as the site of the trauma.\(^93\)

This final discovery was a key shift in the research and is the focus of the following chapter.

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\(^92\) See Appendix 8.

\(^93\) Interestingly, it was this focus upon the kitchen that ultimately led to the final decision to locate the work in a past rather than a present time frame (Australia at the turn of last century) as this is where water was commonly warmed for bathing.
CHAPTER 3

Returning to the Moment: Attempting to look at the Formless

As I indicated in Chapter 1 of this paper, the second phase of the research began by returning to ‘the moment’ of terror and attempting to look directly at it. As stated earlier, an untimely and horrific death of a child was clearly the basis of the image making, haunting all the figures in the performance but it was something we continued to skirt around the edges of. The decision was made to return to the seed of all the images and ‘pitch it high’. The research revealed that even the most abstract of images, if remaining true to the dynamic and emotional impact of a real moment, will retain the traces of this origin which can and will be read (albeit reflexively) by an audience.

94 I would recommend viewing the rehearsal footage of Jason Lehane and Clare Reynolds on the Aviary Development DVD (Appendix 1) as it complements the concerns of this chapter.
The final ‘Cain and Abel’ sequence of Castellucci’s Genesi- from the Museum of Sleep can be seen to be functioning in this way. In Act 3 of the piece, two misshapen men repeated a simple sequence of choreography in an abstract landscape. Over and over again, the two figures smoothly and naturally performed a cycle of wrestling gestures while the visual surroundings and sound-scape disintegrated behind them. Simultaneously, two dogs ‘performed’ an analogous action. They unceremoniously devoured the lumps of meat which had been strewn about the stage, relentlessly moving from one carcass to another for over twenty minutes. I found the silent calm of these two symbiotic actions and the profundity of their consequence almost too much to bear. I was disorientated by my response. I found it totally inexplicable. I left the theatre and I almost vomited.

I’d never witnessed a more candid account of violence. The grief I felt for humankind at that moment, the relentless slaughter present in generation after generation after generation; perhaps because it is what we have always done and will continue to do since that first symbolic murder made me physically ill. N.B. this was a heartbreaking sickness (borne from the distillation of form provoking the sublime) quite distinct from the type of atrocious, biliousness (borne of disgust) encouraged by the latest genre of horror film.96

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95 I stress the significance of this story in the Western/Christian construction of symbolic imagery. At the same time I must articulate that I am not under any illusion that this specific story is anywhere near the ‘first’ mythic parable regarding the cycle of violence.

96 See Saw, Hostel 1 and 2 and Wolf Creek. Note the prevalence of ‘the ruin’ in the mise-en-scene. I do not wish to go into detail about this new horror genre within the body of the paper as it leads the argument of this thesis slightly off track, however, it is worth mentioning and discussing the ‘morality tale’ inherent within this new breed of ‘torture flicks’. Horror films are always extremely revealing because underneath all the fright and blood and guts they speak candidly of the inherent fear of any given culture at any given time. In addition, since the 1950’s they have been specifically marketed to the teenager and hold within them very specific warnings regarding the limits of sexual desire and potential transgression. One only has to look at Texas Chainsaw Massacre in relation to late 70’s post-Vietnam America, or the 80’s obsession with the nightmares of hegemonic suburbia to understand that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. So what is this ‘pornography of death’ we dealing with in 2007? It’s a lazy convenience to say it’s all too sadistic to contemplate and therefore stop looking. They are, after all, reflections. The base narrative is as follows; a group of young people are pushing
This image seemed to contain a perception of the first symbolic act of violence to the last in the one protracted visual frame. It was as the artist had implied\(^7\). The apocalypse was visible only within an examination of ‘the seed’ contained within the genesis myth. This reading of the ‘first murder’ was not made visible in any obvious way; there was no gripping, building narrative, no Stanislavskian signification with character, no grotesque expliciation of torture or violence, no intellectual justification, it was just the way it was (like the dogs eating meat) and as such was acutely felt. We only see terror through a reflection, a sign. To return to Plato’s allegory, lifting the veil, looking directly at our apocalypse is not possible; we rely upon our puppeteers to highlight such obliteration through the shadows they cast upon the cave wall.

\(^7\) Castellucci. R., Genesi- From the Museum of Sleep, 2002 Melbourne Festival, Program Notes.
Such an example inspired our return to the genesis of the *Aviary* narrative in an attempt to see what reflections could be yielded from an intensive focus upon it. The writing reproduced in Chapter 1 was the starting point of this practical research and from this the actors were asked to formulate their own interpretation of this moment. We then began a series of intensive improvisations based on the moment of discovery i.e. the moment the female character wakes to discover her child dead as the male character crosses the threshold doomed to an identical, terrifying discovery.

These improvisations were then repeatedly video recorded to institute patterns of text usage, movement and gesture. From this process we established that for the female character (Charlotte), traumatic shock was producing a disassociation effect where memories of a perceived past and projections of a desired future were far more palatable than the terror of the present moment. Two additional female characters were introduced to the process to study the character of Charlotte and formulate the embodiment of her past (resulting in the young innocent, Lotte) and future (personified by the drowned corpse, Charlie) reflections. The concept was based on the idea of a elliptical narrative that continually returned to different points of this key sequence (based upon birth, the female body, isolation, violence, water and drowning), incrementally edging closer to a revelation of the Real, central moment.

The male character (Tom) seemed to be continually violating this disassociation by crossing the threshold and attempting to drag her back to into a present reality. In the final outcome, this cathartic dynamic remained in trace form, with the male character envisioned as the embodiment of the repeated trauma; trapped in the moment of crossing the boundary of the home, where a bird cage was dropped, haunted by the released past memories which were signified by the three Charlottes. The fluidity of their mutual
choric reflections, embodied by the ‘apocalypse bird women’ and the ‘grey men’ were discovered later in the process and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The repetition of the key moment through improvisation revealed a recurring rhythm and emotional dynamic which was analysed in the context of unspeakable terror. The four key states discovered are outlined as follows:

- **Shock:** The initial terror of waking to find that the baby has drowned made increasingly manifest by the homecoming of the male character.

- **Denial:** The female character wraps the dead child in a cloth and hides it in the meat safe as the male character approaches. In a state of terror, the threat is becoming reality, but the character attempts to deny this by treating the body of her child as if it were a lump of meat and frantically cleaning. In response to increasingly urgent questioning the female character moves into a state of escalating denial, with both characters maintaining physical and emotional contact with the other. The male character, unaware of the gravity of the situation, attempts to move towards an affectionate understanding of her distressed state while the female character simultaneously tries to avoid his questioning, becoming increasingly aggressive.

- **Revelation and Anger:** The male character discovers the dead child in the meat safe and explodes with violent rage. His repressed shadow of violence (personified in the chorus by the grey men) becomes visible and he releases this rage upon the female character. The female character remains in a state of denial, cleaning and hiding. This volatile movement gradually descends into a final attempt at reconciliation and understanding before disintegrating into solitary, repetitive actions.

- **Grief:** Both characters are left isolated from each other, ultimately silenced by their desolation.
Ironically, even though this intensely dramatic explication of terror was used to build the entire emotional pulse of *Aviary*, the decision was made to remove this final ‘illumination’ in the form of a heightened naturalistic explosion from the last section of the work. This decision was instinctively based in the desire to remain true to the original drive of the research, to endeavour to represent the seemingly unrepresentable. We felt that showing the moment of terror would have lifted the veil, providing the audience with linear closure and in doing so would have worked against the core, liminal drive of the study.

In addition to discovering these key emotional states with their associated gestures and physical manifestations, this intimate and intense focus upon the central moment exposed additional narrative elements that became essential to the intricate mise-en-scene of the performance. These can be broken down as follows:

- The petrified figures imprisoned within an isolated, disintegrating homestead at the turn of last century which generated a distinctive ‘Australian’ gothic influence in the costume, set and properties, light and sound design.

- The research into cultural anxieties prevalent during this time period revealed the advent of nationhood and the traumatic involvement of the Australian military in the conflict of other nations (The Boer War) which was predominantly relevant to the character construction of Tom and particularly his choric shadows, the grey men (NB: the sound of dying horses, the polishing of the saddle, the wearing of the uniform and so on as symbolic reflections of this).

- The research also exposed an unusually high prevalence of infanticide and abortion in the female population due to harsh economic and social

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98 See the original draft in Appendix 10
realities, influencing the character construction of Charlotte and her choric reflections through the apocalypse bird women.

While these elements and their associated coding in the work could be potentially analysed in detail, specifically the dualistic opposition of the ‘violent man’ and the ‘hysterical woman’ and its relationship to domestic terror, I have chosen not to focus on this as part of my dissertation even though it is enlightening when approaching a reading of the final work. Rather, I return again to the key concerns of the liminal and the sublime and their relationship to ontological terror.

The four key emotional states Shock, Denial, Revelation/Rage and Grief revealed by this stage of the practical research corresponded to the four veils essential to nightmarish imagery and Burke’s conception of sublime terror: Darkness, Nothingness, Obscurity and Emptiness. The fourfold narrative and symbolic structure of Aviary was built around the curvilinear relationship between these subjective emotional realities and their confinement within the form of visual performance.

Figure 3.2

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CHAPTER 4

THE PRISON OF GRIEF:
THE FINAL PRODUCTION\textsuperscript{100}

Imprisoned in the ruined vessel of time…
What we fear is just beyond our grasp…

Aviary 2006

The final chapter of this thesis is concerned with how the shattered refractions of ontological terror, revealed through an intensive focus on the scene of grief, were made manifest in Aviary.

I will approach this complexity in two ways; the first section references the research of Kimberly Segall and Laura DiPrete, whose critical analysis is primarily concerned with readings of trauma in contemporary literature, and uses their research to further elucidate the aesthetic experience of the traumatic sublime. Inherent within these readings is a return to Freud’s conception of the uncanny, ‘repetition compulsion’ and the death drive as well as the Lacanian notion of the Real. From the basis of this research, primarily concerned with artistic examples that approach representations of terror and grief through the veil of language, I will provide a complementary reading of Aviary through an examination of its visual veils; repetitive and liminal sequencing, the overall mise-en-scène, non-linguistic coding (through gesture and symbolic objects), and the blending of intersubjective domestic-choric bodies.

\textsuperscript{100} I would advise the reader to refer to Appendix 1 (DVD) for Aviary footage, Appendix 11 (Aviary Synopsis), Appendix 12 (Key Symbols) and Appendix 13 (Final Performance Notation) before commencing this chapter.
The final section will shed further light on the four sequences of *Aviary* by recovering seemingly benign objects from the depths of the sink. The sink in *Aviary* is the watery origin of the terror, symbolic of the void and the unconscious. Through the symbolic transfiguration of the objects, we may be able to glimpse their reflections of terror throughout the space and examine their relationship to the four key ‘veils’ and four key emotional states as identified in the last chapter.

**The Threshold Disintegrates**

‘The moment of terror, like the instant of pain, is a moment of zero time and infinite duration. Although terror can only occur in history, it is felt as a naked singularity, existing outside all possible representation. In the actual time that terror and pain occur, history cancels itself, places itself under erasure and disappears’.

Anthony Kubiak

Kubiak’s profound observation upon a temporality of terror seems to capture the lived experience of a traumatic event; the implosion of time and space, the known world collapsing in on itself, the conception of self splitting and disintegrating as its boundaries are breached. Grief is uncanny. The shock involved with sudden loss rips holes in veils, revealing the gaps between secure dichotomies; Past and Future, Self and Other, Body and Mind, Presence and Absence, Known and Unknown. The moment of ‘...zero time and infinite duration’, to which victims of trauma compulsively return, is a cataclysmic collision revealing a zone of erasure, of nothingness.

In Segall’s identification of the ‘traumatic sublime’ within J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* she articulates the close relationship between trauma, the sublime experience, the Freudian uncanny and the ‘return of the repressed’. What she identifies in this Post-Apartheid, South African novel is a reconfiguration of

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trauma and terror into multiplied, ghostly figures and objects with figurative association. She describes how the traumatic sublime is used as ‘...a strategy of symbolic recollection...with the female ghost as a symbol of remembrance’.

These liminal figures signify a resistance to full erasure and are a distinctive departure from the vengeful haunting of the gothic narrative, or the infinitely returning phantoms which seek retribution in Japanese and Chinese ghost tales. In Coetzee’s novel, the male protagonist is suspended in a pattern of self-destruction, a cycle of relentless return to violent and traumatic memories, which take the form of multiple ghostly bodies (who desperately gesticulate in an attempt to be heard but are trapped in silence) and uncanny objects and images (broken dolls, abandoned dogs and bleeding beds). The source of the tragedy is obscured by such symbolic transformation and the gaze is shifted from self to ‘other’. This transference is interesting as the phantom ‘other’ functions on a dual symbolic level, as both a ghostly representative of the protagonist’s inner trauma and as a difficult reminder of the obscurity inherent in attempting to comprehend the traumatic experience of another. This transference and symbolic transformation of the unassimilable Real is the source of sublime terror within the narrative.

102 Segall, op.cit, p41.
‘The concept of the phantom, in its latency, is like throwing the voice…a phantom’s compulsive return works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject’s own mental topography’.

Nicolas Abraham

In her revealing analysis of Don DeLillo’s, The Body Artist, Laura DiPrete describes how the female protagonist compulsively returns to the harrowing scenario of her husband’s suicide through her interactions with a phantasmic figure she discovers in the attic. Through these eccentric communications with the hallucination she is effectively ‘working out’ her own trauma as well as confronting the uncanny voice of ‘the other’ buried within the self. I will quote DiPrete’s analysis of this device at length as it may assist in illuminating the intention behind the relationship of Tom and the ghostly phantoms of Charlotte in Aviary. ‘On the one hand the voice of the slain beloved stands for ‘the other’ within the self, the inner ‘foreign body’ or phantom that knows the traumatic content of an event inaccessible to the host mind; on the other hand

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(according to Cathy Caruth) the phantom voice stands for the intersubjective dynamic by which the subject, listening to the communication, bears witness to the trauma of another’.  

In the latter part of the novel, the protagonist returns again to the Real moment, transforming the haunting into bodily representation through her art form. The final return is cathartic, releasing her from the destructive drive towards death, exorcising the phantom of grief through the social and aesthetic realm of performance. In her analysis of his narrative, DiPrete highlights how DeLillo uses the shattering of memories, distortion of time and space, the phantasmic ‘other’, the symbol of the foreign body, and the notion of ‘collective bearing witness’ to articulate a ‘...language of bereavement’.

DeLillo deconstructs language and privileges strange ambiguities to ‘...force trauma into representation...to tell a story in which the known is deeply imbricated in the unknown’. The visual landscape of Aviary was also concerned with wrenching the ‘unseeable’ into representation through disintegration, liminality and ambiguity in the formal treatment of the subject-trauma and this was achieved (as it was for the protagonist of DeLillo’s novel) through the manipulation of witnessed bodies and objects in real time and space.

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105 Ibid, p487.
106 Ibid p483.
107 Ibid, p484.
Time in the Aviary

‘Something is happening. It has happened. It will happen’.

Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist*¹⁰⁸

The convergence of past and future flattening out into an infinite void of terror was the organising principle behind the repetitive and disintegrating image sequencing of *Aviary*. Excluding the prelude, which serves a ritualistic function by guiding the audience through a physical journey over a bridge and into a heightened reality (introducing the beginning of the tragedy along the way as multiple figures search for something in and around the river, a figure is seen crawling up the embankment and the women recover a dress and locket from the water) we can identify four key (indoor) image sequences; A, B, C and D. These function temporally like a figure 8 drawn repetitively over a central vertical line which is representative of ‘crossing the threshold’ (see Figure 4.2). Starting at the top of the figure, the first curve downwards to the left is Sequence A which, after crossing the centre point, moves diagonally down through Sequence B. Here we arrive at the mid-point of the

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performance, the bottom of the vertical line. These two initial movements establish the configuration of memory which guides us through and towards the central point of trauma in the narrative. Crossing the threshold again (Tom discovers a carcass of rotting meat), we move through Sequence C (the shadow of Sequence B which is domestic in its focus). Voyaging again through the centre point of terror, the present, signified in the performance by Charlotte’s wrapping of the dead child and Tom’s discovery of the grey men in the archway (see figure 4.1), we move back up through Sequence D (the shadow of A which is primarily Choric), arriving back at our point of origin (the re-entrance of the drowned corpse of Charlotte circling back in time and re-witnessing her own trauma).

This description is not intended to be obtuse; if drawn repetitively, it is the most effective way of articulating the collapse of time within a moment of terror and the functioning of temporality within the Aviary narrative. All the witnessed moments blur into one obscured moment, ad infinitum.

Within each phase of the performance, we can identify the instability in the flow of time (caused by the figure 8 intersecting the vertical line) which returns the protagonist, Tom (and the multiplied spectres of Charlotte), to the threshold. The glitch is the crashing of the bird-cage and its threefold symbolic mutation at the beginning of each sequence which signifies a relentless return to the unassimilable Real. For Tom, this is the moment where his comfortable existence shattered into a million pieces. For Charlotte, the homecoming of Tom signifies the horror of having to face the reality of her drowned infant. In this moment of crossing, grief takes flight in the aviary and the maker of cages is no longer able to contain or control his reality. He continuously departs and returns, and through this repetitive action, is forced to confront the increasingly visible transfigurations of trauma which inhabit the space. The
threshold that Tom physically inhabits, the space between upstairs and downstairs, the unhomely and the homely, the living and the dead, the known and the unknowable is deeply disturbed in this narrative.

**Space in the Aviary**

The overall mise-en- scene is organised by the spatial distinction between the outside, unhomely, choric space (upstairs) and the inside, homely, domestic space (downstairs). At the threshold we have the key (cage drop) archway, Tom’s workshop and the staircase. The distinction between these spaces is established in the first two sequences, becoming increasingly blurred by the invasion of unhomely elements into the domestic space in the final two sequences. The inherent unhomeliness of the domestic space is revealed as light is shed on the downstairs space in the second half of the performance, revealing the ruined environment.

Each installed area of the space is concerned with the imprint of trauma. The spaces are organised to correspond symbolically to each figure and their associated traces of memory (Charlies photo area, Lotte’s nursery, Charlotte’s kitchen, Tom’s attic and the shared dining area).
Inhabitants of the Aviary

“Every angel is terror. 
And yet, ah knowing you, I invoke you, almost deadly birds of the soul”

Rilke, The Second Elegy

As explicated earlier, the ‘traumatic sublime’ employs the convention of intersubjective figures which serve as sites of remembrance. These phantom bodies are borne from the shattering of self into other in a moment of terror. These bodies are the birds of the soul, trapped within the aviary of the mind and body. The multiplication of Charlotte into the woman in the kitchen, the ‘doll like’ innocent and the drowned corpse function as representatives of the past, present and future.

Charlotte’s mother, a symbol of transgenerationally transmitted trauma, hovers in-between domestic memory and the actions of the nightmarish bird women. These additional choric figures who through their movement across borders of time and space (eventually arriving at the sink) and use of symbolic objects act as extensions of Charlotte’s traumatic memory (see figures 3.2, 4.3 and 4.8). Tom is also multiplied by a choric shadow, the faceless grey twins who threaten the female figures in the space and enact violence upon each other.

Rilke, R, M., Duino Elegies http://tonykline.co.uk Accessed 30/08/05
Through the creation of these inhabitants and their movement through time and space, we were interested in establishing a fluid ambiguity of interaction; a liminal uncanniness. The shock of the untimely death of the child and the traumatic suicide by drowning is unassimilable. Psychic boundaries are dissolved and the figures become intersubjective, a blurring of self and other, past and future. We were interested in the notion of double imprints occurring in key moments and attempted to achieve uncanny contradictions through detailed body language and gesture and the character’s reactions to symbolic spaces and objects. This notion of double imprinting in image making is explicated in the following examples.

In Sequence A, we witness Tom and the mother in the attic where she appears to comfort him as she hands over a locket. Given that we see her with this locket by the river in the prelude, is this trace a memory of the marriage arrangement or the moment when Tom realises Charlotte has drowned? In Sequence B, Tom leads Lotte downstairs to her new home where she hesitates slightly as she passes the kitchen as if sensing something unsettling. Tom drops her hand and ceases to interact with her as she follows him dutifully into the nursery. All the objects are covered with cloth and dust as if the room has been uninhabited for some time. He picks out a dress, hangs it on a hook, and lingers with it for a moment before leaving. The fond memory of Lotte’s arrival blends into a strange and lonely interaction with her buried dress. We used this device numerous times throughout the piece (see the merger of Lotte and Charlotte in the dishes sequence B) to establish a liminality and strangeness where Tom’s interactions with the phantoms are at once past memories of Charlotte, a witnessing and acting out the trauma of ‘the other’ (see the dance with traps in sequence C) and his own solitary imprisonment in grief (see his movement through the empty ruin in sequence D). Often, symbolic objects function as uncanny phantoms in the narrative. During
dinner (see sequence B) Tom becomes absorbed in carving the meat and Lotte leaves the table. Tom looks up to find the trace of her gone and realises he is carving a rock. The rock should not be there and it functions uncannily as ‘foreign body’ in the domestic scene.

The traces of Charlotte in the space and their interactions with each other serve an equally liminal function as internal witnesses to the tragedy. The future unravels as a re-enactment of the past where the future self constantly attempts to warn the past self to avert the cyclical tragedy. For example, Charlotte holds broken plates out to Lotte, silently screaming at her (see sequence C). The spectre of the drowned corpse functions in a similar way, perpetually involved in a grieving ritual for herself and her child. Emerging from the river, she enters the kitchen and attempts to wake ‘herself’. Startled by the homecoming of Tom she crosses the first threshold but becomes trapped in the last archway. She sets up death photography of her past, of her young, innocent self and her mother. Her photographs, which develop on the walls of the home at the end of each sequence, capture the symbolic deaths in each cycle (the death of the past, the death of the self, the death of the relationship, the death of the child). She builds a stone grave. She attempts to block Tom each time he leaves the house. In sequence D, she dismantles the grave, packing the rocks into a suitcase and heads outside towards the river. For collaborator Kirsten Prins and myself, it is as if she is damned to repeat this commemoration ritual over and over again until she can discover an opening, a way out.

Having identified some specific examples of the traumatic sublime and the liminal uncanny in the treatment of time, space and domestic/choric figures in Aviary, I will now return to the thematic and symbolic structure of the piece, the four key veils and four key states which define the emotional rhythm and dynamic of the performance.
Reflections of the Drowned

Sequence A: Shadows of the Past

Darkness and Shock

*Charlotte pulls a locket out of the sink.*

The overall intention in the creation of this sequence was to simulate the collapsing of past and future time and the shattering of identity (see the first movement of multiplying figures with cages), which can occur in a present moment of sudden loss. In our recorded improvisations of the trauma, Charlotte was immobilised with shock, staring blankly into the sink before moving into a state of denial and desperately cleaning. The shadows and impressions of this sequence were the choric reflections of this state. Inspired by Bill Henson’s liminal aesthetic, we hoped to replicate imprints of past and future memory receding in and out of darkness, with the recollections functioning like the fragments of half remembered dreams. The locket, as a symbol for the containment of memories and a token of courtship was used to establish a connection between the domestic phantoms, each interacting with the object at the same time. The sequence also served to establish a sequence of
past events which led to the central moment. As the sequence approaches the centre point, we see the choric phantoms desperately tapping out SOS on the windows and on typewriters. This is a warning; we are getting too close to the Real. We see Charlotte frantically cleaning in the rubble beneath the kitchen sink. A grey man erases the face of the young lover and duplicates as the drowned corpse prepares the first death photograph of the young Lotte and her mother. These are the visual reflections which make up the veils covering the shock and terror of waking/crossing the threshold to discover a drowned child.

Sequence B: The Homecoming

Emptiness and Denial

*Charlotte finds a length of torn fabric.*

At the beginning of this sequence we return to Tom making cages in his workshop and witness the mother bringing Lotte to the threshold of the house. Again we see Tom return to the dreaded archway but this time the cage

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10 See Appendix 11
11 See Figure 4.2
has transformed into an idealised memory of Lotte. The overriding motivation of this sequence was denial, to pretend everything is fine. The domestic space looks beautiful, shrouded in mist with overhanging fairy lights. Lotte and Tom court with each other through their dancing and share a bed (shown symbolically by wrapping in fabric). We then see the beginnings of the disintegration as Charlotte finds a length of torn fabric. This recovery of the moulded material echoes the simultaneous image of Lotte, bound in a bed sheet, alone in a threatening environment (see choric shadows with foxes). Tom arrives home with game for dinner and we witness the ambiguous blurring of domestic and disturbing memory (wrapping of the duck/baby), as we prepare to cross the threshold again in the movement towards Sequence C.

**Sequence C: Abstracting B**

**Obscurity and Rage**

*Charlotte pulls broken plates from the sink, silently screaming her warning to Lotte. Charlotte pulls hair from the sink and puts it in the meat safe. Returning to the water she wraps her drowned child in fabric and pulls the dripping bundle from the water.*

Figure 4.6
Sequence C is best understood when viewed as an abstraction of the previous sequence. Tom returns to the cage arch to find a wrapped bundle of rotting meat. The rage borne of terrifying disclosure is the unifying emotional dynamic of this cycle, but the revelation is obscured. Obscurity is functioning in two ways throughout; shadowiness and ‘covering’ or obscuring the origin of the trauma. In the improvisations (see Chapter 3), this movement was signified by an outburst of rage and anger in the male character upon the discovery of his child in the meat safe. In this cycle, the domestic space is filled with harsh light, casting shadows throughout the space. The shadowy grey men are also becoming more visible, firing their guns at the women in the top windows as if they were sitting ducks at a fun-fair. Tom sets traps throughout the space and hangs Lotte (who has become increasingly doll like) on a meat hook. Charlotte pulls broken plates from the sink and holds them towards Lotte, screaming...attempting to warn her. The romantic dance transforms into a dance macabre as Charlotte pulls a seemingly endless length of hair from the sink (symbolic of death\textsuperscript{112}). All the while, the domestic figures are observed by the bird women who have begun to decay. Tom leaves the house again and this time, as we approach a second crossing through the centre of the figure 8 we witness Charlotte pulling a dripping bundle from the sink, the obscured origin of the trauma. The function of the chorus as a symbolic reflection of the domestic terror is perhaps most evident in this sequence. The screeching, abstraction of a bird woman, half rotten with her spine visible through her back, is seen dragging a cello across the nightmare space. This is a ‘traumatically sublime’, amplified image, which literally screams out the grief of the protagonist. At the end of the sequence, the mother enters the domestic space, pulling a tiny bird from her mouth, a double imprint, symbolic of the co-existence of birth and death.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{112} See Appendix 12
\textsuperscript{113} See Appendix 12
Sequence D: Abstracting A

Nothingness/Grief

Drowning, Charlotte pulls herself out of the sink.

In this final movement, Tom returns to the threshold to meet his shadow, the grey twins with cages of wire protruding from their stomachs. He takes them with him back into the darkness, as nightmarish abstractions of the memory sequences from A invade the entire space (including his one refuge from the phantoms, the cage workshop). The sound of an incessantly crying baby infiltrates the landscape. Lotte uncovers the moulding, decaying cot moving continually backwards to meet her future death (see wrapping in shroud) as the chorus invade the domestic space. Drowning, Charlotte pulls herself out of the sink. Each moment of this sequence moves closer to a revelation of the Real as Tom (after facing the dead body, see figure 4.7) passes through the empty ruin of his existence.
The visual veils are become increasingly transparent as the caged and grieving bird women converge upon the kitchen. We are getting closer to grasping the moment of terror, we can almost touch it. The corpse returns, and slowly lifting the arm of Charlotte, is startled by the shrieking birds and drops the veil back down as Tom returns again to his repressed moment. He calls out, “Charlotte” and drops one of his cages, releasing the cycle again. The shock of the human voice in real space and time disintegrates the entire refraction, returning it to the darkness, casting it back into the watery depths of the sink.

No single witness of these reflections will interpret their meaning in the same way. The reading above is aligned with my specific intentions and the desires of my collaborators in the creation of a piece of visual performance, a privilege not given to an audience member. Nevertheless, within the silence, in the cracks pried open by carefully constructed images, the traces of emotional truth will, ideally, remain to be deeply and kinaesthetically felt by the spectators.
CONCLUSION

Night Falls...

‘In the interval between each thought,
In the interval between each heartbeat,
In the place where there is no breath,
We recall what we always knew.’

In the creation of any artwork, one strives towards the realisation of something, which in some way fulfils our contract within our community. This indenture as an artist/researcher acting as a bricoleur is not unlike the pact of a scientist. To identify a crucial impasse, evaluate the risks, imagine various solutions, research the findings of others within and without of one’s field, experiment, collaborate and finally, distribute the findings.

Artists are not comfortable with centre points or the middle ground, at least, they shouldn’t be.

Historically, we have longed to encapsulate the transformative power of the sublime; and teetering on the edges of possibility, we sometimes get too close, harming ourselves and each other as we peer into the chasm, reaching towards the obscure and mining the limits of the darkness, not because we crave damage, but because like a child with expanded circles of attention, we can’t help but be curious.

We endeavour to extract that shining morsel; the key which will illuminate something of significance to our shared human understanding, and provide for our audience the experience of catharsis, the elusive epiphany which results in lasting transformation. I am not suggesting I achieved this level of

114 Thompson, W.I., op. cit. p7.
witnessing within my audience; I merely strove towards it, which is half the battle.

Returning to the aims of the Masters research and the objectives I set myself in the creation of Aviary, I can confidently conclude that it is indeed possible to approach a representation of seemingly invisible ontological ground through the mechanisms and coding of the liminal, the uncanny and the traumatic sublime. I believe that Aviary was successful in demonstrating the potency of the liminal uncanny and the traumatic sublime as contemporary performance aesthetics that can function as a means to reflect deeply personal terror and trauma.

Overall, while the production was successful in relationship to my objectives, the intense focus on the scene of grief and the resulting ambiguous complexity of the mise-en-scene could be criticised for being too inwardly focused, self-contained and at times overly obscure. While I feel this intricacy was a major strength of the production, some audience members expressed a sense of frustration and a desire to understand, with greater clarity, the origin and meaning behind the complex imagery. While ambiguity and indeterminacy are core mechanisms of a liminal aesthetic, there is a balance to be found between allowing silence and space for audiences to feel inspired in the creation of their own meaning yet reveal enough so as not to leave the ‘uninitiated’ floundering in confusion. Finding this balance as artists and the issue of ‘reader competency’ in audiences remains one of the major challenges for performance, which utilises these aesthetic mechanisms.

In addition, Aviary was intensely focused on personal terror and trauma manifesting in a domestic situation (albeit with its inherent politics) and while the choric elements provided glimpses into wider social, cultural or historical terrors, the production was limited in demonstrating how the liminal uncanny
or the traumatic sublime may deal with the phenomena of ‘terror’ beyond a domestic or personal focus. Nevertheless, the theatre of Romeo Castellucci and his employment of liminal aesthetics to give testimony to traumatic history, cultural terrors and collective grief gives me confidence in the potential power of such performance mechanisms to speak to us of the unspeakable in its wider social and political context.

While the mechanisms and devices discussed and produced by this research approach possible avenues by which to investigate and reflect upon terror and trauma in performance, the representation of their ‘real’ manifestation remains just beyond our grasp. To answer the cry of Artaud, who articulates our inability to express or represent any ‘true feeling’ (as reproduced in the introduction), it is at this point that I quote Gene Ray who, grappling with an equivalent question, muses:

‘For while sublime contemporary art practices evoke and avow traumatic collective history and imitate, in their effects, the structural belatedness or after-occurrence of trauma, these practices do not silence us so intractably as do the real events that are their referents. And precisely for this reason, such art, when successful can function as an opening for the processing of traumatic history: for testimony and reflection, for the work and play of mourning, for ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’. 115

I have provided through my theoretical and practical research a hermeneutical reading of the creation and production of a live and ephemeral theatrical event, which, I fully acknowledge, in the hands of one of my collaborators or one of my audience members would have had a complementary, yet completely unique, symbolic and emotional positioning.

Ironically for myself, as the animateur, each attempt to move away from a therapeutic investigation of my own experience of ontological terror brought me ever closer to its heartfelt reflection in visual performance. This aesthetic abstraction of the spectre of grief was embodied and witnessed and ultimately cathartic in its result.

It can finally be put to rest.
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APPENDIX 2

Summary of the outcome of Honours Research:
Deakin University: 2003

The principle drive of my honours research was to explore horror, the grotesque and the uncanny in relationship to theatrical representation. The series of performances developed for my honours project entitled, *Sublime Horror: An Investigation into the Theatrics of Terror* were primarily phenomenological investigations into the archetypes of terror, nightmare and loss:

*June...the place does not matter* explored the presence of the grotesque through a carnivalesque, outdoor performance at La Mama about a family living in a caravan and dealing with the nightmare of immobility. *The Alp* was an investigation into the subjective nightmare of coping with trauma and worked elliptically around the horrific through an investigation of the uncanny.

Neither production created for the study successfully evoked terror in the audience; however, they led me to agree with Artaud’s and more recently Kubiak’s notion that theatre is in fact the medium of terror. I concluded that some sort of hybrid project which sat between the chaotic and disturbed surrealism of *JUNE* and the intimate, dream-like world of the *ALP* held the potential for a performance work which could be defined as ‘liminal uncanny’ and effectively evoke dread in an audience. I identified Romeo Castellucci, Peter Greenaway, and David Lynch as practitioners working in this realm of signification. I concluded that terror, like the uncanny is found in the fissures of our existence, in the ambiguous space between our oppositions.

I stated that among the grandest aspirations for artists is to generate art that will force us to stop in our tracks, demanding that we turn around and proceed to unmask the demons that pursue us. The grotesque and the uncanny are merely two aesthetic tools artists have utilised in an attempt to unveil our terror. Saturated with the constant presence of horror, its theatrical representation ceases to affect us while its absence in such a context breeds complacency. If the purpose of the grotesque was to banish our ‘cosmic terror’ could it be that the ‘liminal uncanny’ represents our attempts to grapple with the reality of an indefinable existence...an indefinable enemy? The current dissolution of structural oppositions, traditionally used to classify our reality, is creating a consciousness of an ever-widening void, a vacant playground of possibility, a borderland, representative not only of our aspirations but the ferment of our terror.
APPENDIX 3

Summary of Development Material

March to May 2005

UNTITLED

Figures: Cast = 13 core ensemble with possibly another 8-10 figures.
4 Stone Men/Black Dogs
8 faceless women: eight levels of consciousness
Crow/Swallow
8 x Chorus (Bosch inspired characters)

Setting:
The ideal location for the staging of this work is a large, cavernous, desolate space (longer than it is wide). The set is a 2/3 story dolls house which is a large version of a classic design with opening front and attic. The attic floods throughout the performance until it runs down to the lower level. A hole is blown through the middle, revealing a distant Bosch inspired landscape. Possibly the audience is seated at attic level and look down into the house.

Act One: DARKNESS

SILENCE is not a theatrical moment…it is all there is…

Abandoned house…

A woman arrives home in the dark alone. She proceeds to move through every room in the house and the audience sees her through the windows switching the lights on and off as if she is checking for something. She moves downstairs…turns on an old record player.

As she listens…a figure moves through the other rooms cleaning…this figure multiplies into 7 figures all moving about in the darkness. The woman is oblivious to this.

Record: Do you remember when you were little and you would go into the school library and all you could think was to scream and scream because it was so quiet? Or the feeling walking down the aisle of a church where you just wish your head would start spinning around and screaming obscenities to ease the building pressure of silence…the slimy touch of nothingness…that slowly eats you away…but you were never the one to break it…in fact…this is your family legacy…your duty…because a mastery of silence, to possess others through it is…
“When did you last sleep?”

**Crow sequences**...the Garden of Eden...Who is crow? Who is crow?  
God went on sleeping...Crow went on laughing...  
Crow is God’s nightmare...Crow is the archetypical trickster.

**The entrails of power**...I stand in the graveyard...victorious amongst the dead...I contemplate my position...I am alone here...my fear is conquered...that is why I come...that IS WHY I STAND HERE...I talk to the dead...I plead for my forgiveness...in fear they may be angered by my liveness.

**Shadows** (through windows)...figures in windows... (sound: pig noises in the walls)  
The effect should be that the audience are straining to make out what it is they are looking at. This is never fully revealed.  
1. Rabbit holding a clowns head in one paw...a watering can in the other.

**Flooded Attic with vacuum men (inspired by the paintings of Lucy Parkinson):**  
Faceless woman is asleep...water is spilling from under the bed...she wakes but cannot move...the black dogs come up from under the water and reach towards the bed (sound...high pitched screeching that sounds almost like white noise). The vines in the attic are attached to the black dogs groins...the metallic vines make their way towards the woman and move up under her dress (sound of vacuum cleaners). The tubes suck the life out of the woman.

**Black Dogs**...the dogs make a splashing sound when they move...they shriek when they talk...they have metallic vacuum vines attached to their groins.

**Act Two: ENDLESSNESS**

**Red threads** streaming from roof of bedroom. Faceless woman awakes and pulls a large pair of scissors from under her pillow...the threads cannot be cut...they keep coming, engulfing the bed. Darkness again.

**Flapping/crucified bird**  
The light which can be seen through the windows is clouded and pinkish in colour...a circular spotlight is visible in front of the house (or downstairs room). A small dead bird can be seen at the front of the circle...the sound of flapping wings and scraping claws. A large black figure moves through the house skittishly making shadows in the windows of the house as if it is trying to escape. It appears to be a bird of some kind with enormous, heavy wings which scrape along the floor. It flaps down stairs/slipping/falling down stairs (sound phone ringing). This is repeated a number of times. Sound of distant footsteps can be heard from the ceiling...increasing in number and volume...Men in uniform appear...only their backs can be seen...they make formation in lower area of the house trapping the bird (sound of smashing cars). The soldier figures remain motionless in military formation. Two metal hooks are lowered from the ceiling and two figures reveal their faces...they are black dogs and they attach the distraught bird to the apparatus (one hook for each wing).
Throughout this sequence the old record of ‘the happy prince’ has been playing on the record player...playing it should reach the lines “bring me the two most precious things on the earth...an the angels brought the dead swallow and the lead heart of the stone man...” Sound of screeching and tearing as the hooks lift the birds wings off the ground...as the wings expand out they reveal the figure naked and stone coloured. As the wings spread across the space...tiny gold leaves float down covering the space. The dogs scurry away. The naked figure is revealed to be a man made of stone...the dead bird lies at his feet. The faceless women descend the staircase holding empty bird cages which they place at the feet of the statue...they open the cages and remove dead crows...they beat the statue with the birds and then and begin to wash the statue down. They place the dead birds back in the cages and exit the space. (or alternatively/later as second crow image...the statue is wearing a black trench coat which is opened by the women...dead crows are pinned to the inside of the jacket. They detach the birds and place them in the cages...slowly exiting the space).

Attic of black twigs
The roof of the attic opens to reveal the floor covered in black branches. Evidence that the space was once a child’s nursery is clearly visible but overgrown with the foliage. Dancerella doll is turned on and moving on the floor...music box with ballerina is playing... The faceless women lie hidden in the foliage and slowly stand and reveal themselves. They slowly turn in time with the music and this is the first time the light allows their faces to be seen. They are wearing masks which disguise all their features. They are flesh coloured but it is as if their face has been rubbed off (sound of cracking bones). They begin to tear small pieces off the wallpaper behind them to reveal...

Distant landscape Bosch (Temptation of St Anthony) series of tableaux
A procession of figures (especially tree men)...inspired by the painting of Bosch move slowly across the landscape. The tableaux in his paintings have enormous theatrical potential...particularly if they are isolated from each other.

A replica of the stone man is pushed from the attic...it smashes on the ground.

Act Three: OBSCURITY

The Raining Staircase
One of the faceless women sits under the staircase under an open umbrella. The water from the attic is running down the stairs making a rain effect underneath. The flickering light reveals the walls under the stairs and the umbrella covered with barcodes.

“I am terrified of my own reflection...especially at night...what if I look and someone else is looking back at me...or worse still...what if I look and the reflection changes...if my reflection reveals some horrible demon in my own face...if I stare too long I think I have reached the border of my reason...I have a second face in addition to the first and perhaps even a third...the third face is just the beginning”
The Mouth Chamber with dead sunflower

The mouth is the prison...if you dream your teeth are falling out...it means either you are lying or you will soon be released...the primal power of seizing and incorporation...

The mirrors have teeth and whoever stands too close will be devoured.

One of the faceless women moves through the corridor which is wet and dark. She is clutching a large, dead sunflower. She arrives at the yellow, kitchen door and hesitates, looking behind her. She holds the large, rotting flower in her right hand and with her left she goes to open the door...she hesitates...she can hear breathing on the other side of the door...she pushes the door open and before her...a sea of mouths...teeth and tongues moving silently at a rapid pace. They cover every surface of the kitchen...floors, ceiling, walls... “You should throw it away” (repeated at sickening pace and volume level). She moves into the centre of the room and the mouths are silent, gaping... she notices a record player on the bench and moves record arm to play...after a period of crackling...sound...old lady voice “I feel numb...I can’t feel anything...I feel numb...I need something to lean against”. (it takes some time to work out exactly what the voice on the record player is saying).

A car smashes through the wall of the house...the woman drops the flower.

Mouths and Record: “You have been accused of contriving...deceiving and lying...of falsehood in all its disguises...of fraud...plagiarism...of pretend tears and imagined illnesses...you have stumbled...said I don’t know when clearly you do...eaten rotting food in the dark...waited and waited only to be told you are not good enough...not worth...the drama...become barren...accepted little and given much...you have said enough and taken more...you have allowed damage to yourself and others to go unchecked...unconditionally...you have fallen against walls, in bushes...tripped up curbs...down stairs...through doorways...into roads...smashed fingers...vomited...drunk more...vomited...You have done all these things...and you have done them in the name of love”
The faceless protagonist stands motionless for a moment and then leaves the room of mouths...she makes her way to the laundry where she discovers...

(Sound of prayer)

Laundry with religious figures made from bed sheets: These should be apparition like St Bernadette etc

She then moves to the bedroom and stands before her rack of clothes. She attempts to take them off the rack and put them on but they all disintegrate like ash at her touch. (text/sound...Last Temptation of Christ...angry, flapping bird)

Dining room egg/crows (women hold up table)
The dining table is surrounded by a white, egg shaped shell. The woman cracks it open to reveal a family eating dinner...it is an ideal 1950’s picture with a red and
white checked table cloth. She joins them for dinner (boiled eggs)...long, protracted, ritualised eating in silence...sound of chewing...magnified.

Record player: “the secret concealed...the possession of silence is respected...it grows...it burns fiercely...it resists transformation”.

**Act Four: NOTHINGNESS**

The stone man appears in the flooded, barren landscape...he is naked except for what looks like a bundle of plastic and wires attached to his chest. He stands motionless for some time before beginning to dig in the earth. He uncovers a latex bag filled with water in the shape of a heart. He hold it underneath the light and then unzips the apparatus on his chest and places the latex bag inside...zipping it back up. Darkness...to tableaux of faceless women...with gaping mouths...the stone man is a garden statue in the centre...he has streams of water coming from his chest...the women are motionless around and catch the water in their mouths.
APPENDIX 4

Development Material

June to September 2005

Summary of ensemble material generation

A: Discussions with Ensemble

- Putting the capital T back into terror...capitalism has de-capitalised us...all of our major emotions are now lower case...and there are certainly no Gods to represent them (Greeks...Bicameral mind)
- One is isolated in nightmare...it is a fear specific to being alone...audience????
- Universal nightmare themes are
  1. mouth and teeth
  2. flood
  3. fire and burning
  4. falling
  5. being chased and unable to move or call out
  6. examination
  7. death
  8. cannot find what is lost

DARKNESS (First horse...white, purity, duality, BOW, conquest, leprosy)
- Hidden repressed self
- Night
- Silence
- Still
- Thick
- No sense of direction
- Alone
- Heavy
- Oppressive
- Shapes changing
- The black of the pupil...magnified in state of fear
- The thing is present...but cannot see it
- Touch of the unknown
- Evil
- Absence of light
- Deep ocean...mine shaft
- Monsters of the deep
- The bogeyman is the sabre-tooth tiger...Old memories of when we were hunted
ENDLESSNESS (second horse…red, sword, lawlessness, WAR)
- Repetition
- The hell of mirrors
- The hell of forever
- No destination
- No containers
- Mirrors and endless reflection
- Psychosis
- Vampires
- The incredible shrinking man…how small can he get?
- Universe
- The sheltering sky
- Not dying
- Sand

OBSCURITY (third horse…black, famine, poverty, breakdown of known forms, carries the scales of justice)
- Veils
- Eyes playing tricks
- The thing
- The uncanny
- Ignorance
- Smoke and mirrors
- Fog
- To cease to exist
- To be unknown
- To be unremembered
- I WAS HERE
- Regeneration/children

NOTHINGNESS (fourth horse…pale…death)
- Indefinable
- Terror

**B: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS**

- FATE and Current political events…uncanny in that related to the return of primitive beliefs…notions of the apocalypse…the Anti-Christ (Bush)…the towers falling to ash work on primitive fears…we know our empire is falling (and perhaps because we deserve it)...Karma? What goes around…comes around…cultural/historical Karma. The image of the falling towers terrified us more for this reason than any other.
- The loss of innocence…the unavoidable process…we all relate to different degrees…can this be worked into the spinal narrative?
- The IMPRINT OF LOSS
• Absence...hollowing out...we are more nothing than anything...perhaps the nightmare of the protagonist is revealed at the end to be termites hollowing out everything
• Approach the work but gradually taking away that which is comforting rather than starting with the horror
• Sound...comforting, lulling (almost imperceptible to the audience) i.e. vacuum cleaner in far room to put a baby to sleep, cars swashing by on rainy street, gentle wind in trees...soothing sounds that are gradually taken away...
• Bright light shone in face of audience...then images are revealed as eyes adjust.
• What does the eye see? What are we missing that the brain is not fast enough to process? Quantum physics...What is really happening?
• Torture and terror...sleep deprivation
• What if I never sleep again?
• What if I sleep and never wake up
• The terror of the mind not stopping...endless information and raving...no peace
• The terror of the self...or of ones own mind...schizophrenia, insanity...to be aware that you are going mad...to suddenly hear a voice in your ear when you are alone.
• The HELL of mirrors
• Birds flapping...panic and struggle for life...crows...one for sorrow...two for joy...three for a girl...four for a boy...7 for a secret that can never be told.
• The terror of not being able to communicate
• Stroke victim in constant state of pain( can only utter the word...liar!)
• To be imprisoned in own body or mind...cannot move...paralysis
• Pushing a foetus off a cliff...hearing it land...head is saying NO but cannot stop pushing
• Too much light is as terrifying as too much darkness
• Erasure...nothing remembered (but knowing it is happening)
• Bus Stop at nursing home
• The incredible hulk suddenly appearing at window
• Being attacked
• Long black hallway...what is behind door?
• In bed...someone is touching you...you think it is someone you know but it is not.
• Not being able to make something out in the darkness...something that shifts form in the darkness
• Game...teen girls...push against chest...leads to fainting and then vivid images
• Heartbeat on pillow...footsteps...“someone is walking in the world and looking for me...and when they find me I will be dead” (Jason Lehane)
APPENDIX 5

DEVELOPMENT SHOWING DRAFTS:
AVIARY (Working Title)

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 05

Casting

Man: Jason (black)
Daughter: Clare (lemon/yellow)
Wicked Step Mother: Kirsten (Clare masked towards end) (Red)
Twin: Tania (lemon/yellow)
Living dolls, drowned children: Clint, Anna

Proposed scenario

Key Words: GUILT, DENIAL, LOST INNOCENCE.

Man is a sculptor. He is withdrawn and silent. He only interacts with the daughter. He gives the daughter medicine.

Wife of man is a neurotic, controlling nightmare. She has a collection of caged birds/canaries. She carries around a red canary in a gilded cage. She is the proverbial wicked step mother. She appears to the daughter as nightmare prosthetic/plastic surgery woman.

Daughter of man is treated as more of a slave in the house by the wicked mother figure. The father attempts to communicate with the daughter but she ignores/detests her father because of this (we assume). Her real mother is dead.

The young woman is haunted by a twin figure. They appear to be the best of friends. For about a quarter of the performance there is an uncertainty about whether the twin is real or not but this must become clear as the story unfolds. The Twin comes to show the daughter the truth she cannot face.

The daughter is visited at night by drowned dolls with dead sunflowers.

The daughter becomes pregnant just after her first period. The father is implicated. The daughter has the baby.

In a rage, the step mother takes the baby, and strangles/drowns it in the kitchen sink.

We see the daughter discover the child left abandoned in the kitchen sink...she lovingly wraps her dead child in blue cloth and buries it in her cupboard.
We see the wicked step mother perform a bizarre ritual to torture the daughter. We have witnessed her prepare the event as if she is planning a luscious dinner party. Building a puppet theatre in which she will eventually place the dead baby as the star of the show, she has a number of automated dolls stored in the cupboard which she makes characters in the drama. She will ultimately force the daughter to view this macabre set up. NB: The story told by the dolls in rehearsal reveals subtle clues to the real story.

At the climax of the story (the doll theatre is set up, the step mother is digging in the cupboard and is about to reveal the dead child), the father walks in on the bizarre ritual and rips off the plastic face of the wicked step mother, revealing that it is actually the daughter. He digs in the cupboard to unearth a bundle of dead birds.

The daughter (tied to a chair to watch the puppet show with only her back visible) has slipped out of the chair while the audience is focused on the birds/Man/Woman. The father sees only an empty chair bound in rope, the nursery covered with dirt and dolls. The wicked step mother is her shadow self. The Twin is her nightmare. Her past and present/nightmare and reality converge at this point. (past images will be stacked backwards and revealed in their true state)

The young woman and man are revealed to be partners (there will be subtle clues alluding to the fact throughout). The child was drowned a number of years before. The young woman has become increasingly disturbed and may have even spent time in hospital as she was responsible for the child’s death. This is the true nightmare. The man shares the audiences reality. He is their point of contact for working out what has really happened. He only sees/interacts with one woman...his partner. Not three.
APPENDIX 6

Showing Treatment 2: NOVEMBER 05

- Installation in flooded space...dolls peer at audience.
- Daughter and Twin standing with backs to audience holding matching brown suitcases. They slowly join hands and walk towards the ruined house.
- Audience are directed to move along path. Seating is available inside first space.
- Sound skipping. Light appears in far space. Man in studio sitting. Shadow play on walls.
- Daughter and twin have run around back of space and enter the house exactly as the audience saw them do in the distance.
- They stop outside nursery space. Father enters.

   Man: ‘Hello...I haven’t touched anything’...Holds out arms...‘Come here...come’...

   He exits.

- Light turned on in child’s room. Suitcase on floor. Unpacking...Twin sits in bed. Daughter moves around room. Picks up objects. Unpacks some things. Twin stares at cupboard. Twin humming. Unveils cupboard...Daughter moves towards cupboard...Step mother enters.
- Mother glides swiftly down the corridor holding a red canary in cage.

   Step Mother: “Look who’s here...nobody told us you were coming”.

   Step mother returns to bedroom. Step mother sprays plastic plants. Step mother tends to birds.
- Twins sneak to kitchen...play see-saw...shadow choreography on wall above...step mother stands above...plate smashes on wall...twins jump off...clare looks at plate...Man enters...Girl takes plates and sets table...waits for Twin...they both sit. Step mother enters...sits.

- Dinner 1. Father, step-mother, daughter and Twin.

   Twin whispers to girl as man enters...Man brings platter of quails.

   Girl: “May I feed the canaries...I’d like to”

   Man: “Yes...perhaps after dinner we can do it together”
Man exits.

Step Mother: I’m sorry… but you see… by my thinking… the fragile and delicate nature of canaries necessitates a planned approach to feeding during the breeding season… one must rely upon the laws of nature” (man re-enters) I was just saying… one must rely upon the laws of nature in order to improve breeding performance and produce more canaries to show standard. Take for example the Red Factor canary… It must be semi-erect standing at about a 60 degree angle… alert and jaunty… moving confidently between perches (Twin starts tapping… staring at Man… slowing building) But I don’t believe the red factor is a true canary… why… well they derive their scarlet hue from a canary… probably a boarder fancy being bred with the Venezuelan Red skin finch…

Man: Just try it.

SM: Sorry

Man: Just try it

(building) what do you think… if you are going to feed them… what do you think? Well… the red factor is a cross breed bird so are red factors true canaries… are they… what do you think… (Girls stops banging hands… man touches her)

SM: I also wonder how the red factor became so popular throughout the world… If you mate a Doberman dog with a German Shepard bitch you will get some beautiful… strong… healthy pups… and some of the pups may look like a Doberman… or a German Shepard BUT no way can the pups be classified as Doberman or German Shepard pups… the pups from such mating are mutts… mutts.

Girls pushes platter off table man exits… returns with pills… girl and twin leave table… Man and step mother sit in silence… Man cleans up mess and heads to the kitchen where he embraces girl. Step mother watches… exits.

- Man and girl movement sequence in kitchen… dolls shadow play on walls. Twin removes sheets covering bed and other objects.
- First nightmare sequence. Shape at end of bed. Step mother measuring wood panels… cutting, sawing… building something. Ensemble doll visitation sequence in daughter’s room… out of cupboard. Sunflowers, tin toys and clicking teeth? Man appearing about space… shadows on walls.
- Bedding on daughter’s bed is slowly taken off… Father drops stones… takes daughter from bed and leads her to step mother’s room. Light from ground. He places her on bed. Darkness.
- Twin walks up corridor… stands in doorway… light from behind. Step mother in attic… light on deformed face… watching.
- Man leaves bed.
- Man and step mother pass on stairs.
- Daughter wakes in step mother’s room...puts on one of her underskirts...twirls about...step mother watches...girl takes sheet from mirror...sees reflection of step mother...covers it up and turns around...sees twin...
- Twins take canaries from cages
- Twin heads upstairs...girl sits...dangling feet sequence...first image repeated. Girl sees something in water...pulls out baby doll...opens it up to discover dead red canary inside...drops doll in water. Twin smiling.
- Girl opens suitcase and changes her dress. She is dressed exactly like step-mother.
- Step mother enters (repeat first entrance) but with empty bird cage this time.
- Girl in kitchen...hands in sink...blood...smashes plate on wall...Man enters...Girl sets table.

Repetition of first dinner exactly but it is just man and woman. Step mother and twin sit in attic...Red Feathers fall from roof onto the table. End.
APPENDIX 7

AVIARY

Devised and directed by
Louise Morris
In collaboration with the Cast

Man:  Jason LeHane
Mother:  Kirsten Prins
Young Woman: Clare Reynolds
Twin: Tania Smith
Doll 1: Clint Dowdell
Doll 2: Anna Hamilton

Installation Design: Louise Morris
Sound design: Nick Craft
Lighting Design: Alexandra Prichard
Painted Living Doll effects:
Gonzalo Varela and Lucy Parkinson
Technical support: Zita Whalley,
Anna Grassham, Kelly Johnson

With warmest thanks to
Richard Murphet., VCA, Trisha Simmons
and
Jason, Rod and Jed @ CARNI
“We pulled our dolls along the bars of our crib...dragged them into the heavy fold of illness.
They appeared to us in dreams and were tied up in the disasters of feverish nights.

That superficially painted...drowned corpse which floated on the flood-tides of our affection....

They were the first to inflict this larger than human silence upon us...”

Rainer Maria Rilke

You are witness tonight to the result of 3 weeks creative development within the confines of this ruined site thanks to the generous support of the collaborative ensemble and the resident CARNI folk.

I am currently completing the first stage of my master’s candidature in Animateuring at the VCA and tonight’s performance is the result of the initial stage of practical research.

We have selected 30 minutes of material which is representative of the direction of the larger work to be completed mid 2006.

The research speculates on current aesthetic debates about performance and visual images during times of terror. Explicitly, the ‘liminal uncanny’ which I have identified as a specific mode of signification in performance which essentially manipulates liminal qualities (such as indeterminacy, boundary collapse and non-linguistic coding) to evoke uncanny sensations through the juxtaposition of the familiar and the strange.

Louise Morris
AVIARY: CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT SHOWING

SUMMARY OF AUDIENCE FEEDBACK
SUNDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2005

Strongest elements:
- Use of space and set design
  Unusual, atmospheric, depth (cinematic), large and never ending environment, haunting
  “the combination of deChirico-esque perspective, industrial wasteland and Victorian
domestic disharmony was unsettling”, gothic, tapped into imagination, like surrealist
painting, multi-dimensional staging was visually exciting and involving in a ‘beyond
theatre’ sort of way.
- Costume- colour and style
- Light- atmospheric
- Visuals/imagery and general aesthetic- built dynamic relationships...made words
  redundant, dirty, dusty, decadent,
- Silhouettes...something unseen, another area, world...unseen...unseen...unseen...unseen.
- Performances of actors
- Repetition- dream-like, punctuated the narrative

Weakest elements:
- Sound
  Not strong enough, a little insipid, disparate, too loud
- Text and story line
  Unfinished, too floaty, needed more to connect to, increase audience absorption, confusing,
softly spoken at times, greater commitment to themes raised... hesitant... go there
- Movement could be tightened
- Tighter flow and dynamic
- Plate smashing
- More seating
- More information in program related to story and process... less academic!

Sensations/emotions
- Made me feel quite icy... especially the sink... I wanted to be sick
- Curiosity, mystery, frustration
- Depressing but beautiful at the same time
- Wonder at intensity of images
- Uncomfortable memories, domestic dreams
- Messy, abusive, perverted and neurotic
- Haunting yet beautiful
- Scary, sense of apprehension and dread
- Dread, wonder, curiosity, surprise
- Nostalgia
- Tension, melancholy, suspense
- Apprehension, intrigue, touch of anxiety
- Suspense, sorrow, melancholy
- Opened a door to a sort of psycho-mythic netherworld or primal drama scary
  area... but only opened it.
- Freaked at points
- Emptiness in the soul which can be filled with love.
APPENDIX 9
Please Refer to DVD ‘journals chapter’ for story-boards and further influential text and images

AVIARY IMAGE SPARKS FOR CAST
APRIL-MAY 06

RT= Real Time
FB= Flash Back
FF= Flash Forward
E = Ensemble

- Charlotte draped over tub in kitchen...steam fills the space...distorted sound scape...shifting figures (women in black) shadowed in the mist move slowly with old bird cages (E1)

- Lotte: 1st medical sequence (FB1)
  With ensemble. This flashback reveals Lotte getting rid of unborn child

- Room of women typing SOS (E2)

- Charlie death ritual: Photographs (FF)

- Lotte is presented to Tom (E and FB)
  TRANSACTION. Lotte’s mother figure exchanges birds with Tom

- Apocalypse Bird Girls in archways. The women in black have bone like wings which extend from their corsets.

- Lotte stands in archway...holding suitcase...dead black tree in red landscape ...soft lamp in Tom’s area shadows of bending cage wire...working. The beginnings of industry (FB 1)

- Tom in fever...Charlie must deal with it (floor shape) (FF)
  First indication of Tom’s war nightmare. Horses.

- Lost Child (E): This is an exploration of the concept ‘Australia as the country of lost children’ ...the lost child in arid, harsh landscape as an Australian anxiety

- The grey man with no face (E) The grey man with no face is a figure who appears and disappears with no explanation. Want to explore proximity to audience and freaky lighting tricks with this figure/figures. He may also be seen in the outside landscape

- Lotte and Tom Meal: Charlotte is present and unseen (FB)
• Dishes (FB) Lotte cuts hand in the sink. Blood in the sink. Repetition movement sequence (FB)

• Charlie (FF)

• Lotte/Tom: First movie theatre (FB/E) Footage…the winds. Horse stamping in desert. Women in black seated behind.

• Tom

• Charlotte wrapping bundle: hiding wet bundle (RT)

• Lotte wiping blood from legs: hiding bundle (FB)

• Charlie ritual involving bundle (FF) Dragging huge bundle?

• Flight (E)

• Bird women with Sacred heart: heart balloon filled with water…zipped up…water squirts into mouths of kneeling figures (E)

• Tom and Lotte make love (FB) Art Gallery/Veils: Egon Schieles’s LOVERS. Ladies in black with opera glasses (E)

• Lotte and Tom have Termites /some infestation (FB) Disintegration…something is coming…Australian gothic (E)

• The grey man with no face (E)

• Charlie in Graveyard (FF)

• Lotte and Tom with birds (FB) Charlotte is present

• San Francisco earthquake and fire terror 1906…crumbling buildings…Radio sounds…old woman saves umbrella and pet canary (E)

• Lotte Pregnant: Tom makes a cot from bird cages (FB)

• The grey man with no face …dancing (E)


• Immobility (E)

• Burnt Church: God is dead …whipping…horses (E)
• Charlie with Umbrella (FF)

• Lottes waters Break (FB)

• Drowning in kitchen (RT) Charlotte is sucked into tub…she is drowning. Wet sheets slapping on floor. Lines of Babies clothes across space

• The other sequence: TOM Fear of invasion/nationalism (E)

• Heart of Darkness…Horses: Boer War: Tom’s climax (E)

• Birds flapping Charlie (FF)

• Charlotte : Mouth Chamber with dead bundle…‘you should throw it away’ (E)

• Devolution (E)

• BIRTH: women in black moving in shadow. Horrific sounds (FB and E)

• My ranting and raving lasted about 20 minutes until I was finally thrown into the bath (FF)

• The grey man with no face (E)

• Lotte: The thing that cry’s (FB) All through the flash back sequence there has been the sound of a baby crying slowly building in intensity to screeching birds. Lotte in corridor of light moving towards a cot. The cot starts overflowing with water

• DECAY: The women in black move across the archways. Their high collars have become cages which cover their heads (E)

• RUIN(E). Some sort of shift in light reveals the true ruin of the space

• The real terror (RT) Tom discovers Charlotte with dead child
APPENDIX 10

AVIARY DRAFT: June/July 06

Prelude...outside images. Lanterns in made from birdcages. Ladies in the Garden...ladies on the pier...beautiful living paintings...the burning boat...

1. Charlotte draped over tub in kitchen...steam/smoke fills the room. An apparition of a woman in black appears in the mist (trick with light and mirror?) and disappears as the smoke clears...distorted sound scape of final sequence.
   SOUND: water, bath, hollow
   TEXT: Charlotte?
   KEY MOVEMENT: waking

2. Tom building cages in his attic. Morphing shadows.
   SOUND: birds, industry, walking
   TEXT: Charlotte, I have a surprise for you
   KEY MOVEMENT: dropping of cage

3. Shadow of Charlie in top space thrown onto the far white wall...long reaching shadow of her hand strokes Tom’s head (in archway). Shadow of birdcage in hand. Shadows of the 5 black women appear to move out of the figure of Charlie and move across the archways holding birdcages. Video (shadows coming from nowhere) One stops behind an archway...turns back and looks at Charlotte...her mouth is covered in blood.
   SOUND: train
   TEXT: One for sorrow, two for joy
   KEY MOVEMENT: Staring into sink

4. Lotte and her young lover.
   SOUND: old fashioned song
   TEXT: Charlotte, what’s the matter
   KEY MOVEMENT: Tom turning Charlotte to face him...Charlotte trying to escape.

5. Abortion sequence with Lotte. Shadows of the women move about the back top of the space...they are performing a ritual. 19th Century medical instruments...shadow. Sacrifice. Lotte is taken by her mother to the women.
   SOUND: warped, humming, instruments
   TEXT: Charlotte...Are you alright? It’s not clean
   KEY MOVEMENT: Pushing head down
6. Lotte and Mother. Mother is making Lotte up like a doll. She takes her photograph (flash bulb).
   SOUND: Track 7 Beethoven
   TEXT: What is wrong with you? Look at me
   KEY MOVEMENT: Looking at her face

   SOUND: squawking birds
   TEXT: Everything’s fine
   KEY MOVEMENT: Tom with hands around neck

8. Charlie has set up first death photograph. SHIP. Flash Bulb.
   SOUND: Child
   TEXT: He’s fine
   KEY MOVEMENT: move away from Tom

9. Room of women typing SOS.
   SOUND: typing/SOS
   TEXT: Where is he?
   KEY MOVEMENT: Charlotte cleaning

    SOUND: camera
    TEXT: What is wrong with you? Look at me.
    KEY MOVEMENT: tom pulls charlotte up off floor

11. Women in Black in Archways...boney wings extend. Song.
    SOUND: old fashioned song- scratching
    TEXT: Leave it
    KEY MOVEMENT: Push away

12. Lotte in archway with suitcase...dead trees in landscape. Mother walks away. Tom working in attic. Lotte walks towards attic...Bird women watching.
    SOUND: birds
    TEXT:
    KEY MOVEMENT: watching/hiding

    SOUND:
    TEXT:
    KEY MOVEMENT:

14. Tom greets Lotte. Takes her downstairs to room with hanging clothes. He takes her suitcases away.
    SOUND: music box
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TEXT: Charlotte. I have something to show you
KEY MOVEMENT: back to stare in sink

15. Grey man with no face.
SOUND: Horses
TEXT: What have you done?
KEY MOVEMENT:

16. Shadow puppets...Lotte and Tom
SOUND: Swaying Wattle song
TEXT: Talk to me
KEY MOVEMENT: hugging

SOUND:
TEXT:
KEY MOVEMENT:

SOUND: Dogs
TEXT:
KEY MOVEMENT: hiding in corner from Tom

18. Lotte...something is outside the house. Tom returns with bundle of meat.
SOUND: violin
TEXT: There’s something wrong with it
KEY MOVEMENT: bundle

19. Lotte and Tom...Romantic meal sequence. Charlie in stone graveyard.
SOUND: recipe list
TEXT: Charlotte?
KEY MOVEMENT:

SOUND: water
TEXT: Talk to me
KEY MOVEMENT: Turing Charlotte around...getting rid of plate

21. Movie theatre. Lotte and Tom at the pictures. The light of the old projector above their heads...the women in black sitting behind...shifting...grey men in top windows...horses...footage of film ‘the winds’ projected in domestic space.
SOUND:
TEXT: Keep your distance
KEY MOVEMENT:
SOUND:
TEXT: Why is he wet?
KEY MOVEMENT:

23. Tom leaves the house with cages.
SOUND: water
TEXT: He’s wet
KEY MOVEMENT: hiding

SOUND: Dogs
TEXT: There’s something wrong…
KEY MOVEMENT: don’t want to touch the bundle

25. Bundle sequence with 3 Charlottes. Charlotte puts baby in meat safe.
SOUND: scratching violin
TEXT: What are you doing?
KEY MOVEMENT: Hiding the bundle.
SOUND: drowning
TEXT: What have you done? He’s not breathing
KEY MOVEMENT: keeping Tom away from bundle

SOUND: Violin
TEXT: Charlotte
KEY MOVEMENT: violent struggle

27. 2nd Dance. Love and violence. Lotte and Tom. Women in black at the gallery with opera glasses…viewing Egon Schiele.
SOUND: Swaying Wattle 2 with violin
TEXT: Look at me…what is wrong with you?
KEY MOVEMENT: Tripping Charlotte over

Bundle of dead chicken put in meat safe.
SOUND:
TEXT: What have you done?
KEY MOVEMENT: Tom standing over Charlotte

SOUND:
TEXT:
KEY MOVEMENT:

SOUND: Horses
31. Lotte Pregnant...Tom gives present. Lotte unwraps the cot...the crying begins.

SOUND: baby crying

TEXT: A mother is a mother is a mother still...the holiest thing alive

KEY MOVEMENT: backing away from dead child

Medical sequence ritual echo from sequence 4.

SOUND: Violin

TEXT: It is not clean

KEY MOVEMENT: rocking


33. The birds are getting restless...

34. War (ensemble). Tom. Rotting horses.

SOUND: bells/dying horse

TEXT: I don’t understand

KEY MOVEMENT:

35. Decay...Bird women 2nd move across space with dead bird costumes.

36. Drowning sequence. All. Charlie with umbrella...locking the doors...Lotte’s water’s break. Water pours down stairs

Charlotte is pulled into the sink. Charlotte is drowning in sink.

37. Birth sequence ensemble...the bird women enter the archway carrying a table which they place in the space. Lotte is standing at the top of the stairs...water pouring down. They get Lotte and put her in a wedding gown and lead her to the table. They proceed to tie her to the table with her gown. The grey men drag Tom into the space...Lotte laughs silently at him. The grey men rip off Lotte’s wedding gown and gag her. Tom and the sexual act...man baby. The grey men observe as Lotte’s belly explodes. The women start to sniff the bundle and Lotte and the women tear it to shreds. Lotte rips at her own face. They throw the bits at the men and slowly move into the shadows.

SOUND: Violin 1.30 >

TEXT: He’s not breathing

KEY MOVEMENT: showing Charlotte the bundle

38. Charlie sets up final image.
39. Lotte moves towards the crying baby, which has been building in intensity from sequence 29. The cot starts flooding. Charlie moves towards suitcase simultaneously and unwraps the bundle of bones. Jigsaw Cage around head of Charlie complete.

40. RUIN. The house is revealed as a flooded ruin. Women in Black come downstairs into domestic space with cages over head.

41. The dead child.
Shadows of bird women move into Charlotte in kitchen...They hold her head down in the sink. They flee at the sound of Tom’s voice.

A:
Charlotte action: to keep Tom away from safe.
Tom action: to surprise/to connect/to discover/to get to safe

Tom walks through top space whistling.
Calls from upstairs ‘Charlotte (charlotte upright...frozen)...Charlotte...I have a surprise for you...Charlotte...come upstairs...I have something to show you’
Tom from top of stairs ‘Charlotte?’
Tom: Charlotte...are you alright?
Tom: Charlotte...what’s the matter...what are you doing? (Tom steps up onto raft)
Charlotte: (whispering prayer)
Tom: Where is Daniel? What is the matter with you?
Charlotte: (Still whispering) Tom exits and checks cot...looking around house...then kitchen.
Tom: Charlotte...look at me. Where is he? (DISHES SEQUENCE)
Charlotte: (Cleaning up broken plate)...It is not clean...he’s hiding...everything’s fine (starts wiping meat safe)
Tom: What is wrong with you? Where is he? Where is my boy? (moves towards her)
Charlotte:...everything’s fine...just leave it...LEAVE HIM (push)
Tom: (realisation)...Charlotte...What have you done with him? (finally gets safe open...sees bundle...lifts bundle out) God...Charlotte...what have you done?
Charlotte: (washing dishes) He’s hiding...everything’s fine.

B:
Charlotte action: To avoid Bundle
Tom action: To show bundle
Tom: (gently carries bundle to her) Charlotte...Look at me...what happened? I don’t understand. What happened?(Charlotte cleaning...‘not clean’) He is wet. Why is he wet? Charlotte. (showing her bundle)
Charlotte: Don’t touch it...there’s something wrong with it.
(...)Tom gets more physically violent...she try’s to crawl away... then underneath...he is fine...everything’s fine) What have you done? What have you done to him? What?
(gets her out from under raft)

C:
Charlotte action: To get bundle
Tom action: Keep her away
Charlotte: (suddenly vicious) Don’t touch it...leave it...it’s not clean.
Tom: Keep your distance...keep away from us...what is wrong with you?

D:
Charlotte: Not clean...
Tom: ...
Charlotte: Not clean...

(Charlotte hunched in far corner of space...Tom broken hugging bundle)

Post script...image outside. Light from the shed on the hill. The grey man.
AVIARY BRIEF AND SYNOPSIS

*Aviary* has developed out of an investigation into the borderland of terror, nightmare, time distortion, grief and the uncanny. There are four key states of nightmare which can be categorised as darkness, emptiness, obscurity and nothingness. These are reflected in the four image sequences of *Aviary* which were built from the four rhythmical states of a domestic (naturalistic) scenario (one moment in time) as outlined below which was workshopped with the ensemble. The terror explored in *Aviary* is an ontological one, largely concerned with the spectre of death in human experience.

**Background story:** It is 1906. A young woman Charlotte is married off by her mother to a wealthy man twice her age, Tom, following her affair with a young man that led to an unwanted pregnancy. She is forced to undergo an illegal abortion and is taken by her mother from her life in Melbourne town to an isolated house/aviary in the country. Tom is a loner with violent tendencies borne from his experiences in the Boer war and Charlotte finds herself alone and pregnant in a strange and threatening landscape.

Throughout *Aviary* we witness Charlotte imprisoned in a moment of terror and anguish. She has fallen asleep while bathing her child in the kitchen...upon waking has sat staring at the little corpse floating in the water while the memories that have led to this moment flash before her...the horror of her inevitable future looms in the archways above her...the demons representing the nightmare of her isolated life at the turn of the century in Australia close in around her. Her trauma and shock gives way to denial as she lovingly bundles the child in fabric and places it in the meat safe. She returns to the now freezing water and starts washing the dishes and it is at this point that her grief becomes unbearable, manifesting as a vacant, meaningless, screaming hole. To silence the terror she proceeds to pack a suitcase full of rocks and throws herself off the pier into the nearby river.

Tom returns home looking for his wife and son and crossing the threshold, he drops one of his bird cages setting a bird loose in the house. This is the moment that haunts him as it was the harbinger of the tragedy. Again and again he returns to the threshold and as each return disintegrates, he inches closer to a revelation of the repressed trauma. An SOS signal is sent out and a search party gathered to locate Charlotte in and around the river. Her body is eventually found and brought into the house where Tom identifies her on the dining table.

The traces of Charlotte remain in the space...the memory of her innocence and hope, her abuse and loneliness, the terror of the accidental death of her child in the kitchen and the grief that led her to take her own life. Tom is left alone in the aviary to deal with these traces, haunted by spirits, caught in endless repetition in the cracks caused by trauma and shock. **This is the visual narrative.**

It is important to stress that it is the nature of non-linguistic, image based work that the audience becomes the final layer of the work...as their interpretation of the images distilled from the scenario above are entirely subjective. Their individual experience both intellectually and emotionally will colour their reading of the work with a thousand possible interpretations. It is my intention that a suggestion of the story outlined above may be read by an audience but more importantly, the emotional quality of our investigations will remain in the images affecting the audience subliminally.
APPENDIX 12

Key Symbols in Aviary

**Birds:** forecasters of events. Omens. They fly from the mouth of the dead.

**The Aviary:** The imprisonment of the dead soul in life as represented by the caged bird.

**The bird loose in the house (as represented by the dropping cage):** Death

**The number Four:** Completion...Or four fold symbolic structure as evident in seasons, elements, psyche (self, ego, animus, shadow), four horsemen of the apocalypse, the vision of Esekiel and the four winged creatures, four crows as an omen for a male child and so on. In eastern cultures the number four is symbolic of death.

**Tom:** The Cage maker. The Death Drive. At the beginning of each sequence, he returns to the moment when the cage was dropped. A cage for a bird (A), a cage for Lotte (B), a cage for the shadow (C), a cage of grief (D).

**Charlotte:** A woman who has fallen asleep while bathing her newborn in the kitchen. A state of petrification and repetition of ‘the moment’.

**Lotte:** a young Charlotte...memories which have literally happened albeit through the perception of Tom. ‘The past as the atmosphere of the present’.

**Charlie:** The drowned corpse of Charlotte who constantly returns from the river to the kitchen and attempts unsuccessfully to wake herself to avert the impending disaster.

**Mother:** Repetition. Repressed trauma passed down through a generational cycle.

**The apocalypse bird women:** grief “one for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy etc. old rhyme that is spoken when one counts crows. Bird with human head “BA” symbol for the soul. Lilith, the primordial wife, who sometimes takes the form of a winged creature, a destructive force, who in some folk tales steals and kills male babies. Birds are related to Angels...the human desire to break free of gravity.

**The white lantern ladies:** although they remain outside, they are a further phantasmagorical multiplication, traces of grief in the landscape.

**The lover who becomes a grey man:** the erasure of innocence

**The grey men with no face:** the shadow of Tom, Rage, Death.

Other Symbols of Interest

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Crossing the bridge: ritualistic journey from consciousness to the unconscious. The afterlife, the great beyond, the ‘other shore’. The river marks the boundary between the realm of the living and that of the dead.

Bells: Summoning and warning.

Book and destroyed pages: disintegration of high culture and religion.

Crow: or Raven is a harbinger of misfortune…the dark side of the psyche.

Dance of death (Dance Macabre): the idea that in both dance and death everyone is equal and social distinctions disappear. Death is inherent in life.

Dogs barking: The guardians at the gate which warn of invisible dangers.

Egg: Fragile, new life, the origin of the world.

Fox: cunning and trickery…female sexuality.

Hair: Carrier of life force…continues to grow even after death.

Horse: Power vitality/night-mare…id and ego linked to horse and rider. 4 horsemen of the apocalypse. The light-horsemen of the Boer War.

Key: the gatekeeper…the power to confine or release.

Kite: innocence, flight, freedom, childhood.

Shadow: Dark doubles of those which cast them.

Water: Feminine unconscious. Water gives life but also destroys.

Note on the drowning symbols: The original image involved the three Charlottes in a simultaneous water sequence. Charlotte drowning in the sink, Lotte’s waters bursting from balloons on the stairs and Charlie pouring water into the cot from buckets. Due to understandable health and safety concerns because of nearby lights we could only estimate this.
## APPENDIX 13

**IMAGE RUNNING SHEET: AVIARY**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

**SEQUENCE A: SHADOWS OF THE PAST/Darkness/Shock**

Running Time: Approx 31 mins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMESTIC</th>
<th>ENSEMBLE</th>
<th>O/S</th>
<th>Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Charlie crawls out of the opposite side of the river as second bell rings | The search for Charlotte:
Bird women repetition sequence then into searching tableaux as audience reach rotunda. Katie rings bell. All move towards pier. Ladies on Pier with birdcage lanterns...pulling Charlotte’s dress out of the water. Mother approaches holding Charlotte’s locket...sees that it is Charlotte's dress and backs into audience | Figures searching through park with lanterns                                               | Pier/Parkland |
<p>| 2 | Tom in Attic making cage                                                  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                            | Attic       |
| 3 | Charlie enters space from outside and moves through audience dripping wet. Attempts to wake Charlotte and is startled... |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                            | Domestic space |
| 4 | Charlie runs upstairs (staircase shadow) where she gets trapped in her area. Lotte comes out from behind pillar. Doubling apparition. | Bird women Apparitions in archways. Shadows of bird cages. Mother drops cage (1st crash)                                                                 | Lanterns in top windows White women move Across top windows right to left                  | Across arches Top windows |
| 6 | Charlie checks out prison (Charlotte 1st sequence repetition in kitchen)  |                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                            | Charlie area and kitchen |
| 7 | Tom hears cage drop...fixes cage.                                         | Bird women move through                                                                                                                 |                                                                                            | Attic       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 126  | Whistle (Charlotte reacts to whistle in kitchen)  
Tom puts out seed for birds  
Tom moves lantern around attic... puts record on smoke...circular formation |
| 8    | Lotte Debutant. Lotte introduced to Tom in uniform.  
Debutant Dance sequence Back platform |
| 9    | Lotte and Young Lover (Young lover gives Lotte a toy) Arch 3 |
| 10   | Focus on Charlie moving rocks Charlie arch |
| 11   | Lotte/lover/mother Shadow sequence in 1st arch. Mother replaces lover in shadow. Arch 1 |
| 12   | Lotte/Mother (head stoking choreography) Medical 1: the abortion Back Platform |
| 13   | Lotte Convent 1: Dirty Sheets Ladies with cross in window Nightmare land |
| 14   | Lotte/Mother/Charlie Floppy death photo (echo of 19th century death photograph 1). Charlie arch |
| 15   | Tom/Mother in Attic. Double image: The marriage is arranged/grieving for the loss of Charlotte Attic |
| 16   | Lotte and Tom arranged in archway...gives locket Charlotte finds locket in sink Drawing room Sewing Back Platform |
| 17   | Charlie Focus...with locket hanging in tree. Charlotte drops locket in sink Bird women start hunting Charlie arch/back platform |
| 18   | Tom tapping SOS rhythm with tools. Charlotte starts looking through rubbish in kitchen. Attic/kitchen |
| 19   | Charlie...stiff death photo with Mother/Lotte  
SOS (first used as a distress signal in 1906)  
Bird women typing Ladies scratching windows with sticks. Ladies Knocking SOS  
Grey man erasing Charlie arch 5 main archways and nightmare |
young man…

PANEL PHOTO 1. Mother and Charlotte

20 Black out with sound of Morse code. Tom standing at top of stairs looking at kitchen.
Extra slow fade on double of grey man

Nightmare land

SEQUENCE B: Homecoming/Emptiness/Denial

Running time approx: 17 mins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMESTIC</th>
<th>ENSEMBLE</th>
<th>O/S</th>
<th>Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tom in attic making cage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lotte stands in archway with case. Silhouette of dead trees against ochre horizon. Mother walks into landscape</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cage arch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Looking into house...sees premonition of self in kitchen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cage arch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lotte drops case. (2nd Crash) Tom appears from pillar and picks it up. Greets Lotte...Abstraction of 1st cage drop</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cage arch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tom takes Lotte down stairs. OMEN: Lotte senses Charlotte in kitchen. Glimpse of bird women watching in arch ways</td>
<td>Peer into house</td>
<td>Stairs and domestic corridor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tom walks into the bedroom of his dead wife...everything is covered. He turns on music box and picks out a dress...goes upstairs. Memory of Lotte is left alone in room.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lotte and clicky toy given to her by lover. Charlie finds an old kite in the rocks. Tom puts on swaying wattle record and makes shadow puppets on wall. Lotte and Charlotte both move towards him. Charlotte falls in kitchen.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom/kitchen/attic/Charlotte arch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tom comes downstairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Innocence Dance 1</td>
<td>Grey men at top</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tangled in material. The sexual act. Echo of Klimt painting.</td>
<td>of stairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tom leaves house with birds. Charlie attempts to stop him leaving. Silhouette</td>
<td>Back walkway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tom returns with dead duck (reaction to Charlie)...shows Lotte bundling. Sits at table. Lotte puts dead duck in meat safe</td>
<td>Grey man in top window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Meal. Trying to eat a rock. Tom stabs rock.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dishes repetition. Lotte and Charlotte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Plate smash</td>
<td>Bird women peering in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Charlie takes Photograph of kite hanging in tree</td>
<td>PANEL PHOTO 2...Charlotte with violin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Tom at bottom of stairs looking at kitchen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Blackout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SEQUENCE C (abstracting B): Obscurity/Rage

**Running Time Approx: 17 mins**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DOMESTIC</th>
<th>ENSEMBLE</th>
<th>O/S</th>
<th>Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tom in attic eating, puts on Billy Williams record.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tom in attic: polishing saddle</td>
<td>Charlie building a stone grave for her child</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attic And Charlie arch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Charlotte stroking duck in kitchen</td>
<td>War 1: Grey man with gun. Shoots ladies in windows. 2nd grey man drags bloody bundle to cage arch</td>
<td>Ladies move along windows. Drop when shot</td>
<td>Back platform and back windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tom in attic hears cage drop. Returns to cage archway and finds a bundle of meat. Whistles and throws meat onto platform</td>
<td>Bird women swoop on carcass…sick choreography 80&gt;5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attic And cage archway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lotte with Toy. Charlotte pulls broken plate out of sink…tries to warn Lotte.</td>
<td>Grey man reaching down to Lotte. Abstraction of shadow puppets from B.</td>
<td>Grey man in window 4</td>
<td>Bedroom and top windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tom puts on swaying wattle record…comes downstairs with animal traps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tom behind Lotte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lotte Doll on meat hook.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tom sets traps.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dance 2 around traps.</td>
<td>Women with spines and opera glasses viewing dance</td>
<td>Women watching</td>
<td>5 main archways and domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Dance 2 around traps.</td>
<td>Women with spines and opera glasses viewing dance</td>
<td>Women watching</td>
<td>5 main archways and domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tom takes duck off table. ThROWS it on Lotte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tom Leaves house with birds. Charlie attempts to stop him leaving.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Back walkway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lotte Isolated</td>
<td>Threat 2: Cello dragged across arches. Bird women start screeching.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic space and nightmare land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic of what is happening to Charlotte as she wraps her dead child.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mother enters domestic space. She pulls a bird out of her mouth.</td>
<td>Stairs and kitchen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tom returns: Reacts to Charlie (pain in leg getting greater)</td>
<td>Grey men replace Tom behind pillars.</td>
<td>Grey man walks across top windows</td>
<td>Top walkway and windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Charlie takes photo of death bundles in tree.</td>
<td>Charlie arch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Tom at top of stairs looking at kitchen</td>
<td>PANEL PHOTO 3: Tom and Charlotte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>BLACKOUT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DOMESTIC</td>
<td>ENSEMBLE</td>
<td>O/S</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tom in attic making cage</td>
<td>Grey men in cage arch with wire stomachs. (4th Crash)</td>
<td>Attic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cage arch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tom approaches grey men and opens stomachs...pulls wire from inside the men...the men follow him.</td>
<td>Cage arch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lotte pregnant. Present in room. Unwrapping of cot</td>
<td>Bedroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lotte backing away from cot...stop under medical arch</td>
<td>Medical 2 Instruments</td>
<td>Back platform and windows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lotte moves back to convent arch. Charlotte Prayer/cleaning.</td>
<td>Women in BURNT CHURCH. Horses and spines choreography</td>
<td>NM Land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Charlie starts packing rocks into suitcase</td>
<td>Mother in Attic. Branding her back.</td>
<td>Charlie arch and NM Land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tom in Attic: Puts on Billy Williams record</td>
<td>Bird women start moving towards attic</td>
<td>Attic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Toms nightmare</td>
<td>Bird women invade attic screeching. Shadow of nightmare horse</td>
<td>Attic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>THE DROWNING: Lotte on stairs</td>
<td>Women carry 5 black water balloons</td>
<td>Walkway</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lotte on stairs</td>
<td>Breaking the waters with instruments</td>
<td>Top of stairs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Charlotte drowning in sink/Charlie water out of mouth</td>
<td>Bird women: Dressing the bride/corpse. Lotte taken by grey men to dining table.</td>
<td>Kitchen and Charlie area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lotte on stairs</td>
<td>Bird women move along arches...unfolding wings</td>
<td>Stairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mother crawling along archways with key. Charlie leaves with suitcase.</td>
<td>Grey men sit with corpse at table with gun. Imply but do not act violence. Leave.</td>
<td>White women blow ash onto windows</td>
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SEQUENCE D (abstracting A): Disintegration/Nothingness/Grief
Running Time approx 25 mins
<table>
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<tr>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 14

EVENT PLAN – AVIARY

VENUE- THE LIVING MUSEUM OF THE WEST
Pipe-makers Park - Maribyrnong

Production Dates
Bump in Sat 09/09/06 to Sun 17/09/06 (10am-5pm)
Mon 18/09/06-Wed 20/09/06 (10am-10pm)

Season Dates
Wed 20/09/06- 30/09/06 (7-10pm)

DRAFT NO. (1) - CURRENT AS AT (13/07/06)

Presented by the VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
In association with Red Cabbage Inc and Cheeky Monkey Enterprises

ANIMATEUR: Louise Morris

Ph: (03) 9754 14 35 BH
Mob: 0439 312 315
EVENT DETAILS

*Aviary* is an exciting and challenging new performance work directed by VCA Animateur, Louise Morris. Set in Australia at the turn of the 20th Century, the performance is a haunting visual spectacle which interrogates both domestic and social terror. The performance is the result of over 1 year of creative collaboration with physical performers, visual, sound and lighting artists and promises to be a unique, thought-provoking and enchanting theatrical experience for audiences.

The work is site specific and will involve the audience gathering at a specified location in Pipe-makers Park (the car-park at the end of Newsom St, Maribyrnong). Upon arrival, the audience will be issued with an event pass and commence their journey (approximately 5 minute walk) over the footbridge and along the footpath down by the river and pier to the Bluestone Building. Approximately 15 marshals will safety guide the audience through the park where they will be witness to a series of beautiful yet haunting performance tableaux (performers in the existing landscape (i.e. standing on the pier) which have the effect of living paintings). At the entrance to the Bluestone Building, the audience will exchange their event pass for a ticket (upon payment) and enter the lower level of the building to watch the main show (approximately 60 mins in duration). At the conclusion of the performance, the marshals will lead the audience back to the car park.

Creative Aims

- To push the boundaries of site specific performance by planning and implementing a safe, unique and memorable journey for an audience through public space and the ingenious use of existing historical architecture for performance.
- To evoke for the audience the sensory and emotional experience of having a nightmare through sophisticated layering of sound, image and physical performance.
- To examine the relationship between the visual and performing arts through the creation of an evocative visual narrative.

Project Objectives

- To interrogate the visual and performative strategies, affects and critical modes employed by artists to depict terror.
- To develop effective methods of planning, rehearsal and production which ensure the resulting work is a true collaboration of all the artists involved.
**Location:** Living Museum of the West (Bluestone Building) and Pipe-Makers Park from the car park situated at the end of Newsom St over the foot bridge and following the pathway by the river to the Living Museum (weather permitting) (see attached site map)

**Name of the event:** AVIARY

**Type of event:** SITE SPECIFIC PERFORMANCE

**Purpose /aim of the event:** Master of Animateuring premiere performance

**Target Audience:** General public and University students/staff

**Benefits**

The event will see Parks Victoria in association with the Living Museum of the West hosting the premiere of *Aviary*, an exciting and challenging new performance work directed by VCA Animateur, Louise Morris. Set in Australia at the turn of the 20th Century, the performance is a haunting visual spectacle which interrogates both domestic and social terror. The performance is the result of over 1 year of creative collaboration with physical performers, visual, sound and media artists and promises to be a unique, thought-provoking and enchanting theatrical experience for audiences.

---

**Event Management Contact**

**Organisation:** VCA

**Address:** 2 Grandview Cres Tecoma VIC

**Telephone:** 03 9754 1435

**Fax:**

**Mobile:** 0439 312 315

**Email:** lmorris@deakin.edu.au

**Website:** www.redcabbage.com.au

**ABN/CAN:**

**Delegated Event Administrator (if applicable):** Sara Koller

**Organisation:** Victorian College of the Arts

**Address:** 234 St Kilda Rd Southbank 3006

**Telephone:** (03) 9685 9226

**Fax:** (03) 9685 9236

**Mobile:**

**Email:** s.koller@vca.unimelb.edu.au

**Event Date/s:** Wed 20/09 – Sat 30/09

**Event Time:** 6.45pm – 8.30pm

**Bump In:** Sat 09/09/06 10-5pm

**Bump Out:** Sun 1/10/06 11-5pm

**Number of participants:** 12 cast + 15 marshals

**Number of spectators/audience** Approximately 40-60 per night

**Number of production crew:** 12-15

**Cost of participation:** N/A

**Ticket prices (if applicable):** $15 Concession $22 Full (TBC)
COMMERCIAL FRAMEWORK

FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT FOR MASTERS OF ANIMATEURING (DRAMA) AT THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

VENUE SITE PLAN

SEE ATTACHMENT A

STRUCTURE PLAN

No structures will be erected outside the Bluestone building.

The indoor set and seating plan is outlined in ATTACHMENT B

SITE PROTECTION

A team of marshals situated along the pathway of the audience (see Attachment A) will ensure the audience follow the existing path through the park, ensuring the protection of the surrounding parkland. The design and production team are aware of the heritage significance of the Bluestone building and will ensure no damage is incurred to the floors or walls during the installation and removal of the set, lights and seating for the performance.

PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat 09/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Bump in</td>
<td>Louise Morris: 0439 312 315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun 10/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>As Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 11/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues 12/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 13/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs 14/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 15/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 16/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsals- Run of Show</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun 17/09</td>
<td>10-5pm</td>
<td>Rehearsals- Run of Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 18/09</td>
<td>10-10pm</td>
<td>Technical Rehearsals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 19/09</td>
<td>10-10pm</td>
<td>Dress Rehearsals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 10-10pm</td>
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<td>Preview</td>
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## CONTACT DETAILS

**EMERGENCY SERVICES –** 000  
**VICTORIAN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE-** 9696 6111  
**FOOTSCRAY POLICE STATION (24 HOUR)-** 9689 9633  
**SUNSHINE POLICE STATION (24 HOUR)-** 9313 3333  
**AVONDALE HEIGHTS POLICE STATION-** 9337 6777  

**HOSPITALS- WESTERN HOSTPITAL, FOOTSCRAY** 9345 6666  

**AGL (POWER/STREET LIGHT FAILURE)** 131245  
**CITIPOWER (AS ABOVE)** 131280  
**LP GAS EMERGENCY** 1800819783  
**CITY WEST WATER EMERGENCY** 132642

**MUSEUM STAFF –** Janine or Peter  
On site queries –  
Event Contact - Louise Morris  
Event Administrator- Sara Koller  
Production Manager- Mattie Scott  
Stage Manager- Kate Mc Millan  
Outside Marshal Co-ordinator- Clint Dowdell  
Safety Officer and Risk Management- Mattie Scott  
Project Supervisor- Richard Murphet  
Sound and Seating Technician- Terry Ryan  
Set Designer- Evan Granger  
Lighting Designer- Govin Ruben
# COMMUNICATION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>COMMUNICATES WITH</th>
<th>HOW FREQUENTLY STATIONED AT</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
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<tr>
<td>MATTIE SCOTT</td>
<td>• DIRECTOR</td>
<td>THROUGHOUT REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCE</td>
<td>MUSEUM</td>
<td>PRODUCTION MANAGER</td>
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<td>• STAGE MANAGER</td>
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<td>• MARSHAL CO-ORDINATOR</td>
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<td>• MUSEUM STAFF</td>
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<td>CLINT DOWDELL</td>
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<td>THROUGHOUT REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCE</td>
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<td>MARSHAL CO-ORDINATOR</td>
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<td>KATE MCMILLAN</td>
<td>• PRODUCTION MANAGER</td>
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<td>LOUISE MORRIS</td>
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<td>MARSHAL TEAM X15</td>
<td>• MARSHAL CO-ORDINATOR</td>
<td>AS ABOVE</td>
<td>SEE SITE PLAN</td>
<td>AUDIENCE ORGANISATION, SAFETY, GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION</td>
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<td>FRONT OF HOUSE</td>
<td>• MARSHAL CO-ORDINATOR</td>
<td>AS ABOVE</td>
<td>MUSEUM</td>
<td>TICKETING AND SECURITY OF DOOR TAKINGS</td>
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<td>MATTY SCOTT</td>
<td>• PRODUCT MANAGER</td>
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<td>SOUND DESIGN AND PRO SEATING INSTALLATION</td>
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<td>TERRY RYAN</td>
<td>• PRODUCT MANAGER</td>
<td>AS ABOVE</td>
<td>MUSEUM</td>
<td>SET CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVAN GRANGER</td>
<td>• PRODUCT MANAGER</td>
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<td>LIGHTING DESIGN AND INSTALLATION</td>
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<td>GOVIN RUBEN</td>
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CONSULTATION PLAN

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<td><strong>Parks Victoria</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VCA</strong></td>
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HEALTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEE ATTACHMENT C: RISK ASSESSMENT

TICKETING

Audience members will be greeted by the MARSHAL team at the Newsom St Carpark between 6.30 and 6.45pm on the performance evenings. Audience members will be issued with a distinctive event pass, briefed on security/safety and follow their allocated marshal through the park to the Bluestone building. 2 Marshals will remain at this station until 7.15pm to cater for latecomers.

Upon arrival at the Bluestone Building the audience will collect tickets and programs at the front of house stationed at the lower level of the building.

MERCHANDISING

VCA Company 2006 brochures and information about upcoming shows will be provided for the audience. Information about the work of the Living Museum/Arts Victoria will also be provided.

GIVEAWAYS

N/A

SIGNAGE PLAN

2 X A FRAME SIGNAGE SITUATED AT CARPARK

POWER

3 PHASE POWER LOCATED IN BLUE STONE BUILDING
ALL MARSHALS PROVIDED WITH LANTERNS AND BATTERY POWERED LIGHT SOURCE FOR AUDIENCE MOVEMENT OUTSIDE

AMPLIFICATION PLAN (INCLUDING NOISE MONITORING)
THERE WILL BE NO AMPLIFIED SOUND OUTSIDE OF THE BLUESTONE BUILDING.

WATER PLAN
SEE MUSEUM ATTACHMENT

SECURITY PLAN
The Footscray police station will be provided with full event plan and associated documents prior to the event.

The Production manager and Marshal co-ordinator will fully brief cast, crew and audience according to the risk assessment and safety management plan provided.

A representative from the Living Museum will be available during rehearsals and performances to provide security, phone and first aid access.

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN
SEE MUSEUM ATTACHMENT: BINS PROVIDED IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS

TOILET PLAN
TOILETS ARE LOCATED OUTSIDE THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING OF THE MUSEUM AND WILL BE CLEARLY SIGN POSTED.

TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN MANAGEMENT PLAN
SEE ATTACHMENT A (SITE PLAN) for placement of Marshals during performance.

ALCOHOL PLAN
ALCOHOL WILL BE SOLD ON THE OPENING NIGHT OF THE PERFORMANCE (TO BE CONFIRMED BY VCA)
WATER ACCESS
SEE MUSEUM ATTACHMENT

DISABLED ACCESS
THE PUBLICITY FOR THE EVENT WILL PROVIDE A NUMBER TO CONTACT FOR AUDIENCE MEMBERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. THEY WILL BE INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND DURATION OF THE JOURNEY ELEMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE (WHICH REMAINS ENTIRELY ON FOOTPATHS IN PARK) AND GIVEN THE OPTION TO DRIVE THEIR VEHICLE THROUGH
THE TOP GATE TO THE MUSEUM CARPARK USING THE REMOTE SENSOR IF REQUIRED. 2 MARSHALS WILL BE SPECIFICALLY ALLOCATED THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

WEATHER CONTINGENCY PLAN
IF RAINING, AUDIENCE WILL BE RE-DIRECTED TO VAN NESS AVE AND PROCEED THROUGH THE SENSOR GATE TO THE MUSEUM CARPARK AS ABOVE.

SITE SAFETY PLAN
THE EVENT ORGANISERS AND PRODUCTION MANAGER WILL APPLY THE STANDARD SAFETY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOLLOWED BY THE LIVING MUSEUM OF THE WEST AND PARKS VICTORIA. THE VOLUNTEER MARSHAL TEAM WILL BE MADE AWARE OF THESE PROCEDURES ON THE REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE DATES AS PART OF A SECURITY BRIEFING PRESENTATION.

Emergency contact list: See Contacts List

Emergency Evacuation plan: Refer to LIVING MUSEUM attachment

Occupational Health and Safety: Refer to risk management plan

Provision of fire extinguishes and fire blankets: Refer to MUSEUM attachment

Process for incident/hazard reporting: Refer to MUSEUM attachment

First aid and public health plan: Refer to MUSEUM attachment and Risk assessment

RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (SEE ATTACHMENT C)
PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE (SEE ATTACHMENT D)
AVIARY

...imprisoned in the ruined vessel of time

...what we fear is just beyond our grasp

DIRECTED BY LOUISE MORRIS

AVIARY is a site specific, image based investigation into the nightmarish borderland of terror and the uncanny. The performance outcome is the result of theoretical and practical research undertaken by 2006 Masters of Animal Ears candidate, Louise Morris, in collaboration with the ensemble featuring:

Jason LeHane, Clare Reynolds, Anna Hamilton, Kirsten Prins, Tania Smith, Clint Dowdell, Katie-Jean Harding, Halcyon McLeod, Miranda Borman, Ivan Thorley, and Anna Voronoff.

Set Design: Evan Granger Lighting Design: Govin Ruben Sound Design: Terry Ryan
Media Design: Dylan Volkart Costume Design: Lauren Theos

DATES: Wed 20th Sept (preview), Thurs 21st Sept (opening), Fri 22nd, Sat 23rd, Sun 24th.

TIME: Meeting Time 7.30pm at specified location. Marshalled journey begins at 7.45pm.
Booking essential. Call 9665 9233

MEETING PLACE: Carpark at the corner of Newsom St and Stanford St, Ascot Vale off Epsom Rd
(Melways Ref MAP 222: A 17)

You will be greeted at this location and escorted through Pipemakers Park to the Living Museum.

This project is supported by:
APPENDIX 16

Program note

“God is having a nightmare. This thing arrives at the moment he falls asleep and grabs him around the throat…it rushes him through the universe, pushes him beyond the stars, ploughs up the earth with his face and throws him back into heaven…he cannot understand what there can be in his creation which could be so hostile…eventually the thing speaks.”

Ted Hughes

The journey which began with explorations in car parks, galleries and ruined buildings has led us to this place—a blue stone meat factory built before the turn of the last century. This version of AVIARY was constructed by exploring one moment in time, a terrifying, accidental domestic event. We were interested in representing what happens to time, memory, gesture and language in a moment of terror and we did so with the suspicion that any theatrical representation of terror, grotesque, uncanny or otherwise can only ever be an approximation of such a feeling…a screaming void, an empty space, a thing always lies beyond these boundaries.

The AVIARY is a prison of grief where a traumatic event haunts the protagonist. It is a representation of the flimsy cages we build in our lives for our own protection and the protection of those we love. Plato suggested that an aviary could be used as a simile of thought patterns in the mind, for what can be contained but ultimately not controlled. The caged bird has long been thought of as a symbol for the dead soul trapped in life…and a bird loose in the house a harbinger of death. What we call ‘ghosts’ could be thought of as a memory caught in seemingly endless repetition, where shock pierces our normal conception of time, leaving a lingering trace of the event in the space it occurred.

“Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most the empty carcass of time”

Karl Marx

The contemporary discourse surrounding the use of terror as a mode of inquiry for artists is riddled with socio-political implications and as such I have found it necessary to locate a ‘specific terror’ as the focus of our performative explorations. By this I do not mean to suggest that historical or political readings of terror are unimportant to my research, quite the contrary, rather the focus is based on what I can locate intimately as a theatre maker. The crack that terror can create in our everyday lives is deeply personal in its expression and I would suggest that political implications are intrinsically manifest and readable within this mode of inquiry.

This specific terror is an ontological one, linked to philosophical inquiries into the fractal quality of human existence and a ‘terror of oblivion’. It is this ambiguous space which fascinates me as a performance maker and I am aiming to investigate if this terror, found at the borders of our reason, in our nightmares both sleeping and waking can be transformed from experience into matter through image theatre.

My masters research has suggested that there is a specific mode of signification in performance, the ‘liminal uncanny’ which manipulates liminal qualities such as indeterminacy, boundary collapse, disintegration, repetition and non-linguistic coding to evoke terror through a juxtaposition of the familiar and the strange. AVIARY attempts to engage a beautiful rather than a grotesque expression of the horrific as I suspect that terror is always lurking in the shadows of the sublime.